



**THE COMPANY OF MASTER MARINERS OF AUSTRALIA LTD.**

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MASTER : HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

23 June, 2000

The Sectional Committee Secretary  
The Commonwealth Parliament Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Dr Carter,

**COASTWATCH INQUIRY**

The Company of Master Mariners of Australia is an organization established to promote the efficiency of Australian and international maritime services. The organization provides a body of experienced seafarers able to be consulted on any questions affecting judicial, educational, technical or commercial issues affecting the Merchant Navy, Safety of Life at Sea or any related aspect without involving itself in political or industrial relations issues.

The Western Australian Branch of the Company has taken an interest in the Coastwatch inquiry as a number of members are currently in the forefront of potential maritime activities on the North West region of Australia. Members have raised concerns regarding the inadequate protection facilities of a vast coast line with a wealth of minerals.

Recent incidents, involving the landing of illegal immigrants at Ashmore Reef, the beaching of a vessel with illegal migrants at Coffs Harbour, the "Kirky" incident and the Search and Rescue of participants of round the world yacht races are some examples of concern. There are also concerns of piracy of vessels and illegal occupation of oil and gas platforms.

It is our view that 2 options are available to improve the vigilance and protection of our coastline, our mineral resources and our fishing grounds.

- Option 1 would call for the boost of naval equipment and manpower to provide a marine platform for a Coastguard as a coordinating body.
- Option 2 is to establish a coordinating agency with the hardware for a marine platform sourced from the private sector.

Our submission recognizes the number of agencies currently involved in the provision of services which could be coordinated by an Australian Coastguard. Our view of unifying the hardware of these agencies under one umbrella, and over a period of time provide vessels suitable for multifunctional duties, would provide a significant cost

saving. It is also important to remember that with one coordinator, vital communication links (domestic and international) will improve.

The submission covers the area of coordination, implementation and operation, support and funding.

In conclusion we recommend that the concept of an Australian Coastguard be adopted. This concept would consist of a coordinating body, who may initially work with all the participating agencies, but gradually through specialist training, as well by the acquisition of the appropriate hardware, become a body to provide all the services as stated in our submission.\

The committee responsible for this submission consists of:

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Captain Frank Kaleveld    | Stevedoring Operations Manager                                 |
| Captain Robin Gray        | Senior Lecturer – Marine Operations, Fremantle Maritime Center |
| Captain Richard Purkiss   | Lecturer – Marine Operations, Fremantle Maritime Center        |
| Captain Phil Griffin      | Lecturer – Marine Operations, Fremantle Maritime Center        |
| Captain David Harvey      | Retired Master Mariner   |
| Captain Andrew Codrington | Master Mariner   |

The members of this committee are available for additional comments or elaborations.

Captain Frank Kaleveld, Branch Master.

## **Background**

This submission seeks to address two of the terms of reference of the Joint Committee review of Coastwatch, namely:

- The role and expectations (both public and government) of Coastwatch, and
- Whether an Australian Coastguard should be created to take over Coastwatch's functions.

The representatives of the Company of Master Mariners of Australia (Western Australian Branch) have reviewed the current model with respect to the policing of the Australian coastline and also the policing methods employed by a number of other countries. In reviewing current practices both in Australia and overseas the representatives developed the opinion that the present Australian model was not the most efficient and cost effective system possible.

## **The Australian model**

We consider that the term Coastwatch, should at least encompass all of the following functions and roles in order to adequately protect our coastline from those who seek to enter either goods or people contrary to Australian law. In addition, we believe that our responsibilities and obligations with respect to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Search and Rescue<sup>1</sup> and Safety of Life at Sea<sup>2</sup> Conventions, would be best served by coming under the same organisational umbrella as Coastwatch. In particular the following functions were addressed:

### **Search and Rescue**

- Ocean (AusSar)
- Coastal (AusSar and the State Marine Authorities)
- Inshore (Co-ordination of the activities of the Volunteer Marine Rescue Services)

### **Policing**

- Customs (Marine and coastline aspects)
- Immigration (Mainly the detection of illegal immigration activities)
- Quarantine (Protection of our borders with respect to pests and diseases brought in by ships, including ballast water)
- Fisheries (Enforcement of the Exclusive Economic Zone, EEZ)
- Environment protection (Including marine parks)
- Marine legislation enforcement (Ship safety and Port State Control)
- State and Federal police marine activities

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<sup>1</sup> IMO, International Conference on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, as amended

<sup>2</sup> IMO, Safety of Life at Sea Convention, 1960/74 as amended

### **Other Activities**

- Pollution control (Including the management of the National Plan with respect to oil pollution)
- Maintenance of navigation aids (Management role)
- Vessel traffic services
- Marine Certification management
- Protection of Australia's offshore resources within the EEZ (Both natural and physical)
- Hydrography and Oceanography
- Boating education and safety

### **Overseas Examples**

In searching for a model to follow, currently being used by a foreign administration, a number of examples were researched. Of particular note were the systems in place in the United States, Canada, and the Philippines. Each of these examples were different in a number of key areas, and no single model appeared to adequately address all the functions we considered to be appropriate to Australia's needs. However, the review did highlight that, in each case, the issues of border protection and maritime safety were addressed by a single organization, which allowed a uniform approach and a specialized operational structure. Thus in developing the ideas contained in this submission, the major benefit to Australia would be a versatile structure more capable of providing the surveillance and enforcement functions of the various organizations.

