

Report of the Australian Seafarers Welfare Council Meeting

6 March 2017

MTS Newcastle

96 Hannell Street, Wickham, NSW

AGENDA ITEM 1: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance.

AGENDA ITEM 2: ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES

The meeting was attended by a quorum of members, with apologies from Rio Tinto, MIAL, Rightship & Apostleship of the Seas, and guest attendance from a representative of the Newcastle Port Welfare Committee.

AGENDA ITEM 3: GUEST PRESENTATIONS

The Chairman of the newly formed Port Welfare Committee in Newcastle, Hennie du Plooy, described all those involved in the committee as having good will and are excited about what they are going to achieve. Trying to form a good link between operations in port and the local centre. The committee is focused on building on the good will and to deliver welfare services in the best way possible.

AGENDA ITEM 4: PREVIOUS MINUTES & ACTION ITEMS

Minutes from the previous meeting on 28 October 2016 were accepted following the amendments that were made as a result of a number of comments.

The Chair ran through the Actions Arising document.

AGENDA ITEM 5: CORRESPONDENCE

The Chair gave a verbal update on correspondence since the last meeting. Electronic copies had been circulated and a hard copy was available at the meeting for the Council to view.

AGENDA ITEM 6: ASWC ENGAGEMENT

The Chair provided an update on the website statistics during the reporting period (1 Oct 16 – 31 Jan 17). There were 1,001 website 'hits' for this period, compared to 1,124 in the previous period.

There had been 2 articles published to the website since the last meeting.



WORKING LUNCH

AGENDA ITEM 7: MLC COMPLAINTS AND INCIDENTS

7 a) & b) MLC Activity

AMSA presented the MLC incidents/complaints data for the reporting period 1 Oct 16 – 31 Jan 2017, during the reporting period there were:

- 38 complaints regarding alleged breach of MLC
- 10 MLC related deficiencies issued
- 2 ship detentions for MLC related deficiencies
- 18 medivac
- 3 man overboard
- 5 disappearance ashore

Calendar year to date (as at 31 Jan 17) there has been:

- 14 complaints regarding alleged breach of MLC
- 3 deficiencies issued
- 2 MLC related ship detentions following inspections instigated by MLC complaints

The Chair advised that AMSA is in the process of employing a Seafarer Welfare Coordinator who will take care of the MLC incidents/complaints as well as being involved in the redevelopment of the website, drive MLC for the organisation and developing mechanisms of communication.

Dean Summers (ITF) queried the distribution of MLC stats, Chair explained how the data is stored and that our system does not have the capacity to capture complaint data. Chair made a point that AMSA need to be more mobile in terms of receiving complaints and to get out of the formal reporting mindset. The Council discussed getting out to the centres and talking with seafarers, finding out what they want and how they use our services.

Gavin Kelso (Hunterlink National) advised he would like to speak with the Seafarer Welfare Coordinator about data sets, the Chair advised this may be out of the scope for this role however Michelle Grech, Head of Systems Safety at AMSA should be able to assist.

ACTION 3/2017 – 7.1: Chair to send out a notification to the Council once the new Seafarer Welfare Coordinator has been appointed.

7 c) Local welfare report

Dennis Cloughton (MTS Flying Angel Club) talked about the death of a seafarer on board *Choiba*, Chief Officer Mr. Mircea Cerchia. In late December the Chief Officer on board was found unconscious and was transferred to hospital for treatment. With help from AMSA, ITF and Flying Angel Fremantle, Mr Cerchia's daughter, Alina, was able to be flown to Australia to be with her father just hours before he passed away. She wrote a beautiful letter to all involved thanking them for flying her out, helping her during her stay and allowing her to visit her father prior to him passing.

It was agreed that while this occurrence had a tragic ending, it is a great example of how we can all come together to provide the necessary support and assistance to seafarers and their families in these unfortunate situations.

AGENDA ITEM 8: GENERAL BUSINESS

8 a) Finalise ASWC Strategies

The Council discussed finalising the ASWC strategies and were all in agreement with the content on the front page of the document. The Chair then advised Council needed to make a decision on the next port welfare committees to be created making a point to focus on three to begin with rather than try and do everything at once. The Council agreed on Port Kembla, Port Hedland & Dampier. Dennis Claughton (MTS West) made mention of the relocation and redevelopment of the Port Hedland Centre and the Council agreed it would be good timing for a committee to be formed in correlation with the new centre.

