



3 SHORT BLASTS

Just when you thought we were making headway...

THE OFFICIAL BULLETIN OF THE AMOU WESTERN AREA BRANCH

Bumper Attendance.

By Capt. Dan Pearson, Secretary AMOU Western Area.

The May end of month meeting held at the Flying Angel club in Fremantle was one of the best-attended meetings in recent memory. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who made the effort to attend, with one member driving from Geraldton to be there. A total of 25 members were present and counting apologies the number would of have been closer to 30.



Photo taken a couple of minutes prior to the start of the May meeting.

At the meeting we had a guest speaker, Mr Geoff Henrickson from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure to give a quick overview of the proposed “Tinny to Tanker (T2T)” legislation and how that was going to effect members who held a state issued certificate. Geoff was able to give an excellent presentation on this issue and some other changes that were occurring at a state level. The meeting was paused to allow Geoff to give his presentation and then field questions from those present as to how this was going to effect their future certification and advancement of qualifications.

Also present at the meeting was Mike Fleming, Director of the AMOU Port Service Division. Mike was in Western Australia to continue the AMOU campaign for the South West Ports EBA. At the meeting he gave those in attendance an overview of the current negotiations and the plans to finalise these negotiations. Of particular interest was the story of the problems he had encountered with Bunbury that you may have read of in the press.

As you may be aware, this months meeting also incorporates the Annual General Meeting. By now you should of have received a copy of the AMOU financial statement in the mail and this is the main topic of the AGM. Many of you will be aware at last years WA AGM our membership had a lot to say about the financial accounts, and even refused to endorse the accounts. This certainly made Sydney take notice.

In an effort to have the account statement explained to the meeting this year, the WA Branch executive attempted to have the Federal President Wayne Moore attend the AGM in Fremantle this year. We even offered to donate frequent flyer points for a plane fare, but unfortunately Wayne was unable to attend due to serious illness in his family. So, as a suitable substitute, we managed to get Fred Ross to agree to attend.

Fred will not only be able to discuss the current financial accounts, he will also give the meeting an overview of the Offshore Oil & Gas EBA negotiations and the direction in which this is heading.

In addition Fred has sent the following letter...

Dear Members,

Just a short note to let you know that the EBA negotiations which have been delayed or run out of steam are about to kick off again.

I don't want to go into details but one of the real difficulties is the Unions wishing to negotiate separately.

If we can live together on board why cant we negotiate together?

On the 22nd June the AMOU and AIMPE will meet with the Employers collectively.

The MUA because of leave arrangements and other commitments are unavailable.

Because of this the meeting will not go into any fine detail but a broad discussion.

On the 30th June I will attend the Special Meeting in Fremantle and discuss where we should go.

As soon as possible after that meeting I will assemble your Works Council and seek negotiating parameters.

From what I have said nobody should draw an inference that I am critical of anyone but I am disappointed with the process.

Regular bulletins will now be sent out.

Thanks for your patience.

Regards

*Fred Ross
Director Offshore Division*

We all look forward to seeing you at this months meeting. Meeting is held at the Flying Angel Club, 76 Queen Victoria St, Fremantle. Meeting starts at 1000 sharp.

Foreign Officer Muster.

By Capt. Dan Pearson, Secretary AMOU Western Area.

Late last month, the vessels Lewek Swift and Lewek Emerald visited the port of Fremantle. As you will be aware, the WA Branch makes an effort to visit offshore vessels as it is sometimes the only opportunity that we get to see our members aboard these vessels.

As is the usual custom, once aboard the Lewek Swift I head to the wheelhouse to find the Master and say hello. You could probably imagine my surprise when I walked onto the bridge and introduced myself to the Master who promptly told me that I had nothing to do with them, as both he and the Chief Officer were poms.

I found that the 2nd Mate was Australian and after having a chat to him, learnt that the situation was the same on another Lewek vessel that is manned by Total Marine. With the Lewek Emerald due in the next day, I made plans to drop by and see if the arrangement was the same.



Lewek Emerald and Lewek Swift alongside Victoria Quay in Fremantle.

