



AUSTRALASIAN INSTITUTE
OF MARINE SURVEYORS

Shipshape

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**WORLD'S LARGEST BATTERY-ELECTRIC SHIP
POWERS UP IN TASMANIA**

From engine room to surveyor's desk: my journey in the maritime sector

WHEN Eric from the Australian Institute of Marine Surveyors suggested I write about my journey instead of another technical deep-dive, I thought, “Now that’s a great idea!” While I’m usually focused on compliance reports and technical analyses for *Shipshape*, every bit of that expertise stems from an interesting career journey – a story of continuous learning, serious challenges and a commitment to maritime excellence.

I started, quite literally, right in the engine room. After scoring a university gold medal in marine engineering, I spent the next decade working my way up from a trainee to a management-level engineer officer on huge ocean-going LPG tankers, oil tankers and bulk carriers.

Life at sea isn’t just a job: it’s a high-intensity crash course in reality. You’re running a massive, floating factory far from land. Teamwork, quick thinking and resilience aren’t things you talk about – they’re what you rely on every single hour to keep the vessel safe and the mission compliant.

The management-level engineer officer’s crucible

As a management-level engineer officer, I wasn’t just fixing machines; I was managing complex operational cycles. I’ve taken delivery of new ships, which is akin to managing a greenfield commissioning project from scratch. I’ve overseen multiple dry dockings, which require the meticulous shutdown and restart



of the entire vessel’s technical plant.

Beyond the technical competency, life onboard taught me true leadership and parallel thinking. You learn resilience from being separated from your family for months, from solving complex mechanical failures in the middle of the Pacific and from staying calm when a severe storm hits. You learn to lead diverse teams, working closely with people from five different nationalities, fostering a shared commitment to safety and efficiency. This intense operational environment was the crucible where my leadership and diagnostic skills were forged.

Pivoting to the shore

The sea life is incredible

but, eventually, the industry or life itself pushes you ashore. When travel restrictions (due to COVID-19 travel restrictions) made sailing tricky, I didn’t step away – I just changed my angle. I started freelancing as a superintendent, helping overseas ship managers from the ground here in Australia (while the ships they manage were in Australian ports). That naturally got me deeper into the regulatory world, and I picked up experience as a flag state inspector, which was a fantastic crash course in compliance.

That path, of course, led me right to the role I have today: class surveyor and auditor for an IACS society.

The surveyor's perspective

After years of running the show, becoming a class surveyor an auditor flipped my perspective entirely. Instead of managing the system, I now verify it – which is much more interesting than it sounds!

I work for an IACS society and my main mission is making sure ships meet those crucial international standards.

That means everything from detailed surveys of the hull, machinery and equipment to diving deep into a company's safety management system (SMS) and auditing against frameworks like ISM, ISPS and MLC.

Honestly, it's about much more than ticking boxes. Because I've actually lived the journey and been on the receiving end of inspections, I know exactly where the pressure points are and what robust ship operation truly looks like in practice. This hands-on

knowledge is key. It allows me to collaborate with ship operators and onboard crew to not just find issues but genuinely guide them towards building operations that are truly resilient and sustainable.

Beyond compliance: the business angle

During my sailing days, a crew member got me hooked on stock investing and, suddenly, my curiosity went way past machinery manuals! To invest smartly, I realised I had to truly understand how businesses work. I ended up diving headfirst into finance, operations, strategy and marketing – all self-taught. It was fascinating to learn how companies grow, compete and stay relevant, looking at industry models and economic trends.

What really connected the dots was my audit work. I kept seeing the same thing: maritime businesses run by technical and operational experts, but they often get stuck when trying to turn that brilliance into clear,

scalable and sustainable growth systems.

This observation lit up my next goal. I realised that my combined skill set – the hands-on knowledge from ship, the systematic checks from surveying and the strategic deep-dive from my own studies – is perfectly built to help these maritime ventures.

Let's talk growth

If you're a business owner or operator maritime sector, I'd genuinely love to have a cup of coffee or have a chat over the phone or online with you. (My shout!). I'm keen to understand the unique challenges your business faces and perhaps I can throw in a few good ideas or insights based on my journey. Let's talk growth!

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