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Thanks to all AIMS members and the Board for allowing us to be part of your 40th anniversary conference. We enjoyed catching up with existing clients and members.

Congratulations to all the nominees and award winners.

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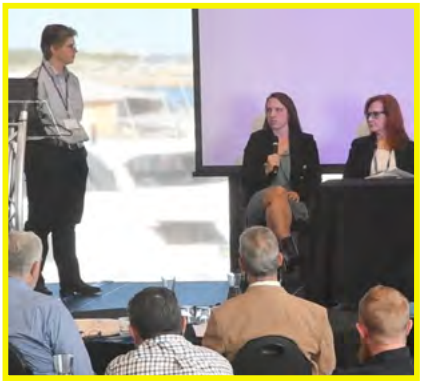
Shipshape

Front Cover: Vessels of all sizes use Western Australia's busiest general-cargo port in Fremantle, where AIMS recently held its biennial conference and marked its 40th anniversary.

Back Cover: One of the two lighthouses (one red, one green) marking the entrance to Fremantle Harbour.

AIMS 40th anniversary (Page 5.)



Successful conference. (Page 9.)

Awards for excellence. (Page 16.)

2026 Boat Show. (Page 18.)

Merchant Navy service. (Page 44.)

Port State Control. (Page 48.)

Fire Protection Industry (ODS & SGG) Board

The Fire Protection Industry (ODS & SGG) Board (FPIB) administers the fire protection division of the ***Ozone Protection & Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Regulations 1995*** on behalf of the Australian Government. .

This includes working with industry to support the safe handling of scheduled extinguishing agents and promote compliance with Australia's licensing requirements. Through the FPIB marine engagement program, the Board are actively engaging with the marine sector to encourage best practice in installation, servicing and maintenance of fire protection systems containing Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) or Synthetic Greenhouse Gases (SGGs). Correct licensing helps protect people, vessels and the environment while supporting safe, compliant operations across the marine industry. Contact the FPIB and get involved today.

fpib.com.au

AIMS celebrates its 40th anniversary

THIS year, the Australasian Institute of Marine Surveyors (AIMS) celebrates its 40th anniversary as the premier professional body representing marine surveyors in Australia. In 1986, a small group of surveyors in Sydney saw the need for surveyors to be recognised for their skills, their knowledge and the value they added across the marine supply chain.

They wanted the shipping industry to recognise that surveyors offered more than just a report on the condition of a vessel or cargo: they added value through risk mitigation. They also saw the importance of sharing lessons learned over many years, strengthening how surveyors supervise, work and report with consistency and professionalism.

In those early days, members ran AIMS as volunteers – like many volunteer groups – on a shoestring. They gave their time for the love of the profession and a strong desire to see the organisation succeed and thrive. Today, AIMS relies on its members, more than ever, to give of their time and knowledge to advance our profession both within the marine industry and, more importantly, to the general public at large.

In 2026, AIMS is a broad church of members working across the marine industry. From small aluminium runabouts and trailer boats to large container ships, bulk carriers and tankers, our members work in, on and around vessels and cargo – helping ensure seafarers can live and work safely, return home to their families and that the natural environment is protected for future generations. AIMS will continue to work and strive to place marine surveyors at the centre of any marine activity where safety for people, the environment and assets is concerned.

We are the keepers of the knowledge of all things maritime, something that needs to be maintained and celebrated internally, while also broadcasting externally that our place in the industry is not just a box to tick but providing real value and meaning, and that we act to mitigate risk in all its forms in the best interests of our clients and the community at large.

2026 conference

Our 2026 conference, held in Fremantle on May 7-8, highlighted the importance of building relationships, not only within our own organisation