The following day both Carl & Myself boarded the Lewek Emerald and again found that the manning consisted of a foreign Master and Chief Officer with an Australian 2nd Mate. We asked the 2nd Mate about the situation and why he had not called us. He explained that the situation had been going on for almost as long as the vessels had been on the coast and had been led to believe that the arrangement was endorsed by the AMOU.

I can emphatically state that *the Western Area Branch of the AMOU does not endorse the use of foreign officers aboard vessels that are working on the Australian coast.*

Having stated this, there are occasions where the employment of foreign officers will be tolerated by the Branch. This can only occur when the employer can demonstrate the following;

1. That there are no suitably qualified deck officers on the company's book.
2. That the company has demonstrated that they have exhausted all means of recruiting suitably qualified personnel. This can include advertising in the media and having sent an employment alert through the AMOU WA Branch email system.
3. And, that the company contact the Branch and discuss the employment arrangements of the proposed foreign officer including the duration that they will be onboard and that they are paid comparable rates and conditions.

We recognise that in "boom" times that the availability of suitably qualified Australian deck officers is not sufficient to satisfy demand, but this translates to there being enough jobs available for all Australians when times are lean.

As many of you will be aware, in recent times the demand for DP qualified personnel has skyrocketed. Unfortunately the certification and training of Australians for this qualification did not meet the current demand. This situation is being addressed but the lag in the training has caused the loss of berths to foreigners at present.

This is why point 3 listed above is very important. When a company contacts us to advise that they need to employ a foreign officer, we attempt to negotiate that an Australian be put onboard in the position to be filled and that the foreign officer be employed as a supernumery to "train" the Australian and allow him to gain the valuable desk time and experience.

It must be noted that the 2006 OOG EBA does not have a provision for this "DP trainee" and that the negotiation to get this position is done by the staff of the Branch in a good faith arrangement with the company. Provisions for training have been tabled in the negotiations of the 2009 agreement.

Now to the point of the title of this article. Unfortunately not all operators are complying with the points that I have set out above. We do attempt to obtain the employment lists from the operators but, as you may know from trying to deal with the payroll department of these organizations, this can take a while. To allow us to make an assessment of the current situation and to follow up quickly on the matter of foreigners, I would like to ask that if you are sailing with a foreign officer to drop the branch an email to notify us.

Before the barrage of emails hit my inbox, I would like to remind our members that we live in a multicultural nation. Therefore I will define what we consider, without prejudice, as a foreign officer.

1. That the person was not born in nor holds citizenship for Australia or New Zealand.
2. That the person is not a resident or is not in the process of applying for residency in Australia.
3. That the person is employed under the provisions of a 457 (or similar) work visa.

In the coming days, a letter will be sent to all employers asking for the status of the number of foreign officers employed within their fleet. With your feedback on this matter, we will hopefully be able to get a very accurate picture of the situation and be able to police this matter more effectively.

Please send any correspondence to sec@amouwa.com . If you have any views on the matter that you would like to be heard, then feel free to write an article or letter for publishing in 3 short blasts.

WOODSIDE CONTINUES TO MAKE GOOD PROGRESS AT PLUTO

WOODSIDE has reported that the Pluto LNG Project had reached 55 per cent construction completion at the end of the previous quarter.

The company said that during the quarter, pipelay operations commenced and the main cryogenic heat exchangers for the LNG plant sailed away from Germany for Dampier.

In addition to flowline pipe installation, the subsea team also installed six flowbases for the project's production wells.

At the onshore site, preparation earthworks were completed in the main process areas and civil works progressed with the pouring of some 50,000 cubic metres of structural concrete.

Woodside said 76 modules and supporting structures for the LNG train (out of a total 263) had now arrived from Thailand and are being installed on site.

Meanwhile, the 480-bed expansion of the Gap Rodge Accommodation Village in Karratha started during the quarter. At completion the village will house more than 2100 construction workers for the project.

BROWSE

In other news, Woodside has stated that the proposed Kimberley LNG Hub site at James Price Point is now its preferred location for the Browse LNG project.

The company had been considering between bringing gas onshore in the Kimberley or the Burrup Peninsula near Karratha.

Woodside said the recently signed Heads of Agreement between it, the State of Western Australia and the Kimberley Land Council in relation to the establishment of a LNG Precinct in the James Price Point area, was made on the basis that the Kimberley LNG Precinct is its preferred site for the processing of LNG from the Browse Basin gas fields.

