



# BRISBANE MISSION MATTERS

**WINTER 2022**



## **President's Address**

Welcome to the Winter edition of our e-newsletter.

I am sure you will agree that the disruption of the past two years has been front and centre in most people's lives. A degree of that uncertainty still exists and is likely to continue into the foreseeable future. That said, the "green shoots" of returning to a sense of normality have certainly sprung and we now find that life for the Brisbane Seafarers Centre – and ultimately our seafarers – is returning to normal at an ever-quickenning pace.

I am also pleased to report that since our last newsletter there has been a significant turnaround for the life of our seafarers following the general easing of restrictions that had been imposed globally. This newsletter explores the most recent edition of the Seafarers Happiness Index report and how the situation is improving. This easing of restrictions has allowed seafarers greater access to the various seafarers' welfare centres dotting Australia's coastline, has seen a return to normal lengths for a seafarer's contract and has ultimately removed many of the repatriation hurdles that have plagued their lives in recent years. This upswing has also instilled a more optimistic outlook for our staff and volunteers who are looking forward to caring for and interacting with seafarers once again.

Our Winter e-newsletter will hopefully reflect this sense of optimism for seafarers' welfare in conjunction with highlighting the range of activities that continue to demonstrate the value that Mission to Seafarers Brisbane contributes to the local maritime industry and our broader supportive communities.

Enjoy!

*Ross Nicholls*

**Capt. Ross Nicholls**  
**President**

# Open for Business

Life at the Brisbane Seafarers Centre is rapidly returning to pre-COVID operations and thankfully, the removal of shore leave restrictions has allowed for an increasing number of seafarers to return to the centre.

A great deal of thanks goes out to the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) who have championed the requirements of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006 which requires shore leave access to be provided as a critical component of a seafarer's overall wellbeing. Heather and her now diminished team, which includes Wil of Stella Maris, are only just coping with the demands of these increased visits. Fortunately, to have seafarers return to the centre, to listen to their stories and assist them with a range of services they have been denied over the past two years, has brought great joy to Heather and the small number of remaining volunteers. Ultimately, this is what it's all about!



*Seafarers from MV Aquitaurus*

The Brisbane Seafarers Centre is now open Monday to Friday from 1000-1800.

The centre can open at other mutually agreeable times but by prior arrangement only.

For further information or clarification on opening hours and activities, please contact the Brisbane Seafarers Centre during opening hours on 07 3895 1181 or via email on [tfa@mtsbrisbane.org.au](mailto:tfa@mtsbrisbane.org.au)

# Caring for Seafarers and their Families

In late April, a Ukrainian seafarer was plucked off the deck of his ship by a helicopter after suffering a major heart attack. The chances of surviving such a rapid onset illness were far greater given this ship's proximity to the Australian coast. When seafarers are "medevaced" (medically evacuated) off a ship, they usually have few to no personal effects accompanying them and generally no phone. They subsequently find themselves in a foreign hospital surrounded by an intensive care team fighting to save their life. On certain occasions, they are not even aware of what has happened to them.

Fortunately, seafarer welfare services such as Mission to Seafarers are generally advised of these medevacs and can respond by attending hospitals, establishing a connection with the seafarer's family and providing support by way of clothing, toiletries, a phone and a smiling face and listening ear.

This is the exact situation Anatoilii from Ukraine faced earlier this year. This significant life event coupled with the knowledge that his family had been displaced by the Russian invasion of his homeland was a cause for significant stress. It was reassuring for Anatoilii and his family to know that he was safe, cared for and able to communicate with his loved ones, thanks to the wonderful work of our ship visitor Peter Jones alongside Heather and volunteers Jenni and Joey.



*Peter Jones and Anatoilii*

In an earlier situation, in 2015, the captain of the 7,500 TEU container ship *Hanjin Miami* was lost at sea off the southwest coast of India. An extensive search by the team aboard the *Hanjin Miami* and other nearby commercial ships failed to locate the captain after three days of coordinated and thorough search efforts.