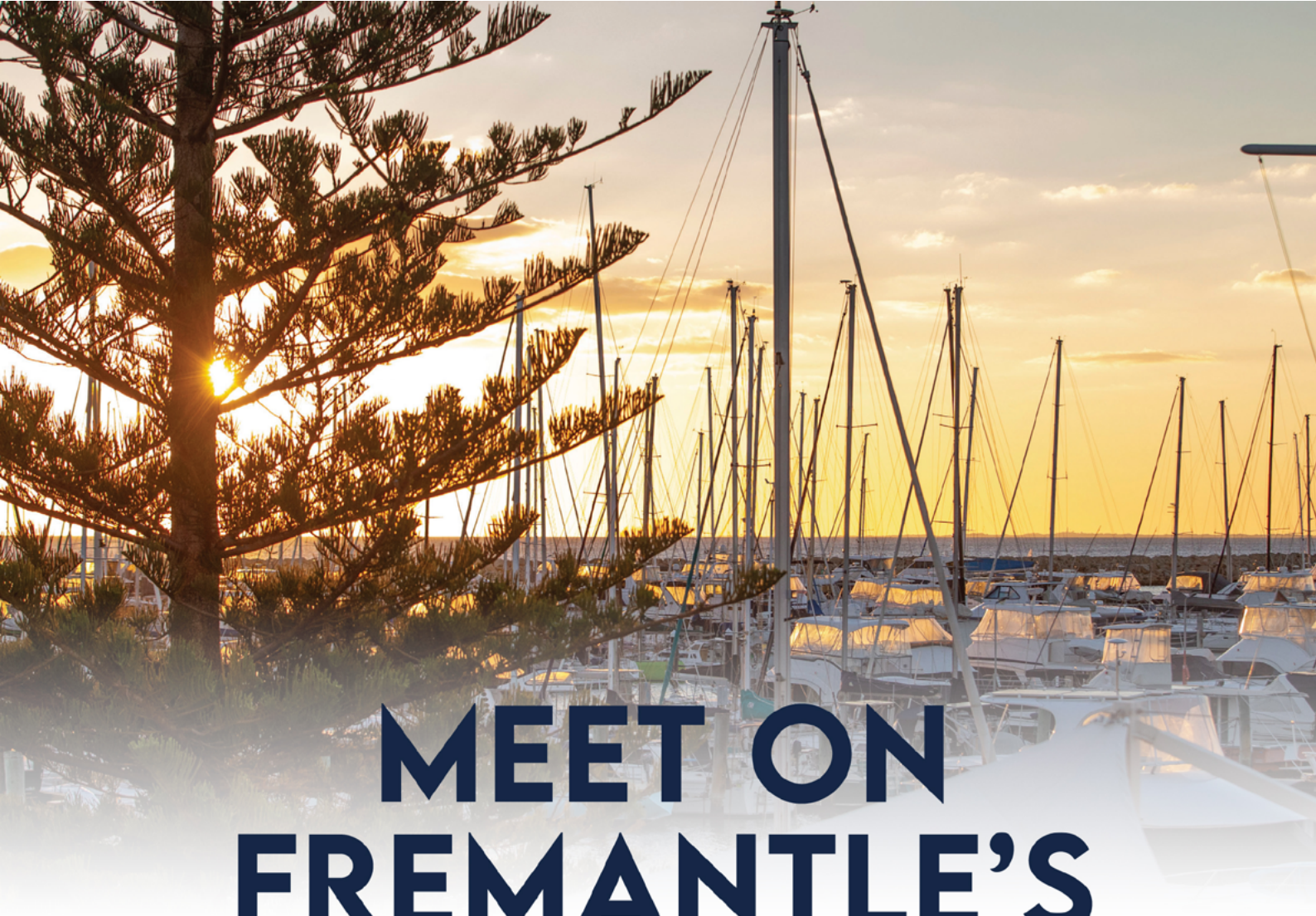
but also with other stakeholders inside and outside of our industry. Relationships add value to our businesses and our profession. Whether those relationships are the more obvious, such as with other surveyors, or more subtle, as being with insurers, service providers and other industry bodies, connections provide us with opportunities to improve and grow.

Imagine us as a village, where all types are needed to make the village function and prosper. The conference was an opportunity to successfully expand who we are and what we do and how we fit into the world.

Our conference was the first time that a two-day event has been staged. With the broad range of speakers and topics covered, having a conference of this length proved that our participants were keen to engage with all of our speakers and topics that they presented.

Dr Eric Perez, CEO AIMS, and his team worked tirelessly for more than a year to bring to fruition another successful conference. They are to be congratulated on the success of this event and look forward to an equally successful conference in 2028.

Eric McIlwain
Chair of the AIMS Board



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A busy 2026 rolls on

THE work of AIMS continues as we head into the 2026-27 financial year.

Insurance risk evaluation survey template

I want to thank Neil Dorrington and Anthony Gates, who have provided comments regarding the insurance risk evaluation survey template. Anthony field-tested the template and provided multiple rounds of feedback.

Two versions of the template have been drafted:

- ❏ the first maintains images at the end of the template; and
- ❏ the second has images at the end of each section of the template.

Members can access the templates in the members only section of the AIMS website.

AIMS membership: value proposition

Membership of AIMS is a clear statement of professionalism and expertise. It places you among a trusted network of leading marine surveyors and industry specialists, strengthening your connections and expanding your professional influence.