However, the company stated that the Browse joint Venture is still considering the Burrup option.

SPENDING CUT

Woodside also revealed that its spend for 2009 is now likely to be in the order of \$6.6 to \$6.7 billion, down from the \$7.3 billion it previously indicated it would outlay on its various projects and exploration activities this year.

Source: An extract from Oil & Gas Australia, May 2009. Page 8

Letters to 3 Short Blasts.

I would like to thank those of you who have written to 3 Short Blasts. Letters are published as sent but we will ask you to revise a submitted letter if it is considered necessary (hasn't happened yet). You may choose not to have your name published and we will withhold your details. Please keep up the incoming as it puts another opinion out there for others to digest. Please send your submissions to sec@amouwa.com.

Specialist Vessels.

Hello 3 Short Blasts,

As previously expressed – appreciate all the work which has gone into this publication and the ongoing negotiations for our expired EBA.

Regarding the EBA negotiations – it came as somewhat of a shock that the AMMA (the Operators) wanted to define Specialist Vessels as

“Specialist Vessel” means either:

vessels engaged on specialist tasks for a certain period, that is, free span corrections on new pipelines, new subsea installations using a crane and saturation diving from a DP 2 vessel; or any of the following types of vessels:

- ***pipelayers;***
- ***DP2 or DP3 dive support vessel;***
- ***self-propelled cable layers (not including seismic vessels),***
and

- **rockdumpers.**

The definition of “Specialist Vessel” has been an ongoing problem for a number of years and this is what I would like to discuss here.

Preamble / History

In years gone by there was an extra allowance paid for those involved in ‘construction’ work on the Australian coast. The main reason for this allowance was due to 2 factors

- the extra safety risk associated with one-off construction projects
- and as compensation for casual employment and lack of continuity within the industry

Although the definition of ‘construction’ was fairly clear, unfortunately when the allowance applied - was not. Some construction vessels e.g. dive support vessels (DSV’s) were sent off to the nearest installation to pick up equipment and were thus deemed to be off construction; all of a sudden the DSV had become a platform support vessel. Others vessels were delayed from commencing work until 00:05, to ensure the vessel crews were not paid the construction allowance for that day.

Needless to say the Client Representative and the Master of the vessel were in constant dispute as to when the vessel was on construction. The Payroll Officers were inundated with queries from crews who were keeping their own tally of ‘construction days’, which did not agree with the Master’s submission. With most of the vessels being mobilised out of Singapore, the transits (‘run jobs’) to Australia were also in dispute, with regards to the construction allowance. The entire allowance was becoming a nightmare to abide by and more so, a disaster to administer.

At this point, the following EBA was changed to reflect a more progressive approach to the ‘Construction Allowance.’ The concept was to classify a vessel as ‘Specialist’ prior to entering the coast and for that vessel to retain this classification from ‘pick-up’ to ‘re-delivery’. The purpose of the allowance had changed slightly from when the initial ‘Construction Allowance’ was first introduced. Since the industry made been through a quantum leap in terms of the safety culture offshore, the construction phase of most projects was now considered of equal safety risk to other offshore operations.

Most vessels receiving the Specialist Vessel Allowance (SVA) are vessels incorporating Dynamic Positioning (DP) as a means of remaining in one location, to undertake their workscope. DSV’s, Pipelayers – both rigid and flexible, Rockdumpers, DP Drillships, DP Flotellas, DP Geotechnic investigation vessels, purpose built ROV support and construction vessels, Well Stimulation vessels, DP Dredgers were some of the vessels included in this category. The one thing which was common to all – they all relied on DP to undertake their work. No DP = no work. This is a different situation to some of the newer supply vessels fitted with DP Class 1 or Class 2 systems, which utilise DP as assistance when manoeuvring at installations.

A number of the deck officers predicted DP would become mainstream on most offshore vessels (OSV) and indeed this has become the case. A number of other

vessels including cruise liners, supply vessels and seismic vessels now incorporate some form of DP system – albeit mostly DP Class 1.

Since these vessels were on the Australian coast for short durations, the manning contracts were sporadic and hence the manning companies were not inclined to pay for DP training on the off chance of a Specialist Vessel contract.