The captain's wife visited Australia on holidays during July 2022. Recognising the significant network of seafarer welfare centres around Australia and the care they are constantly providing to seafarers, the captain's wife sought to have a personal service at Mission to Seafarers Brisbane to finally bring closure for herself and her family. Heather coordinated with our wonderful Chaplain, Revd. Stephen Briggs, to provide an appropriate service to recognise her husband's contribution to seafarers and this tragic loss for his family.



*Revd. Stephen, captain's wife and friend*



## Kiribati Seafarers – Where are they now?



*Kiribati national flag*

During mid 2021 we became aware of 250 I-Kiribati seafarers stranded around the world, having been removed from their ships and lodged in hostels and hotels in Australia, Fiji, South Korea, Indonesia and Germany. This displacement was caused by the complexity of repatriating these gentle Pacific Islanders as their home country had prevented their return for fear of COVID transmission. You may recall at the time we were actively engaging with state and national authorities along with the Kiribati Consul General to create a safe and swift pathway for their return home.

Most of these seafarers have since returned to Kiribati, though confronted with the possibility of never being able to work aboard ships again. The remaining seafarers who were stranded here in Brisbane have continued to live and work in Australia under appropriate visa arrangements. The prospect of returning home and never working aboard a ship again was an option that many couldn't face.

Today, nearly 30 I-Kiribati ex-seafarers are living and working within fruit picking communities in South Australia and in labouring roles here in Queensland. The demand for labour is high and their earning capacity here is greater than their previous shipboard roles. While some of them have been away from their family and friends for nearly three years, the necessity of working and earning a reasonable income for their families has outweighed their roles as a father or brother. They are all set to return soon as their visas expire in the coming months.



*The I-Kiribati boys at the fruit picking homestead in SA*

# Seafarers Happiness Index

The Seafarers Happiness Index was founded by Mission to Seafarers in 2015. The index is designed to monitor and benchmark seafarer satisfaction levels by asking 10 key questions around issues such as mental health and wellbeing, working life and family contact. The results serve as an important barometer of seafarer satisfaction with life at sea.

The survey is distributed to global seafarers to provide indicators of key issues around the happiness of seafarers, both on shore and aboard. The results are then shared with industry and key decision makers.

Encouragingly, the survey for the last quarter has seen a significant improvement in the outlook for seafarers. The latest quarter results indicated a happiness score of 7.1 out of 10 which was a significant upswing from 5.85 out of 10 in the previous quarter. While a pleasing change in the index, it highlights how the impacts of global events – a pandemic and a war – have on this truly international workforce. The results are more positive but there are long-term trends indicating a life at sea is a declining career of choice.

Together we can make sure that seafarers voices are heard, and that the shipping industry can make positive changes. Let's make life at sea better.

Check out the website to monitor the index and read the latest report to find out the reasons for this uptick in happiness.

[Seafarers Happiness Index](#) | [Make Seafaring Better](#) | [Take the Survey \(happyatsea.org\)](#)



*Seafarers from MV Lihir Chief*

## Our Female Seafarers

Our female seafarers make up less than 2% of the total seagoing workforce. This is not surprising, given the traditional structure within the cultures of the key source countries of today's seafarers. But globally, traditional cultures and roles are being challenged as gender bias is slowly being addressed and more women are considering opportunities to work in the maritime industry.

Several years ago, at the Brisbane Seafarers Centre, we established a "women's department" which contained a range of free contemporary clothing and fashion accessories to give our female seafarers access to something more feminine than PPE. This offering, coupled with a range of health, beauty and hygiene products, have provided a small opportunity for them to feel special while working within this male-dominated working environment.

Our endeavours will continue with this focus on female seafarers, and we are hoping to extend our offerings for them into the future. Stay tuned.



