

# Father Bill to take it easy

BY JORDAN CRICK

**AWARD-WINNING** Cleveland reverend Bill Pearson has retired after a 62 year career working with sailors.

Known simply as Father Bill, the Cleveland resident has decided to swallow the anchor at 84.

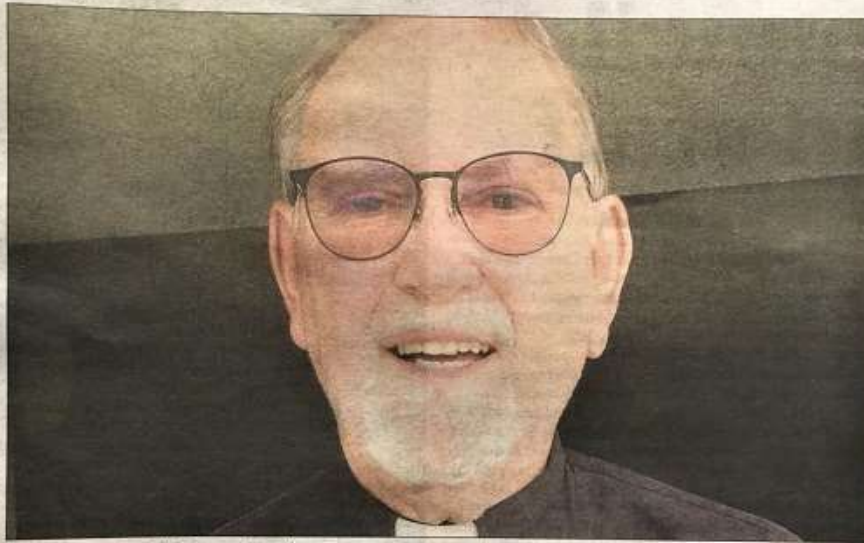
He began his Mission to Seafarers as a chaplain in Townsville in 1959, after being ordained as a deacon.

He later served as chaplain in the Australian Navy, and was rector at four Queensland parishes between 1962 and 1996.

After being appointed to the Nundah parish in the 70s, he worked as a chaplain with HMAS Moreton.

Towards the end of his career he was recalled to the Mission to Seafarers as a senior chaplain and head of the Mission to Seafarers Brisbane, having retired as a Navy chaplain in 2006 after almost three decades.

Father Pearson said it was difficult to walk away but joked he had to make the call because there was a chance he could have fallen overboard while ship visiting.



**STALWART:** Father Bill Pearson is well known among seafarers after a 62 year career working with sailors.

"I loved the work I did with seafarers," he said. "I had to provide facilities for them, visit them on board ships to find out their needs, and visit any in hospital or in jail."

He thanked his wife Lorna

for her support throughout his career, saying she had never complained about the long hours they had spent apart because of his work.

"I heard at a wedding reception this saying, 'behind

every successful man is an absolutely amazed mother-in-law'," Fr Pearson said.

"Just one example of this was in our Townsville days," he said. "While I was ship visiting, Lorna kept the mis-

sion doors open, serving the crews that visited."

Father Pearson said the greatest shock during his career was containerisation.

When he began his ministry, items were loaded by

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hand from trucks parked on the wharf in a process that would take two or three weeks.

"But now they are loaded directly with containers that are packed with general cargo in the warehouse," Fr Pearson said.

"This means that loading a general cargo ship can now take only a few hours instead of weeks."

Father Pearson's finest achievements were receiving the Reserve Force Decoration, being made an honorary member of The Company of Master Mariners of Australia, and receiving the Chaplain Emeritus title from Archbishop of Brisbane Philip Aspinall.