



AUSTRALASIAN INSTITUTE
OF MARINE SURVEYORS

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**AIMS HEADS WEST
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Marine surveyors: surveying in a time of change

Success requires adaptation and a mindset of embracing change, write Dr Eric Perez and Susan Hull.

SINCE 2024, a range of market intelligence agencies and insurers (WGR Data Base, Gard) have published reports showing the global marine survey services market is growing, with an estimated global valuation of US\$4.75 billion in 2025 and projected to reach US\$7.27 billion by 2032.

The industry is experiencing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of about 6.19 per cent, which has been driven mostly by increased regulatory oversight, advances in technology and increased demand for safety compliance in maritime operations.

The Asia-Pacific region is experiencing the fastest CAGR (about 9.5 per cent), mostly driven by rapid industrialisation, high trade volume and extensive shipbuilding. Along with major investments in offshore oil, gas and renewable energy (such as ocean wind farms), there is a strong possibility that commercial shipping surveys will become a burgeoning industry in our region.

The maritime sector recorded an annual growth rate of -1.88 per cent last year. This highlights challenges in global shipping demand, fleet modernisation and regulatory compliance. More than 1,600 startups and 3,500 early-stage companies continue driving innovation in marine logistics, vessel automation and port technologies.

Another area of solid growth is the increasing demands for safety and compliance surveys



that are a direct result of the industry focus on sustainability, safety, the environment and risk management.

Ocean wind farms are growing at an exponential rate, along with other offshore surface and sub-sea structures, giving marine surveyors a myriad of opportunities to specialise in different sectors. Warranty surveyors are already playing an increasingly important role in this space, with growing ongoing appointments to protect the interests of both insurers and developers. Those with the right qualifications and experience are receiving appointments to approve procedures for the loading, sea fastening and transport; and conduct inspections of monopiles, cables and foundations to check for corrosion or damage.

Surveyors skilled in safety audits have opportunities as well. There appears to be a rise in appointments for regular safety and suitability audits on workboats and transfer vessels, and, while undertaking those surveys, the surveyor is receiving additional appointments for condition surveys for equipment, barges, jack-up rigs, etcetera to ensure they are safe and fit for purpose.

Maritime security options are also on the rise, with a demand for surveyors who can conduct security audits. Persistence Market Research advises that cyber-attacks on maritime infrastructure were up 400 per cent from 2019 to 2023 and are now driving demand for advanced cybersecurity solutions like AI threat detection and blockchain communication.

Meanwhile, expanding maritime trade in emerging markets, notably our region, the Asia-Pacific and Africa, is boosting investment in port security systems, creating growth opportunities for innovative surveyors with port and loading experience.

The upsides

There are many new developments in marine surveying. These include a strong ongoing focus on risk-based compliance and the introduction of new technologies. The new kind of technology appears to be artificial intelligence (AI), which is on the rise and slotted as a “must have” for data-driven surveys and surveys using digital and remote sensing equipment.

While maritime authorities demand stricter, more frequent and more detailed surveys of vessel energy efficiency and safety, they are also introducing simplified regulations and streamlined processes for accredited marine surveyors who undertake bulk vessel inspections and compliance surveys for domestic commercial vessels.

AIMS diploma enrolments remained steady throughout the 2024-25 period, with a total of 90 new students enrolling across all diplomas. Demographically, students are situated broadly throughout the Australasian region, but there was an increase in representation from other nations.

Student enrolments are received from a mix of those currently working in another sector of the industry looking to transition into a marine surveying role to those working with a marine surveyor wanting to gain the qualification while under the mentorship of their employer, and others are wanting to upskill in their current role as a marine surveyor.

Markets are changing, and emerging economies are having an impact on shipping – both in terms of trading and regulatory oversight. Surveying vessels designed for electric or alternative propulsion, using technology to meet complex regulatory reporting and addressing risks in older vessels are all opportunities for surveyors.

The downsides

Separate from P&I (which covers shipowners for liabilities), professional indemnity (PI) for

shore-based professionals such as surveyors is likely to rise over the next year or so.

Because of third-party claims for negligence in vessel management and increased workloads, increased regulatory obligations on marine surveyors and a shortage of skilled labour, it follows that the potential for increased errors by surveyors and-or increased demands by their clients is likely. This could create a greater focus by a surveyor's clients to ensure the adequacy and bona fides of a surveyor's PI cover.

The marine survey industry continues to face a skilled labour shortage across all sectors, mostly due to barriers to entry. These barriers are causing an unhealthy reliance on outside specialists and contractors, and contributing to monopoly markets that disadvantage the sole trader and small business operators.

High levels of competition across the marine survey sectors in Australia and the region remain a concern; upskilling is now not voluntary but rather it is essential for staying in business.

The number of marine surveyors exiting the industry due

to age means valuable knowledge will be lost and this may result in changes to the demographic of surveyors and survey companies/organisations in Australia.

In conclusion

So, what does the innovative marine surveyor need to do to retain a foothold and maximise their opportunities? Be good at adapting!

The conclusion here is that the future of marine surveying looks pretty safe despite the usual industry naysaying; however, existing surveyors should not be complacent. Complacency can lead to a quick demise in times of rapid advancement and change. The trick to having a successful and profitable survey career is to master adapting to the changes – and, in fact, embracing them.

There are many tips for success but, as a starter, we've listed some critical ones to consider that we think are essential to growing your business and giving you the edge on your competitors.

Enhance your digital skills by embracing AI and similar digital advancement, as remote sensing and data analysis will be crucial for future roles. These include advanced, high-resolution sensing technologies

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We currently operate in Melbourne, Geelong, Portland and Adelaide on the Marine Surveying side and are also able to travel to other states and territories and overseas by request. Currently stevedoring services are offered in Geelong and Portland.

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like LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) focus on 3D mapping, environmental perception and navigation for autonomous systems, robotics and defence. Advancements include 4D imaging radar, solid-state LiDAR, structured light and AI-powered stereo vision.

Keep abreast of new regulations and market information. Identify your skills and match these to new market opportunities. Undertake training in new areas, especially compliance, risk assessments, safety and security-based inspection requirements.

The rise of social media and how to use the mix of social media available to maximise business exposure should be a

key consideration for all marine surveyors. Learn how to best integrate posts across different social media platforms and into your website. If you don't have even a simple website, think about getting one.

Understand how social media can assist your business advertising and branding. Learn when and how to use it effectively and what you need to do to manage it.

Improve your technical knowledge. Increase your familiarity with new technology, new vessel materials (like HDPE) and advanced survey technology and important trends in our region. Branch out into different fields of surveying, research

the up-and-coming trends and growth areas, and find out how to gain experience in these fields.

Team up with a mentor or seek a partnership with an older surveyor who is potentially ready for retirement and learn as much as possible. Consider buying an established surveyor business or agency, where you can leverage their skills with yours.

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