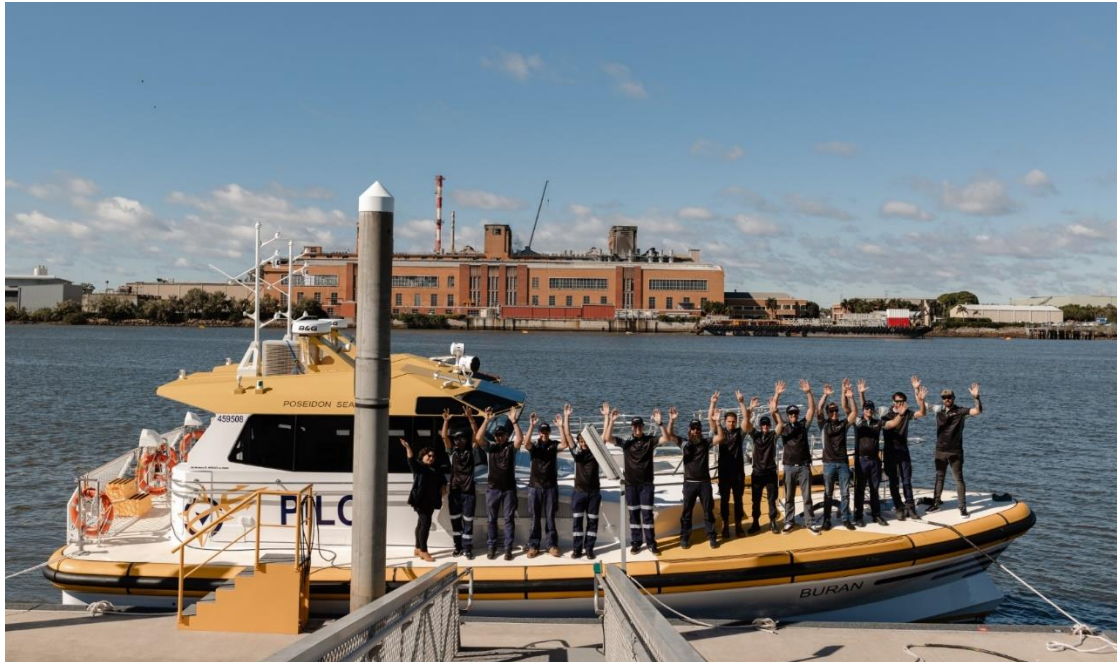
*Margaret (Volunteer), Anjila (Assistant Engineer) and Heather*

## Poseidon Sea Pilots – Boat Naming Ceremony

During July, Poseidon Sea Pilots officially named their new pilot vessels – *Timbin* and *Buran* – at their on-water base at Pinkenba. The naming ceremony coincided with NAIDOC week and involved a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony by Elders and new employees of the Quandamooka. It was a wonderful opportunity to be a part of the naming ceremony and connect with this new local organisation.



Maintaining a strong working relationship with our local pilot company is vital for us to have alternative opportunities to connect with seafarers. Marine pilots are a wonderful set of additional eyes and ears to monitor a seafarer's welfare and potential issues onboard, either prior to the arrival of or on departing ships. Recently, a pilot's observations on a ship arriving into Brisbane allowed us to send a ship visitor onboard to arrange support services for those seafarers in need.



*Pilot launch crew aboard Buran*



*Quandamooka Elders conducting a Smoking Ceremony*



## Sea Sunday

Sea Sunday was celebrated this year at the Anglican Parish of Grovely. Not only is this Parish incredibly supportive of our Mission, but it is also the home of one of our wonderful Chaplain, Revd. Stephen Briggs.

Sea Sunday takes place on the second Sunday of July each year. It's an opportunity for us to reflect on the contribution of the seafarer and pray that their sacrifices are rewarded through the ongoing love and support by the many welfare organisations and their staff. If you would like us to celebrate Sea Sunday in your Parish next year, please contact us to discuss the opportunity.



*Marcia, Marnie, Revd. Stephen and Heather at All Saints*

## Rebuilding our Team

The Mission to Seafarers Brisbane, like many charities, has been subject to significant disruption of its activities. These activities are underpinned by our Centre Supervisor, management committee and our volunteers. While we are not unique, this loss of community engagement is being felt by all seafarer welfare providers and charities in general, both within Australia and internationally. This has been recognised by our state and federal governments and efforts are now underway to understand this drain of community engagement and to ultimately assist in generating a new sense of enthusiasm in supporting local charities.

