

## **MARITIME HAS ALWAYS MATTERED**

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Maritime has always mattered. It is the perennial nature of maritime trade that has an inertia of its own to seek markets to satisfy supply and demand. Increased Flag of Convenience shipping has widened the association between the sovereign ship Venture (commercial) operations and those of the sovereign military ADventure (navies), a profile facilitated by increased Venture regulation for a Rules based regime. UNCLOS provides the basis from which sovereign nations exercise jurisdiction over their allocated water space (where possible) in terms of voyage conduct. The IMO and IALA provide further guidance for the conduct of ship operations generally. Both serve to provide the seafarer with a much more structured framework in which to operate; an evolution of a rules-based approach beginning with the loss of the RMS *Titanic* (SOLAS), the work of the United Nations (UNCLOS), and seafarer welfare generally through the ILO. Concurrent to those developments has been the reduction in people required to run ships at sea, where increased isolation has been a conscious commercial decision rather than one driven by the circumstance of a pandemic. What is being experienced shoreside today is not new to the seafarer, but for different reasons.

The uniqueness of the times based on the global COVID-19 experience provides new challenges where seafarer interaction ashore may be more restricted in an already restrictive ISPS regime. Seafarers may be required to remain onboard beyond contractual expectations to facilitate sustained ship operations where reliefs are not able to travel to their next contract due to limited transport (air) capacity. The shoreside and at-sea impact of COVID-19 is to potentially extend the periods between rest circumstances provided by the diversity of life experience; the uniqueness of the times will impact on seafarer resilience in an already relatively isolated workplace.

Being in isolation, or isolated, is nothing new for the seafarer. In many respects what is happening ashore, with the experience of isolation being imposed to stem the spread of a contagious virus, is something the seafarer lives with on a daily basis in pursuit of their employment at sea. The idea of mental health issues arising from the isolated circumstance ashore is also a factor that has impacted on the seafaring community. Seafarers learn to cope with long periods of separation from friends and family, intermittent communication, and little interaction with other crew members in circumstances where shipping is sustained by the smallest, cost effective, human effort. The seafaring community has long learned to stay healthy by regular exercise (if desired at a gym or on the upper deck), generally well sustained with regular meals, and hours-of-rest routines where proper and effective rest cycles are encouraged. Safety, and the management of people within a safety regime is well embedded in the seafaring circumstance where safety management systems are an international expectation imparted through shipping's (IMO) ISM Code.

Happiness has relativity in job enjoyment underpinned by diversity, variety, task engagement, and human interaction; like any employment circumstance. However, the seafaring circumstance can be one of monotony during long sea voyages, or intensity during cargo/human changeout operations alongside. Where isolation is a strong theme in the seafaring circumstance, happiness is dependant a measure of resilience to cope with the factors afore mentioned. Even when surrounded by humans similarly task occupied, such as hotel staff onboard cruise ships, there is still potential to feel isolated as there is no chance

to regularly go home or go to a movie, sporting fixture etc, to provide diversity away from the work place; to give wider context to daily life.

There is nothing quite like watching the break of day across an unbroken seascape to the horizon, or a blazing sunset to unmask the night sky with stars blazing brightly across time; matters of great comfort known to seafarers. Perhaps these small comforts will serve to sustain endurance as the pandemic provides for universal human chaos.

## **About the Author**

Captain Martin is a Master Mariner (Master Unlimited) and continues service in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Reserves as a Navy Pilot and Navigation specialist following 25 years' service in the RAN. He has had command in both the commercial and military maritime sectors and has extensive experience piloting ships in the Great Barrier Reef, most ports of Australia and many overseas ports.

Peter offers extensive maritime operations experience comprising a mix of senior operational and strategic expertise gained through onshore marine services management, roles with both the Department Foreign Affairs and the Department of Defence, and his academic endeavours: Master Degree (UNSW) and current PhD Candidacy with the University of Tasmania (UTAS) / Australian Maritime College (AMC).

### **Academic Maritime focus**

Peter's PhD research fuses his maritime experience. His research seeks to identify areas for improved communication, negotiation, and advice in the open source domain to identify significant Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) for Australia's Maritime trade. By exploring the perception of 'sea blindness' in Australia's institutional, NGO and commercial environments, the project aims to benchmark the present circumstance and suggest critical areas in the 'system' that may need attention to better appreciate and advise on Australia's strategic maritime outlook.

The objectives of the research are:

- To evaluate the extent of 'sea blindness' in Australia's Commonwealth institutions, commercial organisations and NGOs.
- To explore how 'sea blindness' may impact on maritime related policy making, crisis advice and the commercial maritime interests of Australia.
- To define, analyse, and recommend alternative strategic solutions in response of above discussed shortcomings using the Australia's LNG trade as a model to examine other maritime trade interests.

Captain Martin is a current cruise ship consultant and internationally renowned lecturer-at-sea, having sea-roded for over 50 cruises to deliver highly regarded lecture packages.