### **CO-ORDINATION**

#### **Primary Function**

The initial primary function of an Australian Coastguard should be to co-ordinate the various marine activities of the many Australian agencies that are currently involved in maritime activities such as sea search and rescue, coastwatch, drugs and aliens interception, fishery patrols, ship inspections and anti pollution roles.

The emphasis should be on Australia's needs as a Nation and most efficient model to meet those needs. It will also have the added benefit of providing another avenue for the employment of mariners.

A concept that could be considered is, an organization such as the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) be expanded to include the current activities of AMSA, Coastwatch, AusSar including operational aspects. It should be adequately resourced and be a multi-mission, maritime service comprised of a personnel complement of permanent active duty, civilian and volunteer members, and have four operating goals covering:

- Safety

- Protection of Natural Resources
- Mobility, and
- Maritime Security

**Services to be provided should include:**

- Conducting search and rescue operations in all areas of Australia's navigable waterways, from the lakes and rivers to the high seas.
- Promoting marine safety through regulatory, inspection, and education roles.
- Implementing the Port State Control program, supporting an international effort to bring substandard ships into compliance with applicable international standards.
- Providing a recreational boating safety program that is focused on minimising the loss of life and property and damage to the environment.
- Co-ordinate the various volunteer groups who contribute to boating safety efforts thereby creating a volunteer reserve list. Appropriate training for the volunteer groups would need to be developed.
- Contribute to the national well being by shielding Australia's ecologically rich and sensitive marine environment.
- Carry out fisheries patrols implementing the fisheries law enforcement program protecting the commercial and recreational fishing industry and preventing border incursions by foreign fishing vessels entering Australian waters.
- Enforce regulations to prevent the intentional or systemic dumping of plastics, sewage and other wastes at sea.
- Regulate the shipping industry to prevent or minimise the environmental damage from inadvertent spills of oil, chemicals and other noxious substances.
- Maintain the nation-wide, aids-to-navigation system, including the buoys, fixed markers and lighthouses.
- Provide or regulate vessel traffic services to reduce the risk of collision in harbours, waterways and coastal approaches.
- At-sea enforcement of drug interdiction and illegal alien interdiction.

**Economies of scale**

The main advantages of this concept is that one agency would provide the maritime transport requirements covering sea search and rescue, pollution combat role, fisheries protection, customs, illegal entrants and anti-drug patrols.

This is in direct contrast to the current Australian approach where all of the above operate under different agencies all utilising different types of vessels with differing shore back-up systems.

The cost savings and improved efficiency that would be achievable with the one agency approach would be significant not only from the marine transportation aspect but from shore back-up and maintenance requirements.

### **Continuity**

To ensure continuity of service the Coastguard should be fully empowered to carry out its role and have the necessary legislative support and resources.

In times of conflict, crisis and emergencies it could provide support to the Royal Australian Navy.

In the short term transition phase (one to two years) the role would be co-ordination of marine resources, however in the longer term (five to ten years) the possibility and feasibility of agency amalgamation should be investigated and a suitable model developed.

## **IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATION**

The Australian Company of Master Mariners proposes that the implementation of a Coastguard Service be evolutionary, according to the perception that the coast guard service would initially (and finally) have two principal roles. We propose that these two roles are:-

- coordination of the many maritime representative, policing and patrol functions which are extant within our maritime territories;
- provision of a single agency operational management structure to service those roles.

We envisage that the Coastguard would initially be formed through:-

- the expansion of AMSA's present portfolio of responsibilities to include the coordination of all non-defence maritime patrol functions, including aerial patrols;
- AMSA being renamed appropriate to this expanded role;
- The acquisition of vessels able to support maritime patrol functions within
  - Australia's area of responsibility
  - Economic Development Zone
  - Territorial seas
  - Inshore waters
- The establishment of clear policy establishing the coastguard-client status of the agencies presently charged with policing & monitoring functions (i.e. Customs, EPA/CALM, Immigration, etc.).