While we have been fortunate during the past 18 months to operate effectively in caretaker mode, the loss of volunteers to power our organisation forward is now having a significant impact on our ability to reopen and to provide the same level of service to seafarers. We are more urgently needing our maritime industry and broader communities to engage and provide the support necessary to rebuild and strengthen our future in providing welfare support to these key international workers.

***Do you have skills, experiences or qualifications that would complement those necessary to operate on a management committee or Board that sits only once every two months?***

***Do you have skills, experiences and some time to assist us with routine voluntary activities at the seafarers' centre?***

If you, or someone you know, has a charitable nature and a small amount of time and interest in the maritime industry or in providing some support of less fortunate people, we would love to hear from you.

Have you heard of these charity quotes?

*"The pay is poor, but the rewards are priceless!" (Ross 2022)*

*"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:32-36)*

## **Events for Spring**

### **Brisbane Open House (BOH) – Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August**

BOH has resurfaced after two years of being on hold awaiting a healthier community. This year, BOH is operating as a scaled back version to minimise the number of people out in the community. The Brisbane Seafarers Centre is not able to participate, however the Port of Brisbane and Patrick Terminal tower will be open from 0900-1400 on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2022.

So please spread the word and visit these two interesting locations within the port and make sure you drop in and say "Hi" to us at the Patrick Terminal tower BBQ at the base of the tower. All proceeds from this Patrick Terminal operated BBQ will go to seafarers' welfare.

A big thank you to Matt Hollamby and his team at Patrick Terminals for this support.



*This is the tower so come and see the view!*

# Annual Seafarers Day Service – Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September

The 84<sup>th</sup> Annual Seafarers service and wreath laying is being held at St. John's Cathedral in Ann Street on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September at 1130.

The Commemoration Service and Wreath Laying Ceremony held at the Cathedral recalls the endeavors, achievements and sacrifices of the men and women of the Royal Australian Navy and the Merchant Navy, who paid the supreme sacrifice. We also recognise this year the Company of Master Mariners, Queensland Branch.

Members of the broader maritime community, followers, and supporters of the Mission to Seafarers and Stella Maris are all welcome and encouraged to attend this service.



*Kiribati seafarers attending the 2021 service*



# Christmas Bag Appeal

Our Christmas Bag appeal is now under way. As we enter the early stages of the festive season (it does take us months to put this together...) we are actively seeking Christmas related items to pack the hundreds of bags that we deliver to ships leading up to Christmas. Donatable items could include Christmas cards, with a prewritten message, toiletries, small gifts or souvenirs or small Christmas decorations to brighten up a cabin or lounge area.

We are aiming to bring some hope and joy to their lives over Christmas which can be an incredibly lonely time of year for a seafarer.

So please assist us if you are able and send us an email to let us know if you can help.

## Donors & Supporters

It never goes without saying that we are truly grateful for the many selfless donors and supporters who give to our cause. Irrespective of the size of donation or heartfelt gifts or goods we receive, the Brisbane Seafarers Centre directs these receipts to towards the seafarers and activities and events that benefit the seafarers. As a reminder, all donations of \$2 or more are fully tax deductible.

So, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your generosity, care and compassion for Mission to Seafarers Brisbane.

## Summary

The easing of restrictions on seafarer movements and increase of activities at the Brisbane Seafarers Centre is creating an upswing in optimism for our seafarers, staff and volunteers. We have continued to provide welfare and related support services to seafarers during this prolonged period of what has felt like lock down. It's now time to rebuild. The support from our local maritime industry is needed to assist us with re-energising the activity and creating an obstruction-free pathway to ensure seafarers can access shore leave.

It's been a pleasure bringing this e-newsletter to your inbox. We hope you find the contents enjoyable and informative, and we look forward to your continued support and engagement down at the Brisbane Seafarers Centre.

You can find us on Facebook, WhatsApp, on our website at [www.mtsbrisbane.org.au](http://www.mtsbrisbane.org.au) or at 2 Seafarers Street Port of Brisbane where the coffee, tea and care are always free 😊

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*Smooth sailing*