As an AIMS member, you gain priority access to high-quality continuing professional development, ensuring your knowledge remains current, relevant, and aligned with evolving industry standards and regulations.

This commitment to excellence sets you apart in a competitive market. AIMS membership enhances your credibility with clients, regulators and peers alike.

Members are recognised for their technical competence, ethical standards and professional integrity – qualities that directly support client confidence and commercial success.

Beyond individual recognition, AIMS actively advocates for its members, giving you a collective voice in key industry and regulatory discussions that shape the future of the maritime sector.

By joining AIMS, you invest in your professional standing, your career longevity and your reputation as a trusted authority within the maritime industry.

Industry workshops and webinars

AIMS continues to provide workshop and webinar content for members to engage with continuing professional development (CPD).

Workshop 4: Jeffrey Blum, Director, Maritime Education & Training Ltd – 9 March 2026

Topic: Part 1 – Bills of Lading ~ their 3 main functions and why cargo descriptions are essential to avoid danger or fraud.

Jeffrey Blum has been involved in shipping and trading since 1972. The fourth generation of a shipping family, he is a member of the Baltic Exchange. He has been a shipbroker, charterer, shipowner and operator, Lloyd's underwriter, gasoil futures broker and commodities trader in London and abroad.

In 1994, he created Interlink International Trading (UK) Ltd, providing maritime commercial claims consultancy and bespoke corporate training. His clients include oil majors, commodity traders, shipowners, P&I Clubs, shipbrokers, lawyers, governments and international shipping organisations: www.intlinkint.com.

In 2002, Jeffrey co-founded – and remains principal lecturer of – Maritime Education & Training Ltd, providing bespoke tuition, including for students taking the annual examinations of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers: www.metl.london.

For many years, he has contributed articles to trade magazines and books, and is revising the 12th edition of a major shipping textbook. He achieved Fellowship of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers by examination in 1979 and has served on the ICS Controlling Council, Membership and UK & Ireland Committees and London & South East Branch Committee since 1983, including as its Education Officer since 2000, Chairman 2005-2007 and Vice Chairman 2015-2017.

Jeffrey is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators since 1997 (Honorary Associate since 1979), has been an arbitrator (sole and tribunal) since 1994 as Supporting Member of LMAA (London Maritime Arbitrators Association), a Council Member of ICSAS (International Commodity and Shipping Arbitration Service) since its creation in 2005 and a panel arbitrator of SCMA (Singapore Chamber of Maritime Arbitration) since 2019.

He has been a member of the Baltic Exchange since 1976, has been appointed as an expert witness in arbitration and litigation cases since 1983, and has served on the Governing Council of BEEP (Baltic Exchange Experts Panel) since 2012, now known as BEWA (Baltic Expert Witness Association) since 2019, including as its Chairman since 2020.

Jeffrey is a Mentor for the Marine Society's Coming Ashore Programme. Since 1984, he has lectured on maritime law and several commercial subjects at universities and colleges, is a frequent presenter at public, academic, governmental and bespoke training seminars worldwide, and is a Visiting Professor at World Maritime and Shanghai Maritime Universities since 2007.

Workshop 5: Dr Eric Perez – 30 March 2026

Topic: Preliminary findings – CPD and AI insights and challenges

Workshop 6: Jeffrey Blum, Director, Maritime Education & Training Ltd – 13 April 2026

Topic: Part 2 – Bills of Lading ~ their 3 main functions and why cargo descriptions are essential to avoid danger or fraud

Workshop 7: Andrew Fielding, CEO Boating Industry Association

Topic: BIA Marine Broker Accreditation, Broker – Marine Survey relationship and next steps to a greater alignment between AIMS and BIA

Andrew is a seasoned marine industry professional with more than 35 years of experience. His extensive expertise spans yacht brokerage, marine retail and wholesale, and stems from being part of a respected marine industry family involved in boat building, shipwright services and marine sales.

Throughout his career, Andrew has dedicated significant time to volunteering and collaborating with both industry and government through various committees and associations. Currently serving as CEO of BIA, he has also held key leadership roles, including President of BIA Ltd, Chairman of the Queensland Recreational Boating Council (QRBC), and currently as a board member of the Gold Coast Waterways Authority (GCWA).

Leveraging his strong network across the marine sector, government departments and marine agencies, Andrew champions a collaborative approach to ensure the continued growth and success of Australia's marine industry.