Since the premier function of the embryonic service would be coordination, we would anticipate that the provision of maritime patrol platforms could be sourced from the merchant navy under provisions of medium to long-term charters, in the manner of the Coastwatch operation.

We also propose that all maritime patrol assets currently held by individual agencies be transferred into the control and management of the Coastguard service as soon as that organisation's operational infrastructure is consolidated.

Since we do not anticipate that the new service will be able to immediately accept the mandate of enforcing all of Australia's maritime and border law, the Company anticipates that agencies presently charged with this function will continue in their roles utilizing Coastguard patrol assets.

We observe that it is impractical to consider that the present roles of the specialist personnel of separate agencies could be transferred to the personnel of a single agency in a short period of time.

Likewise, we think it unlikely that retraining of present personnel of the proposed client-agencies for secondment (or transfer) to the new Coastguard is practical in the short to medium term. Multi-skilling of coastguard personnel i.e. one person able to

handle all matters of maritime policing and patrol (Customs, Quarantine, Immigration, EPA, SAR, etc.) will eventually be required for the full function of the proposed service to be realized.

We believe therefore that the Coastguard should be charged initially with patrol functions, only to the extent that they provide a single, coordinated asset platform for the other agencies to operate from.

The Company proposes that this function will best be served by acquiring and staffing patrol mother-ships, dedicated to particular areas offshore, and able to support the patrol requirements of client-agencies (including the logistical requirements of the Navy). Such ships would be equipped to provide helicopter support, fast patrol daughter-boats, and hotel-services for client-personnel, survivors, and detainees.

This broad view of an agency which will evolve over time, has much to recommend it. The advantages of single-agency coordination and specialist service provision in the maritime field are inescapable, and have been repeatedly demonstrated by Coastguard Services in many nations.



**SUPPORT:**

Under the heading of support we shall consider the support that would be available to an Australian Coastguard and the support they may be given by such an instrumentality.

Support would be obtained internationally by the Coastguard being a member of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), and the Coastguard would continue to contribute to the IMO, and other International Maritime bodies, in the same manner, or perhaps to a greater extent, as AMSA currently contributes.

Industry support would be gained through belonging to, or actively liaising with, such organisations as:

- Australian Institute of Petroleum
- Minerals Council of Australia
- Company of Master Mariners of Australia
- Australian Shipowners' Association
- Australian Chamber of Shipping
- RSPCA
- Environmental Groups
- Other organisations that operate in the Maritime Industry.
- Royal Australian Navy
- Royal Australian Air Force

The above list is fairly self-explanatory; such groups cover the export/import of various cargoes to and from Australia. Environmental protection e.g. preventing, controlling, investigating oil spills, would be a major task of a Coastguard, as also would some jurisdiction in the export of live animals.

Support would be given to such organisations as:

- Australian Customs
- Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
- Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service
- Australian Fisheries Management Association
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority
- Environment Australia
- Royal Australian Navy
- Royal Australian Air Force
- Australian Army
- Various Police Forces, State and Federal
- Volunteer Rescue Maritime Services
- Port Authorities
- State and Local Government
- Australian manufacturing industry, involved in the shipping arena
- Assisting shipping in Australian waters in circumstances other than Search and Rescue (SAR is covered elsewhere in this submission.)
- Educational Authorities

In the long term, in the interest of efficiency and economic management, many of the functions currently under the control of some of the above organisations could be delegated to a dedicated Coastguard, whilst in other areas the functions could be greatly enhanced.

## **COASTGUARD FUNDING**

It is not possible to give an in depth assessment of funding until a firm management and operational model has been decided.

In general terms, the majority of the Coastguard budget is expected to comprise of components that would be assumed from existing agencies and authorities. By providing a centralised co-ordinating organisation, and reducing duplication, it is expected that the Coastguard would benefit from considerable cost saving at both a Federal and State level.

Examples of this are:

- The projected new National Surveillance Centre, to be provided as part of the Government Coastwatch review, could well be integrated with the existing AMSA AUSSAR centre in Canberra.
- The Great Barrier Reef Ship Reporting system (REEFREP) is at present administered jointly by AMSA and Queensland Department of Transport.

A possible seed organisation is expected to be the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. Elements of Australian Customs, Immigration, Fisheries, and the Royal Australian Navy may also be included.

- AMSA is largely self funded government Agency. Funding is a combination of Maritime levies and fees and charges for services provided.
- Customs has an accrual based budget overseen by the Department of Finance.

The Royal Australian Navy provides considerable platform support to Australian Fisheries (AFMA) and the Department of Immigration, especially in northern waters. The RAN receives funding from these organisations for services provided.

It can be seen that considerable financial cross-pollination already exists between projected components of an Australian Coastguard. As noted earlier, funding would consist of drawing together these different components into one organisation.

FREMANTLE WA 23 JUNE 2000.

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