The Chair talked about completing some background investigation first so we are not stepping on anyone's toes. Garry Dodd (MTS East) to look at Port Kembla and Dennis Claughton to research Port Hedland and Dampier over in the West.

ACTION 3/2017 – 8.1: Garry Dodd & Dennis Claughton to complete some background investigation for Port Welfare Committees in Port Kembla, Port Hedland and Dampier.

8 b) Guidance documents for PWC startup

Chair made a point to apologise these documents were not circulated amongst the Council originally. The Council reviewed the documents and all agreed with the content. Dean Summers (ITF) commented that it is necessary to make it known that Port Welfare Committees provide support to organisations who are in the business of providing welfare assistance to all seafarers including the deep sea fishing industry.

8 c) Hunterlink update

Gavin Kelso (Hunterlink National) talked about Hunterlink's recent work setting up mental health programs in Yangon & South Africa describing the trip as very interesting and successful. A survey was conducted amongst the seafarers centred around HIV which is a common problem amongst both seafarers and the general community, and also about what help seafarers actually want in regards to mental wellness. Local agencies set up counselling services a couple of years ago and unbelievably it was found there was still a large number of people who regarded fortune telling as a higher opinion than a professional councillor. Gavin advised it was heart-warming to see a country in poverty wanting to embrace these programs, he spoke to a lot of seafarers and their families and was reminded we are all human and we all deserve access to mental health assistance. Gavin advised they have applied for funding for a 2 year pilot project implemented in stages and the aim at the end is to have a global roll out. Gavin will keep the Council up to date and will hopefully be able to share the model on how the operation will work at the next meeting.

8 d) Sydney Port Welfare Committee revitalisation

Alan Tait (Australian Mariners Welfare Society (AMWS)) provided an update on the revitalisation of the Sydney Port Welfare Committee, he confirmed they have appointed a new Chairman, an engineer by trade who knows the shipping industry well and has not long retired so has the time available to get involved. Alan advised the first issue they have to tackle is the Chair has no support and this needs to be worked on. On a positive note it seems they will be able to start having meetings in Port Botany, the PWC is very active, alive and well and with the new Chairman they will be able to provide better services to seafarers.

Alan Tait mentioned a problem accessing shore leave from the Caltex Kurnell wharf. It has been alleged seafarers are being charged \$200 for a vehicle to transfer them to the gate. Dean Summers (ITF) advised he can follow up on this with Caltex, Alan to send the details to Dean.

ACTION 3/2017 – 8.2: Alan Tait (AMWS) to provide Dean Summers (ITF) the details of the Caltex Kurnell transport issue for Dean to follow up.

8 e) New Australian Mariners Welfare Society website

Alan Tait (AMWS) noted the new AMWS website www.marinerswelfare.com and advised the importance of all being linked together - AMSA, ITF, Ports Australia etc. to clearly showcase what we all do and what we offer.

8 f) Other business

The Chair talked about the 2014 amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006. Noting the changes to both Regulation 2.5 (Repatriation) and 4.2 (Shipowners liability).

Dean Summers (ITF), provided a verbal update about current business of the ITF.

Dean raised concerns about man overboard cases and how they are not being investigated. He talked about them being labelled as suicides when this may not be the case, as a result the families of the deceased seafarer are not getting compensation. The Chair made comment that it is difficult to investigate as the jurisdiction sits with the flag State, and something needs to be in place to make it an international requirement to investigate. AMSA and ITF to work together on this issue.

ACTION 3/2017 – 8.3: Secretariat to add ITF update as a standing item on future agendas.

ACTION 3/2017 – 8.4: Dean Summers (ITF) and Steve Curry (AMSA) to discuss ways to make investigations into MOB cases a requirement.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is to be held in Sydney on Thursday 22 June 2017 to provide support to the revitalisation of the Sydney Port Welfare Committee.

It was decided the 3rd meeting for the year will be held in Fremantle on Monday 23 October 2017. It was noted by the Chair that a meeting has never been held in the West and that we should provide support to all parts of the country. With a number of months within which to make arrangements, we should all be able to attend. If the logistics for attendance are too problematic, these issues should be raised at the next meeting in June for discussion. Dennis Cloughton (MTS West) will have a think about guests and how we can make the most out of the trip.