Conference

Day 1

On behalf of the AIMS Board, thank you to everyone who helped make the first day of our biennial conference a success, including Matt Kuc, Susan Hull, Eric McIlwain, Pia van Wyngaard (nee Rosenkranz), Andrew Fielding, Sheryl Swarbrick, Fabian Pasquini and Dianna Smith. A sincere "Thank-you" also to our sponsors for their outstanding support and our thanks to AmSpec for sponsoring our networking event. (See photographs of Day 1 on pages 10 and 11.)

Day 2

Thanks to everyone who made Day 2 a standout. Your expertise, generosity and professionalism are exactly what make this community so strong, including: Eric McIlwain, Wade Nagel, Jodie Ransom, Mark Potter, Maximiliano Lavin, Amanda Bradfield, Kalyan Das, Susan Hull, Capt Norman Lopez, Capt John Kavanagh, Capt Louis Koutelas, Graeme Normington, Margot De Villiers, Kerryn Woonings, Capt Michel Lagesse MAIMS, MNI, Gregory Marsden, Naweed Omar, Capt Scott Aiton, Capt William Burton and Zac Howells. (See photographs of Day 2 on pages 12 to 15.)

Key takeaways for me were:

- ❏ collaboration and partnership-building will help build capability within the marine survey profession and maritime sector; and
- ❏ marine surveyors are embracing change and adapting to meet the evolving needs of clients and the maritime sector.

Conferences like this are never a solo effort. A special shout-out to my Western Australian conference team: Wade Nagel, Stuart Marra and Kerryn Woonings. Your support was critical in delivering the day.

Thank you also to Martin B. and Loretta Hofer MAICD for the marketing support that helped bring people together for this important event.

Capt William Burton: thank-you for helping with set-up the day before and for your support during a busy conference schedule.

And to my Board, Sue Brown and Susan Hull, thank you for your steady support and commitment to our profession.

If you're looking to host an event in Fremantle, I can't recommend the Fremantle Sailing Club highly enough. Please contact Cara Murray (Functions Manager) at the Club. Cara and her team made sure everything ran like clockwork.

Here's to 40 years in operation and to the next 40!

Newsletter contributions

Thank-you to the members that contributed to this edition of the newsletter and, for members who do contribute, your article can be used as evidence of continuing professional development.

I encourage members to contribute to the newsletter. If you would like to know more, please contact the office.

Your Institute

Please contact me on +61 2 6232 6555 or send me an email with feedback, and ideas at gm@aimsurveyors.com.au.

Dr Eric Perez
Chief Executive Officer

Day 1

Day 1


AUDITING AND MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

Day 2


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• overstating or ambiguous survey scope;
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• f y assumptions;
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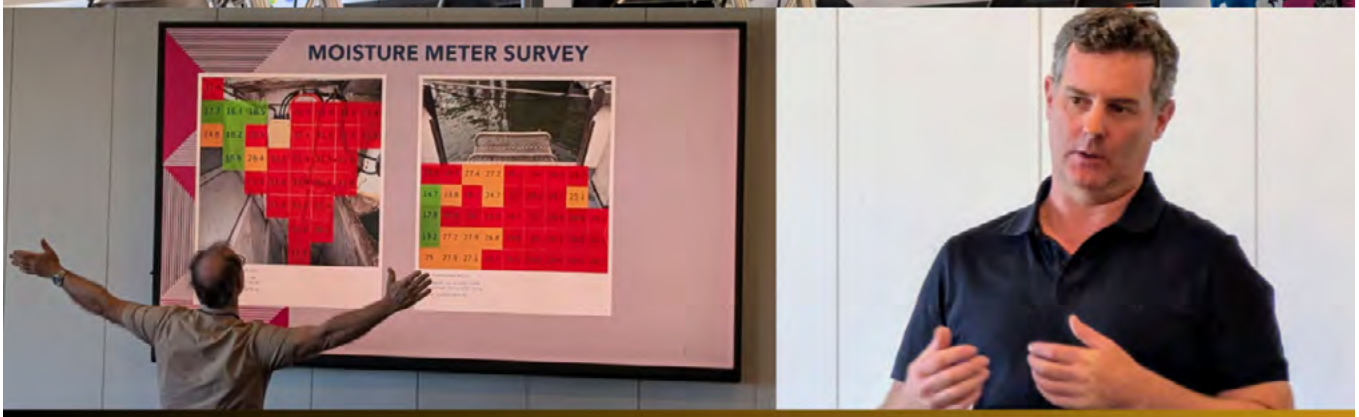
side expe tise;
assura s inconsistent with the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AIMS Awards for Excellence

THE AIMS Awards for Excellence recognise the innovation, professionalism and future focus marine surveyors bring to our industry. And a special "thank-you" upfront to Austbrokers Countrywide for sponsoring the awards.

