

## ***Report of the Australian Seafarers Welfare Council Meeting***

***25 February 2016***

***Hosted by Gladstone PWC at the Mission to Seafarers, Gladstone  
Corner of Alf O'Rourke & Bryan Jordan Drives, Gladstone QLD***

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### **AGENDA ITEM 1: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair thanked the Gladstone Port Welfare Committee and the Mission to Seafarers Gladstone for hosting the meeting.

### **AGENDA ITEM 2: ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES**

The meeting was attended by a quorum of members, representatives from the Gladstone Port Welfare Committee and an Australian Transport Safety Bureau Investigator.

### **AGENDA ITEM 3: GUEST SPEAKERS**

Mike Lutze gave a presentation on the work of the Gladstone Port Welfare Committee, the Port Corporation and the Mission. The presentation provided an overview of the port operations, including the recent development of three LNG plants, and outlined the short history of the PWC. Mike explained that the most pressing issue had been the appropriate transportation of crews from the LNG ships to the town centre. While advances in this area have been made, this is still a work in process.

There were no action items arising from this presentation.

### **AGENDA ITEM 4: PREVIOUS MINUTES & ACTION ITEMS**

Minutes from the previous meeting on 28 October 2015 were accepted.

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 last quarter. There had been five articles published to the website since October.

The number of website 'hits' was slightly raised for this period, however, this reporting period was 4 months and the previous period was 3 months. There were 1,466 hits for the period 1 October 2015 to 31 January 2016.

## AGENDA ITEM 7: MLC COMPLAINTS AND INCIDENTS

### **7 a) MLC Update for the previous quarter**

AMSA presented the MLC incidents/complaints results for the reporting period 1 October 15 – 31 January 2016, during the reporting period there were:

- 49 complaints regarding alleged breach of MLC
- 19 MLC deficiencies issued
- 2 ship detentions for MLC related deficiencies
- 5 Medivac
- 4 man overboard/suicide reports

Calendar year to date (as at 31 January 16) there has been:

- 18 complaints regarding alleged breach of MLC
- 5 deficiencies issued
- 0 MLC related ship detention following inspections instigated by MLC complaints

## AGENDA ITEM 8: AMSA UPDATES

### **8 a) IMO HTW Sub-Committee Meeting 3**

The chair talked about the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the IMO's Sub-Committee on the Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW) which was held from 1-5 February 2016 at IMO Headquarters in London. Michelle Grech (AMSA) attended this meeting as the Head of Delegation, with Sarah Cerche (MIAL) attending as an observer/advisor.

Key outcomes:

- It was agreed that Australia's submission on the proposed revised guidelines on fatigue be used as the base document for further consideration by the HTW sub-committee.
- A Correspondence Group was established to develop the revision, with Australia coordinating this Group.
- Australia has had discussions with a number of delegates, in particular the UK, US, Chile and ICS, about the possibility of developing a fatigue management toolbox, for companies and seafarers that can support the Guidelines on Fatigue. The idea is that the toolbox will contain e-learning material, video and other information.

### **8 b) Safety Bulletin Issue 3**

The Chair talked about Issue 3 of the Safety Bulletin which highlights electrical hazards. The bulletin is based on incident and inspection data and will be ready for distribution in the next month.

It was suggested that distribution of the Safety Bulletin to agents may be beneficial.

### **8 c) AMSA Staffing**

The Chair noted Christina Weston's new position with AMSA as Principal Seafarer Certification Advisor – Nautical. As Christina has moved to a new role she will no longer be working with the Council.

**ACTION 2/2016 - 8.1: Chair to write a letter of thanks to Christina Weston for her service on the Council.**

## AGENDA ITEM 9: ASWC STRATEGIC WORK OUTLOOK

The Chair noted Allan Schwartz's letter of resignation to the Council distributed last evening; hard copies were passed to each of the attendees.

As Allan noted in his letter, his decision to step down as Chair of the Council is not a reflection that AMSA's resolve has diminished in any way. AMSA will proudly retain its membership of the Council through Steve Curry, and subject to agreement, will continue to provide the secretariat support.

The Chair (Steve) mentioned that he and Allan had discussed this over a long period of time. Steve was recruited to AMSA some 18 months ago specifically to focus on MLC, and Steve's work with the Council was intended to grow to allow Allan time to move forward with his future work on aligning AMSA's regulation of domestic and foreign going vessels, which will see Allan's availability for the Council diminishing.

The Chair reiterated Allan's comments that the time is right for the Council to reassess itself, its operations, its strategic directions and its chairmanship.

Warwick Norman agreed, noting we need to look at our stakeholders and focus on how we can best achieve our goals.

Melwyn Noronha commented that it is also timely to look at the Council's Terms of Reference. The Chair agreed and will circulate the original document for consideration/review.

Dennis Cloughton commented on the strength a Chairman from AMSA brings, noting AMSA's Reza Vind as Chairman of the local Fremantle PWC as an example.

Dave Ellis referenced the Council's original intent of rotating the chairmanship responsibilities.

Gavin Kelso talked about the benefits of using social media to reach seafarers. Dave Ellis agreed, however, noted the high workload and effort associated with administering social media which is 24/7. Warwick Norman reiterated Dave's comments and questioned the role of the Council, is it to communicate with the seafarers directly or support the welfare providers who's primary role is this.

Vik Chaudhri added that it is important to allow everyone time to think about this before coming to any decisions.