The deck officers who then paid for their own training, had to chase these sporadic contracts to complete the required DP time for their DP certification. These DP certified officers were typically casual, as no one company had enough DP work to employ them permanently.

The SVA was now more orientated towards the high tech training required and continued to compensate for the casual nature of manning of these vessels.

It was soon realised that all the crew (not only the Deck Officers) needed more training than what was required for supply, anchor handling or standby vessels.

Apart from DP certified Officers with suitable experience (most client companies are asking for more than 5,000 DP hours – in a full year permanently stationed on DP vessels constantly engaged in DP operations, the accumulation of 1,000 hours would be a good year), Helicopter Landing Officers (HLO) and heli-teams are required, crane drivers familiar with computer controlled heave-compensated cranes, cooks who could produce top cuisine for more than 150 crew 4 times per day, stewards who attend to cabins and public areas for a crew of 150, engineers who were familiar with DP operations and more complicated engine rooms, ships electricians/technical officers who are confronted with repairing high voltage breakers to digital DP circuitry – has all resulted in crews in every department becoming more specialised, highly trained and harder to source.

The SVA has had a positive effect in attracting personnel who were more skilled and have attained a higher level of training. This situation continues today.

As an example of how ridiculous the misunderstanding of this classification can be –

A ROV construction vessel in NZ was installing 3 flowlines from the well-heads to the jacket risers. During the contract, the vessel was required to go to a nearby field and undertake some valve actuation work on a FPSO Xmas Tree. The company or the Client (it was never really established) deemed this 'work' to be different and the SVA was not to be paid. Turned out to be 8 hours off-hire from the original contract.

The vessel was still Specialist – the vessel and the crew had not changed.

Companies, clients, contractors and all other associated entities in the Australian offshore oil and gas industry, need to understand that Specialist Vessel Allowance -

HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE WORK AND EVERYTHING TO DO WITH THE VESSEL.

It is based on the vessel not on the type of work the vessel is undertaking.

The Operators are calling for only the 4 vessels mentioned above (again based on the work they undertake) to be the only vessels to receive the SVA.

On this basis - what happens to the Toisa Proteus - 400 tonne crane – DP Class 3 construction vessel. It does not appear in their criteria of DSV, Pipelayer, Rockdumper and Umbilical Layer.

I could name numerous other vessels which fall into the same category. There are many vessels like the Geosea and the Harvilla Harmony (HH) which are not strictly DSV's - as their dive systems bolted on - i.e. the dive system is not an integral part of the vessel. The HH is constantly de-mobbing and re-mobbing the dive system - however, as previously discussed - the skills, expertise and qualifications do not alter. The vessel is still specialised.

The Gorgon field is due to be opened up in the next 4 years, providing a tremendous amount of work for our members. Due to its depth – all vessels working in this field will need to be DP vessels; anchoring is not an option. So where do the DP Class 3 Drill Ships, DP Class 3 Semi-submersible Drilling Rigs, ROV Deepwater Construction vessels and DP Flotellas sit – are they not specialised ?

There are a number of solutions to this classification, most of which include classifying the vessel as Specialised based on a points system. Once the vessel is classified as Specialised – the work it undertakes is irrelevant. Obviously to remain Specialised the vessel must continue to fulfil the criteria of the points system.

As a suggestion – the following criteria could attract points towards classification as a Specialist Vessel -

- DP Class 2 or Class 3
- Helideck
- Sub-sea cranes greater than 20 tonnes SWL
- Surveyed crew carrying capacity in excess of 40
- In-built sub-sea equipment e.g. dive systems, ROV systems, rock dumping facilities, pipelaying facilities, sub-sea work over or construction equipment, etcetera
- Gross Registered Tonnage(GRT) above 3,000 tonnes

In light of how the previous Construction Allowance proved to be a disaster, I would strongly recommend the classification of Specialist Vessel continues to apply. The only issue is the criteria and definition for the classification of Specialist Vessel.

Yours sincerely

Roy Lewisson *BSc.*
Master Mariner
AMOU Member 13553

Let's Alter the Crew Change Syndrome (LACC'S)

In recent years this insidious syndrome (LACC'S) has become more and more prevalent to the point where it appears to be almost an epidemic.