Congratulations to all 2026 award nominees:

- Louie Caducio
- Susan Hull
- Capt Louis Koutelas
- Sedgwick
- Hunter Marine Surveyors
- Michael McAuliffe
- Maike Fritz Ligan
- Steve Foster
- Capt Michel Lagesse
- Rod Twitchin
- Damian Turner
- Kevin Moran
- Phillip Fox
- Krzysztof Bielicki
- Sean Byrne
- Fredrik Andreason
- Trent de Villiers
- Kalyan Das and
- Sarah Flood.

The awards recognise outstanding practice that strengthens safety, lifts industry standards and builds capability across the marine surveying profession.

It was a difficult task to choose between outstanding nominees but this year's winners were:

❏Susan Hull – Mike Bozier Award

❏Mick McAuliffe – Marine Survey Practice Award: Small Business or Individual

❏Hunter Marine Surveyors – Marine Survey Practice Award: Medium or Large Business or Individual

❏Capt Michel Lagesse – Marine Surveyor Specialist Field Award: Small Business or Individual

❏Sedgwick – Marine Surveyor Specialist Field Award: Medium or Large Business or Individual

❏Phillip Fox – Technology or Business Services Award: Small Business or Individual

❏Capt Louis Koutelas – Technology or Business Services Award: Medium or Large Business or Individual

❏Sean Byrne – Student of the Year Award

❏Kalyan Das – President's Rising Star Award.

Marine Survey Practice Award: Medium or Large Business or Individual

Winner

Hunter Marine Surveyors

Marine Surveyor Specialist Field Award: Small Business or Individual

Winner

Capt Michel Lagesse

Marine Surveyor Specialist Field Award: Medium or Large Business or Individual

Winner

Sedgwick

Technology or Business Services Award: Small Business or Individual

Winner

Phillip Fox

Technology or Business Services Award: Medium or Large Business or Individual

Winner

Capt Louis Koutelas

Student of the Year Award

Winner

Sean Byrne

President's Rising Star Award

Winner

Kalyan Das

2026 Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show

AIMS participated in the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show (SCIBS) again this year and my thanks go to the SCIBS organisers for a great event.

I also want to thank Eric McIlwain, Russ Behan, Andrew Laughlin, Michael Fitzallen, Kalyan Das and Capt William Burton for volunteering over a busy four-day event from May 21 to 24.

SCIBS provides an important way to engage with the community, explain the role of marine surveyors, and answer questions regarding pre-purchase and insurance surveyors.

I look forward to SCIBS 2027.

Dr Eric Perez
Chief Executive Officer

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AIMS training update

I HAVE just returned from the AIMS biennial conference in Fremantle, which was a fantastic event at a stunning location and always a wonderful opportunity to catch up with colleagues, exchange knowledge and learn from industry leaders and each other.

It was great to see several overseas and home-grown students there, all talented individuals excited about their future in the industry.

Congratulations to our Student of The Year, Sean Byrne. Sean recently completed the International Diploma of Marine Surveying (Working Boats) and performed exceptionally well, going on to successfully gain accreditation in all of his elected categories with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA).

Sean heads up Catalpa Marine at Port Hedland, where he has established himself as a surveyor providing an important service in the geographically isolated north-west of WA.

Congratulations also to the other nominees: Trent De Villiers (Sedgwick), Fredrik Andreason and Chris Bielicki. Choosing a winner was a difficult decision.

I was excited to finally meet face-to-face Krzysztof (Chris) Bielicki, who had travelled from Poland, where he is a navy diver, with his family for the event. Chris recently completed the Advanced Diploma of Commercial Marine Surveying and subsequently left a -25 C degree Polish winter to come to an Australian summer in December to take part in our Work Experience Program.

Chris was lucky enough to obtain a one-week placement with Hunter Marine in Newcastle and had this to say about his experience: "During my internship with Hunter Marine in Newcastle, Australia, I participated in an intensive week-long program that provided an exceptional introduction to professional marine surveying. Spanning just seven days, the internship involved conducting five diverse surveys, each delivering invaluable real world exposure.

"The surveys covered critical areas, including draft surveys, bunker assessments, and cargo hold condition inspections on vessels at one of the world's largest coal terminals in the Port of Newcastle.

