

'K' Salvage Co. (Aust) Pty. Ltd.

Salvage Consultant : P & I Correspondent : Special Casualty Representative

Maritime Salvage in Australian Waters.
Transport and Regional Services Committee,
House of Representatives,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600.

Secretary: *J. Lubree*

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORT AND
REGIONAL SERVICES

General Introduction.

- 1) I wish to present the following submission to the Committee both as a concerned citizen and a Salvage Expert with many years experience in all facets of Marine Salvage, both in Australia and internationally.
- 2) I must stress that this submission is entirely my own doing, and that I have no connection, either written or verbal with any Salvage Contractors who may become involved in a salvage situation in Australian waters.
- 3) I have attached a C.V. to this submission that clearly states that in past salvage situations my services have been retained by Salvage Contractors, Shipowners, Hull and Machinery Underwriters, Cargo Underwriters and Protection and Indemnity Clubs. This is why I have stated above that I have been involved in all facets of the salvage industry.
- 4) Due partly to the relatively small number of ships plying the Australian Coast and to the fact that we are blessed with comparatively benign weather conditions, major salvage incidents are few and far between in this geographical location.
- 5) However accidents do happen and I am called on a regular basis to attend vessels, which are both well maintained and properly manned, that still manage to find themselves in a salvage situation. Accidents can be guarded against but never entirely prevented, notwithstanding how many new rules and regulations are promulgated by various authorities.
- 6) With this in mind, it is essential to the economic and environmental well being of our Nation, that a high level of salvage expertise and equipment be maintained.

- 7) Marine casualties will happen, be it by operational error, equipment failure or in our modern world by an act of terrorism. Vital harbours and shipping channels may be blocked, port facilities destroyed and massive damage to the environment may occur.
- 8) Mr. John Anderson's recent announcement that the Federal Government has ordered a review of Maritime Security in Australia must address the matter of marine salvage capability.
- 9) When a marine casualty occurs it is no use waiting for days or even weeks, before experienced men and vital salvage equipment can be mobilised from overseas, we must maintain this capability right here in Australia. The Royal Australian Navy has no salvage capability to handle a major marine casualty, nor have the Water Police or any other Government Agencies.
- 10) Only some commercial operators in Australia maintain limited salvage expertise and equipment. These operators (or others willing to get involved) must be encouraged not only to maintain this capability, but also to invest in new and more suitable equipment for the purpose of marine salvage in the future.
- 11) I have read the Discussion Paper that has been issued by the committee secretariat and I feel that a too narrow definition of 'salvage' is being promoted. It is all very well to talk of tugs being available to assist in a salvage situation, however unless tugs can be used to prevent a situation from occurring (the 'first aid' solution), once the vessel has exploded, run aground or sunk, tugs are of little use without salvage specialists and their equipment.

Tugs in Salvage Operations.

- 12) For a number of years I have sailed on fully equipped Salvage Tugs that have been maintained on 'salvage station' in various parts of the world. Because this practice is no longer economically viable (far less number of trading vessels and generally more reliable ships trading), we see countries

... such as the United Kingdom, maintaining ETV's (Emergency Towing Vessels) on permanent stand-by at great expense to the Taxpayer.

- 13) Because of the lack of shipping in Australia and the vastness of our coastline, such ETV's would not be feasible in Australia. The only way that such practice could be made feasible, would be for such vessels to double up as a Coastguard Service, similar to the United States. Unfortunately I do not think that either myself or any members of the Committee will live long enough to see such a development.
- 14) In the discussion paper it is mentioned that "*off shore oil supply vessels or fishing boats*" may be used in a salvage situation. In past incidents such as the **Kirki** off Western Australia, and the **Maersk Tacoma** in Bass Strait, it was extremely lucky that a rig-supply vessel was on hand to attend the Casualty. In most cases these types of vessels are firmly bound by their contracts, and are not available to attend marine casualties. As for fishing vessels, they are of very limited use in a salvage situation given their size and power, and would only be suitable for assisting vessels of a similar size that required towing services.
- 15) When discussing these types of vessels (i.e., oil rig supply boats), it must be remembered that their primary purpose is related to oil field operations. Such vessels are not usually equipped with sufficient towing gear to make an emergency towing connection to a vessel in distress, and few if any, carry salvage equipment that may be required in such a scenario.
- 16) At present we have a limited number of larger hybrid harbour/salvage tugs based at various ports throughout Australia. These vessels are nowhere near the perfect solution, being of limited size, power and sea-keeping quality, however they are certainly better than nothing, when tug assistance is required in an emergency.
- 17) On the other hand in New Zealand and to a growing extent in this country, we are see the phasing out of the larger harbour tugs, with small powerful towing vessels, that are extremely efficient for harbour towage, but absolutely useless for anything but smooth water operations.

- 18) To the best of my knowledge in recent years, there has only been the one attempt by a commercial firm to introduce a large purpose built salvage tug in the area. This vessel was based in Papua New Guinea, however I believe that due to the cost of maintaining such a vessel, was the reason for her eventual demise.

Conclusions.

- 19) I would ask the Committee to imagine the first situation where a major disaster has occurred, say through the action of terrorists.
A vessel has been sabotaged, suffers an explosion and is sinking in a vital entrance to one of our major ports. Unless immediate skilled salvage assistance can be obtained, the port will be blocked creating an economic and logistical nightmare.
- 20) Due to lack of commitment through all levels of Government, there are no skilled salvors or equipment in Australia to handle the situation. Urgent assistance must be called in from overseas
By the time help arrives, the time of applying 'first aid' has passed and the Salvors spend months removing the wreck and re-opening the port.
- 21) A second scenario, a loaded oil tanker is broken down in the vicinity of the Great Barrier Reef, a severe tropical cyclone is approaching. Once again the only tugs available to go to her assistance are totally unsuited to operate outside harbour limits.
There are oil rig supply boats working out of Darwin, however they are fully occupied in placing a new drilling rig on location and will not be available for several days.
- 22) The ship is blown ashore in the Barrier Reef Marine Park, spewing 40,000 tons of heavy fuel, ruining the tourist industry for some years and creating massive environmental damage to the sensitive ecology.
- 23) Australia MUST have a Marine Salvage Capability, both in suitable towing vessels stationed at strategic locations around our coastline and a nucleus of skilled salvage personnel and equipment.

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24) As far as I can ascertain there are only two options available to maintain this protection.

One is for all levels of Government to agree to set up and fund a fleet of ETV's. with the necessary personnel and equipment. If this option were adopted, a commercial company well versed in the world of marine salvage would still be required to operate them.

The other is to come to some form of financial agreement with a Professional Salvor to maintain a salvage presence, in vessels, men and equipment to fulfil this vital role.

25) There are now three major players in the Australian Towage Industry. If it is decided to proceed with option two above, then whoever is chosen should have the capability of not only supplying the salvage tug to deal with the emergency, but also have sufficient backup with a stand-by tug to take over her harbour duties, therefore not compromising the commercial operation of the particular port from where the salvage tug is sourced.

26) I reside in a bush fire prone area. My house and contents are insured and I have spent an amount of time and money ensuring that I have sufficient resources on hand to protect my property should the unforeseen occur.

27) Surely it is common sense to protect our home and contents, namely the coastal environment and commercial world in which we all live. Without assistance the Marine Salvage Capability of this Nation will surely disappear and the people of Australia will be counting the cost for years to come.

Yours Faithfully,

Captain Dick Jolly.