Sarah Cerche provided comment on email. Sarah proposed the new Chair write to Allan to thank him for his dedication, leadership and passion as Chair of the Council for as long as she has been a member (and she suspects longer than that).

**ACTION 2/2016 - 9.1: Circulate the original ASWC Terms of Reference to the Council.**

**ACTION 2/2016 - 9.2: All members to give considered thought to the Councils strategic direction, operations and chairmanship in preparation for the next meeting where we will set aside usual business and primarily focus on setting the future direction for the Council.**

## AGENDA ITEM 10: OTHER BUSINESS

### **10 a) Seafarer safety and welfare while off duty on board ships**

Gordon Gore discussed the findings of ATSB's investigation into a man overboard fatality from *Cape Splendor*.

On 6 October 2014, *Cape Splendor's* bosun descended to the lower platform of the ship's accommodation ladder during his lunch break to fish. The bosun lost his balance and fell into the sea. An assisting seaman threw a lifebuoy toward the bosun and raised the alarm. Following an extensive air and sea search, the bosun was not found.

Gordon talked about the overwhelming consensus of crew during interviews which found that although the crew would follow safety precautions while working, this incident occurred while the bosun was off duty; why was he not wearing a floatation device or using fall prevention equipment – 'because he was not working'.

The ATSB has issued a safety advisory notice (SAN) to shipmasters, owners, and operators to promote the importance of an effective safety culture on board ships. The SAN reinforces the importance of safety awareness at all times, during both work and recreational activities.

**ACTION 2/2016 - 10.1: Gordon Gore to liaise with AMSA to include 'Seafarer safety and welfare while off duty on board ships' in a future Safety Bulletin.**

#### **10 b) New trends in seafarers welfare**

Dennis Cloughton talked about seafarers being repatriated earlier than they possibly should be and the challenges faced by welfare providers in assisting these seafarers, at times covering costs that should be borne by the agent but are not.

The Chair noted that AMSA have a legislative requirement to implement the MLC in Australia and if AMSA is not aware of a situation it cannot do anything. The Chair reiterated that MLC related information should be passed to AMSA confidentially, information can be sent to any of the following email addresses

[LabourConventions@amsa.gov.au](mailto:LabourConventions@amsa.gov.au)  
[OnshoreCom@amsa.gov.au](mailto:OnshoreCom@amsa.gov.au)

Gary Wilson commented on the wonderful work being done across the country by welfare providers, adding that in the case of taking care of things that are the responsibility of the agent, although it is with the best intentions, it may be counterproductive – if we don't make agents accountable they never will be.

**ACTION 2/2016 - 10.2: All Council members note the contacts for passing MLC related information to AMSA confidentially are [LabourConventions@amsa.gov.au](mailto:LabourConventions@amsa.gov.au) & [OnshoreCom@amsa.gov.au](mailto:OnshoreCom@amsa.gov.au)**

#### **10 c) Australian Mariners' Welfare Society update**

Rodney Birdsall gave a brief of the history, current national activities and initiatives of the AMWS.

#### **10 d) Proposed databases for discussion**

Gavin talked about Hunterlink's data collection on mental health which is reported to their board but stops there. Currently, Hunterlink are unable to determine the statistics of data that is directly related to seafarers concerning their mental health. Recent reporting documents 'suggests' that there may be a high percentage of seafarers at risk from suicide or who have died from suicide. These reported statements are reiterated with similar topics including depression, anxiety, social isolation and fatigue.

Gavin noted an organisation called NADA which is a non-government organisation that represents approximately 100 services nationally for drug and alcohol. Those members report through an online portal a range of issues that is recorded on a national database, giving an accurate snap shot of Australian substance abuse and treatment provided.

Hunterlink would like to contribute to ASWC with data with the view of being able to determine trends and problematic areas, and employers may better understand challenging barriers in their workplace, affecting productivity and safety.

**ACTION 2/2016 - 10.3: Add consideration of the collection of mental health data to strategic plan, to be tabled at next meeting.**

#### **10 e) Meeting frequency**

The Chair talked about the frequency of ASWC meetings, noting in the past the timing of the next meeting has been determined at the closure of the current meeting. This has meant that there is no regularity to meetings,

reporting periods are different, the workload for the secretariat varies and we vary between three and four meetings a year. Setting a schedule for future meetings should help in all these areas.

The Chair proposed the following schedule:

Meeting 1 – Week 3 or 4 of February (reporting period – Oct/Nov/Dec/Jan)

Meeting 2 – Week 3 or 4 of June (reporting period – Feb/Mar/Apr/May)

Meeting 3 – Week 3 or 4 of October (reporting period – Jun/Jul/Aug/Sept)

All members present agreed to the proposed meeting schedule.

**ACTION 2/2016 - 10.4: Future meetings to be held 3 times per year, in week 3 or 4 of February, June and October, with reporting periods of Oct-Jan, Feb-May, and Jun-Sept.**

#### **10 f) ILO Convention 185 Seafarer Identity Documents**

The Chair talked about Sarah's attendance at an ad hoc meeting to discuss the ILO Convention 185 – Seafarer Identity Documents (SID), and amendments to the Convention, mainly around technology being used. He noted the challenge for this is that there are countries that will not ratify the Convention as it does not align with their visa requirements.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 11: NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is to be held in Canberra in week 3 or 4 of June 2016. Following Agenda Item 9, the next meeting will primarily focus on setting the future direction of the Council.