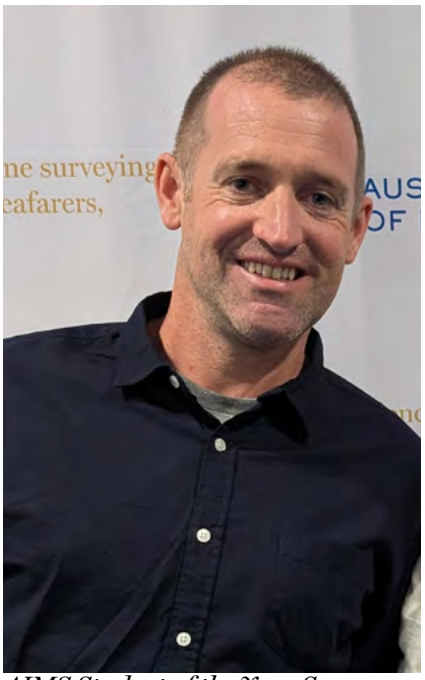
"Each day presented new scenarios – from verifying draught calculations under tight deadlines to documenting cargo stowage for departure. What elevated this experience was the mentorship from seasoned surveyors, coupled with hands-on access to the advanced Cargo Max app, which significantly accelerated survey times.

"Amid the port's dynamic environment, this work transformed my theoretical knowledge into practical expertise.

"Coordinating with HMS surveyors, vessel crew members and port authorities sharpened my communication skills, while handling five surveys in such a short time honed my efficiency and attention to detail. Despite the demanding pace – following a long trip from Europe – the supportive atmosphere at Hunter Marine made every moment enjoyable and motivating.

Overall, this internship exceeded my expectations and was a fantastic experience.

"I am deeply grateful for the opportunity and eager to apply these insights in future roles. I extend my heartfelt thanks to AIMS and Training Coordinator Ms Sue Brown for making this possible, despite numerous challenges.



AIMS Student of the Year, Sean Byrne.

"Before selecting the right institution, I researched major marine surveying institutes in Europe, including the Maritime Training Academy, Lloyds Maritime Academy and the International Institute of Marine Surveying. After reviewing their offerings and sending enquiries, most responses conveyed a typical sales-focused attitude.

"In contrast, your Institute demonstrated a genuine student-centred approach from the start until today, prioritising knowledge transfer and understanding in every module."

"Special appreciation goes to the Director of HMS, Capt. Louis Koutelas, for the finest mentorship of my professional career and for delivering an internship that was rigorously professional and filled with positive experiences."

Krzysztof (Chris) Bielicki from Poland recently completed the Advanced Diploma of Commercial Marine Surveying with AIMS.

Chris enjoyed a week-long mentorship with Capt. Louis Koutelas at Hunter Marine in Newcastle.

Other established surveyors currently assisting students in this program include Mick McCauliffe (Green Sea Survey WA), Bill La Vars (BTB Marine Surveys SA) and, recently, Mark McIlwain (Ocean Reef Marine Surveys Vic), to whom we are very grateful.

If you are interested in being involved in this program and willing to share a small amount of your time and knowledge, please contact me on 0493 546 380 for more information.

Sue Brown
Professional Development and Training Coordinator

First review of the AGSA Scheme finalised

I AM pleased to announce that, after almost 12 months of work, the review of the AGSA Scheme (the Scheme) is now complete. Apart from amendments to the Deed of Arrangement with the AIMS needing to be finalised and signed off by the legal teams of both the AIMS and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (DAFF), there is no further work to be done in regard to the review process.

Working with the Department has been challenging but enjoyable. The amazing work done on this review was due to both parties keeping the intent of the Scheme clear during the process so that we could focus solely on identifying the improvements needed and developing joint solutions to ensure the effective operation of the Scheme.

Issues raised through feedback mechanisms from all key stakeholders were included in the review and both parties agreed on several key points.

It was agreed that there should be a clear separation of an accredited marine surveyor's role and responsibilities with those of a bulk vessel inspection authorised officer by limiting overlapping responsibilities where possible and that key performance indicators for Accredited Grain Surveyors should be developed. This was achieved through careful scrutinisation of the Standard for Empty Bulk Vessel Surveys and introducing monitoring and auditing arrangements for accredited grain surveyors to ensure greater compliance to the Standard.

Other changes to the Standard include deleting the term "Grain Clean" and clearly articulating the processes for identifying and

managing conflicts of interest as per advice from the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC).

In summary, the NACC applies to any person who does something, or tries to do something, that could adversely affect a public official's honesty or impartiality in their official capacity. As an accredited marine surveyor under the AGSA Scheme, your decision to certify a bulk vessel as fit to load may affect the official duties of an Authorised Officer (AO). This is because an AO who is conducting a phytosanitary inspection of a Bulk Vessel Inspection Authorised Officer (BVI AO) is required to consider your Fitness to Load certificate when issuing a bulk vessel approval.

