



## Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee

### Inquiry into the Increasing use of so-called Flag of Convenience shipping in Australia.

Submission of the

**Australian Maritime Officers Union**

September 2015

1. The Australian Maritime Officers Union (AMOU) welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee (Senate Committee) Inquiry into the *Shipping Legislation Amendment Bill 2015* (the Bill).
2. The AMOU represents the professional and workplace interests of members including: Masters and Officers in the 'bluewater' and 'offshore oil and gas' maritime sectors, Marine Pilots, Tug Masters, Bunkering, Dredging Industry, Stevedoring Supervisors, Ferries Crew, Port Services, Vessel Traffic Services/Port Control, Marine Tourism together with Professional/Administration/ Supervisory/Technical staff of Port Corporations and Marine Authorities.
3. Our union is one of three unions registered under the provisions of the *Fair Work Act 2009* to represent the industrial interests of maritime workers. The other maritime unions are the Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers (AIMPE) and the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA).

4. The AMOU is a longstanding member of the International Transport Federation (ITF). We commend the comprehensive submission of the International Transport Federation - Australia to this Inquiry. Our submission is an adjunct to the ITF – Australia submission and focuses on the training required to become a master mariner and the translation of skills to land-based jobs.
5. The maritime industry is obviously an old industry with particular customs, traditions and language developed over centuries. While operations in modern ports are at the cutting edge of any comparable operations and the modern vessels that operate on the Australian coastline are some of the most technologically sophisticated of any machinery, the customs and traditions of the maritime industry remain.
6. Seafaring is a special vocation with a lifestyle that can be quite different to that of non-seafarers. For example, those employed in interstate and international operations may spend a great deal of time at sea usually followed with an equal time of leave onshore.
7. The combination of customs and traditions with employment conditions not commonly found in other occupations has fostered a particular sense of altruism and benevolence between seafarers.
8. Those that go to sea are enamoured by their industry. They view a vibrant and robust industry as vital to Australia’s national interest and want to make sure that into the future young Australia’s with a similar love of the sea have opportunities to work in the local setting.
9. As identified by the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, ‘ . . . *Australia is heavily dependent on shipping, with 99 per cent of international trade volumes transported by ship and Australian ports managing 10 per cent of the world’s sea trade.*<sup>1</sup>
10. It takes more than ten years of training and sea service to become a qualified Master (see Appendix 1). Additionally seafarers must be able to pass physical assessment and have good eyesight. Medicals are required every five years.
11. The intimate knowledge of the industry seafarers gain through the years of extensive training they undertake makes them sought after candidates for many on-shore jobs in the maritime industry. Indeed many positions require maritime qualifications as a precondition for employment e.g. harbour master or coastal pilot.

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<sup>1</sup> Approaches to Regulating Coastal Shipping in Australia, Options Paper, April 2014, Australian Government

12. The role of coastal pilot is essential to the operation of Australia's shipping industry. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) describes the role of a coastal pilot as:

*' . . . to advise on the safe navigation of a vessel, and to be a steward of the marine environment.*

*This means that the coastal marine pilot must:*

- *identify and manage risks to avoid a grounding or collision to protect the ship and marine environment;*
- *provide detailed passage planning, local knowledge, leadership to the bridge team, and liaison with shore authorities and VTS;*
- *provide independent judgement and advice to the ship's master, who remains in command of the vessel;*
- *monitor their own personal health and safety, including managing fatigue: and*
- *provide mentoring and training to new coastal pilots.'*<sup>2</sup>

AMSA makes it plain that a pilot must have local knowledge and mentor and train new pilots.

Under AMSA criteria, trainee pilots must have certain Certificates of Competency, a Certificate of Medical Fitness, have undertaken a trainee pilot induction approved training course and have at least 36 months of qualifying sea service as master, navigating officer in charge of a watch or pilot on vessels of at least 500 gross tonnes.

13. We anticipate that each year 16 new pilots are required in Australian ports on account of natural attrition.
14. Further teaching staff at maritime educational facilities are generally seafarers themselves with associated maritime qualifications.
15. We are constantly contacted by members, and non-members, who recently gained their qualifications who cannot secure any work. They often add that the majority of those they studied with are in similar positions.
16. Our older members fear for their industry. They see the short term opportunism of multinational companies exploiting our natural resources or facilitating the 99% of Australia's trade volumes through shipping without providing opportunities for young Australian workers in our never ending pursuit of lower costs and greater shareholder returns as perverse.

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<sup>2</sup> See: [ASMA How to Become a pilot](#)

17. Our younger members who have pursued careers in this special vocation fear they will never be afforded the opportunities given to previous generations of seafarers.
18. We have made a submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee Inquiry into the *Shipping Legislation Amendment Bill 2015*. Similar to this submission, in that submission we appraised the Senate Committee of the extensive training and sea time required to achieve seafarer qualifications. We made the point that *Shipping Legislation Amendment Bill 2015* and the policies of the Federal Government do nothing to encourage the employment of suitability qualified locals who are willing and able to perform local jobs.
19. As submitted by the ITF – Australia to this Inquiry, there was a 78% increase in Flag of Convenience ship visits to Australia between 2002 and 2014.
20. The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development submitted to the Senate Inquiry into the *Shipping Legislation Amendment Bill 2015* that:  
  
*‘The number of major (over 2,000 dead weight tonnes) Australian registered ships with coastal licences has more than halved; from thirty-six vessels in 2004-05 to just fifteen in 2013-14. Many ageing Australian registered vessels are not being replaced. The number of foreign ships in Australia on Transitional General Licences has also halved in recent years; leaving only eight currently operating.’*
21. The increasing use of Flag of Convenience shipping in Australia is in no way in our collective national interest.
22. Our union fears that there will be a scarcity of Australians able to fill the many seafaring associated onshore jobs such as harbour masters, pilots, vessel traffic officers and lecturers at the maritime training facilities.
23. We endorse the Recommendations of the ITF – Australia as detailed in their submission to this inquiry.
24. The AMOU is always willing to enter into discussions on mechanisms to ensure Australia has a vibrant, healthy and growing local shipping industry. Our members demand that we do this. Our members also demand that we strenuously resist any developments that prevent these goals.

APPENDIX 1

**TIMEFRAME FROM NEW ENTRANT TO MASTER**