The signs usually start to appear sometime late in the third week of a swing with the full blown symptoms manifesting themselves in the final week of the swing.

Not only does this affliction have a negative affect on seafarers it also has an adverse affect on their family and friends; a point that is often overlooked by some sections of the industries leaders.

Tracking down the cause has to date proved to be extremely difficult; some sources to come under suspicion such as Oil Companies, Ship Owners and Manning Companies, when questioned appear to be as perplexed and mystified as to it's origin's as the above mentioned high risk groups.

Recently however a possible cure was discovered when members from the AMOU and MUA joined forces and uttered what seemed to be the magic word.....**“NO”**.

Although this article has been written in a light hearted manner make no mistake there are some seafarers rights that are sacrosanct; regular rotations with set crew change dates being high on the list.

Consequently serious thought should be undertaken by those wishing to alter crew change dates and those being requested to accept a change should hold group discussions and present a united front if it is deemed to be unacceptable.

Name and Membership No. Supplied

Drunk Crew & ISM Code

The article in the May edition of Three Short Blasts about ISM Responsibility raises a few issues. The article was about a Scottish Master who was fined in court for allowing a drunk crew member onboard who subsequently fell down steps and died.

As a junior second mate, I remember being severely chastised by the Master who was supported by the mate, for not getting a drunk cook back onboard.

We were on the slips in the old Keppel Dry Dock and while returning from a night up at Orchard Rd (not 4 floors), came across a good barney with our extremely inebriated cook being ejected from a bar and he was doing his best to get back in. Things were looking in the way of him getting pretty well done by a couple of local bouncers. It was about midnight, just in time to catch last MRT as money was a bit low, and I had a 0600 start, but still decided to try and get him back onboard. Spent an hour trying to get him away from the bar and into a taxi, in which he spewed and we were turfed out at Dhobi Ghat. Word must have spread as no taxi would pick us up and he started getting aggro saying it was all my fault.

Finally got a taxi and when we got to the Keppel gates he wouldn't get out and the money had run out. Then it started to rain as only it can in S'pore. After nearly taking a couple in the head, (luckily head butt missed as well), finally dragged him out, half an hour later got to the gangway which he refused to go up. This was before 7/11 so there was no gangway watch, and then he ran off into the darkness of the shipyard in torrential rain. It was after 0400, there was no way I was going to find him and I'd had enough. Walked back to the main gate, informed the guard who was indifferent, and turned in.

Of course the old man wasn't too happy when there was no breakfast and when

I told him why, received a massive lecture on how irresponsible I was, and if I remember correctly, was sent off to clean out the chain locker. Nothing was said to the cook when he turned up after lunch although I think the delegate who had missed two meals, gave him a good serving.

The issues this raises:

1) I felt I had a personnel responsibility to get him back to the vessel as he was going to get bashed by the bouncers, or if not by them, someone else, get robbed,(being S'pore, maybe bunged) and probably end up in a condition where he would need to be repatriated. I didn't even have much regard for him onboard.

2) Although this was prior to duty of care coming in, as an officer I felt I should provide a duty of care to ensure the safety of a crewman even Though he was hellbent on his own destruction

3) I know what the masters reaction would be if I had woken him at 0400 to say the cook had run off in pouring rain.

Going back to the original article in May

1)What would the Scottish masters' reaction have been when he was woken to say the person was drunk and what should we do with him. Most would say send him to his bunk or we'll deal with it in the morning. Probably(although not in this case) the safest place would be onboard. This court case sets a major precedent and puts evermore responsibly on masters. Companies will have to develop a contingency for similar scenarios as this. As long as ships sail seamen will continue to come onboard inebriated regardless off company policy and ISM.

2)Was the master even aware of his condition?

3)If the master had said to keep him off the vessel and he had fallen off the wharf and drowned, been mugged, killed when hit by a car, or whatever, the master still would have shown a lack of responsibility and failed in his duty of care.

4) Even if the person had been put in a hotel, the master would have the responsibility and duty of care to provide someone sober to look after the inebriated person.

These are just a few of my thoughts on this topic and I am interested in other members feedback and views.

Member name & number supplied