It was unanimously agreed by the working party that AIMS and the Department that surveyors have existing relationships with BVI AOs, shippers and shipping agents, and that these relationships constitute interests. To effectively manage your interests, a new Guidance Note was developed and has been introduced to facilitate transparency, independence and objectivity when performing your surveys. The steps involved include identification and disclosure of your interests, and adoption of appropriate management strategies to manage any real or apparent conflicts of interest.

In the context of the NACC and the AGSA Scheme together, you must consider and disclose any conflicts of interest to demonstrate your integrity when surveying bulk vessels as part of the conditions of your accreditation under the Scheme.

Finally, in line with other accreditation programs mandated by Government, it was agreed to introduce an AGSA Code of Conduct. The Code forms part of the application and renewal procedures and is a condition of accreditation.

The purpose of the introduction of the Code of Conduct is to enhance the transparency, accountability and professionalism of the Scheme, and to further assure the dry bulk export communities are undertaking surveys in accordance with the Standards.

While many improvements have been made to the Scheme, it is hoped that the auditing and monitoring of marine surveyor performance will reduce the need for more oversight of surveyors and, although a further review will be scheduled to take place in two years, we expect that only minor amendments would be required.

I urge all AGSA Accredited Marine Surveyors to download and read the new Standard for Empty Bulk Vessels and ensure that they have appropriate survey procedures in place to maintain their compliance with their obligations under the Scheme.

Susan Hull
AGSA Scheme, AIMS and Grain Accreditation Advisor

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Keeping coal on course

This article was originally published on 9 February 2026 by Jess Rouse from *The Coalface* NSW and QLD

MARINE surveyors are the lesser-known heroes of the coal chain. They ensure that coal dug from the ground is loaded correctly so coal ships reach their destination in one piece.

Captain Louis Koutelas is the CEO and Director of Hunter Marine Surveyors, which was established in 1999 by Louis and Captain Andrew Graver. Louis found his love for the satisfaction of loading a coal ship while working at sea, taking coal from Australia overseas and iron ore from the west coast to the east.

"I had a natural love for mathematics and astronomy. I studied in Tasmania and ended up going to sea with BHP Transport, climbing the ranks to achieve my Master's ticket. I spent 13 years at sea, sailing from Newcastle to Japan with coal and then loading up with iron ore in the Pilbara and taking it to the steelworks at Port Kembla and Newcastle.

"From a shipping point of view, I really enjoyed the navigation and going out to sea – seeing nothing for 10 days and then all of a sudden coming close to a port and seeing ships all over the radar as if it had chickenpox.

"Most of my time at sea was spent as a Chief Officer – I was, and still am, one of the smallest guys on board," Louis laughed. "I could fit through manholes and inspect areas others couldn't. I was more agile than most. I took it upon myself to inspect the ship structure. The most important thing is to not break the ship in half so inspecting ballast tanks and cargo holds was something I had a passion for and all the math behind the calculations to get everything correct."

The process of loading a coal ship is a complex task that requires coordination between the vessel, terminal and technical assistance from marine surveyors to ensure safety during the

One of the draught measures on the side of the coal ship.

loading process and the vessel's voyage to the discharge port.

Louis' team of surveyors' main work focuses on draught and trimming surveys. The draught survey for a coal ship determines the exact weight of coal loaded or discharged by measuring the vessel's displacement by reading draught marks at six points of the ship.

The trimming involves ensuring the coal is distributed correctly at the tail end of the loading to achieve the correct departure condition. This could be for a departure tide, cargo quantity or arrival draught at the discharge port. There are many variables and calculations that go into this stage of loading.

"We do 95 per cent of the draught surveying here in Newcastle and about 50 per cent of the trimming work," Louis explained. "Newcastle is a challenging port to navigate and one of the biggest difficulties for draught surveying is the fact that it's a river port. For instance, after heavy rain, a large vessel will sink more – the difference can be up to 40 centimetres, which is considerable, especially when they're only allowed to have about 1.5 metres under the keel for departure.

"So, we take the density during the draught reading using a zeal hydrometer and we calculate based on the current density of the dock water. That is challenging in itself, because the tide and density can change quite quickly, whereas at somewhere like the Pilbara the jetty is right out at sea, so we don't have that problem.

"The other challenge is being able to distribute the cargo in such a way that the ship doesn't bend much. A large ship can bend like a banana about 30 centimetres in the middle, so that means the deepest draught is in the middle, so you're displacing less water which means you're carrying less cargo. Distributing the cargo at the right percentage in each hatch is crucial to carrying as much cargo as possible.

"Back when I was working with BHP, I loaded the largest vessel in the world at the time, which was 315 metres long. I was at Kooragang overseeing the new Chief Officer. I looked at his load plan and suggested we review it because this ship had been doing the run to Newcastle for 10 years but always sagged by 30 centimetres, so its cargo-carrying capacity was restricted.

"I reviewed previous plans and came up with a new one that had the vessel sagging just two centimetres and that loading was a record lift for the port. Everyone was cheering and I said, "Well, I would actually be disappointed, because imagine how much cargo was left behind over all those years!"

Louis used his time at sea and solving problems like that to build the "CargoMax Pro" software that essentially helps the Chief Officer load to the right draught and trim, and calculate how much is loaded.

"You could make a mistake so easily at 2am and the ramifications of making a mistake at that stage are quite severe. We have had some cases of vessels being overloaded, about 16 years ago, before surveyors were involved with helping the Master and they literally had to discharge cargo because the Chief Officer made calculation errors. Discharging cargo at a port that is designed to load is very difficult," Louis explained.

It's easy to see how intense those mistakes can be when you

stand on the deck of one of these coal ships. When @ The Coalface met Louis, we were lucky enough to get on board MV *Bear*, which was being loaded with steel-making coal to take to Ukraine.

The size of the job was unbelievable, and it was easy to see how one hold being loaded incorrectly could cause all sorts of issues.

With all the talk about transition and claims that coal's days are numbered, Louis firmly believes that the Port of Newcastle will continue to export coal for many, many years to come.

"The throughput for the port hasn't changed. It fluctuates with market demands but the reality is we have the best-quality coal in the world and, as we saw on MV *Bear*, that is key: that shipment is going to Ukraine because of its quality. They want good coal, not the poorer quality coal they can source closer to home.

"Newcastle has a strong future because of that quality and I think that will hold the region in good stead for some time," said Louis.

You can access *The Coalface* here: https://thecoalface.net.au/

Jess Rouse
The Coalface NSW and QLD

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AUSTRALIAN MARINE SURVEYS

Common big ship surveys

The two parts of this article were first published in July and November of 2020. They formed the first two articles in a series to address calls from members to have some "technical" articles.

I WOULD not class this article as "technical", but most of the technical stuff is nowadays handled by a computer program, so I am assuming some level of prior knowledge.

Consider this as a guide or a checklist only. We will not be discussing the actual calculations required; however, I do emphasise the importance of manual draught survey calculations to provide an understanding of the process. Our computers are a constant and reliable companion these days and we rely on them to a great extent; nonetheless, having the ability to conduct a timely manual calculation is good professional practice.

The article is based on my experiences and is my opinion only, as a genuine reflection of the real world I work in. The draught survey is quite simple – using a few tricky (accepted) formulas applied to the Archimedes Principle. Thank the Gods for the Greeks!

It is used for dry bulk cargo vessels but can be used on occasion for other vessels in unique circumstances (such as molasses tankers – see at end of article).

Reading draughts – no magic-bullet solutions, sorry. You must establish your own method and then compare with peers. You may be doing this in a mirror calm harbour or in two to three-metre swells at DBCT, so you may require several different approaches. I believe it is common for some to typically read a little high and some to typically read a little low. I am not talking about a C/O trying to get something for nothing but Australian-based surveyors operating in an acceptable manner and doing the job properly.

You may, in time, get feedback from a colleague at the discharge port to highlight your average accuracy. Over time, a preferred process will become apparent and you are on your way. If you can't get this right after a few weeks, I suggest you try something different.

Reading the off-side draughts – maybe via boat (not commonly accessible for surveyors these days), someone else who can read draughts who happens to be there in a boat (lines launch during tie up), water tube / manometer (ship's or own), using ladder (safety rules may prevent this in some places) or sending a camera down the side. (Any others?) These methods generally provide only the midship draught and shall be used on a case-by-case basis.

"How do I obtain the fore and aft off-side if only the mid-ship is known?" you may ask. "Usually by comparing the estimated width at water level of the draught marks with the mid-ship width," I would answer. Is it one-quarter, a half, etcetera?

Simply apply this to the read draughts and you have a reasonable estimate. Small differences in fore and aft draughts will make a minor difference in calculation of mean draughts, but difference in mid-ship draughts will have a much greater impact on the accuracy of the survey. (Note to self.) On some vessels, the forward draught marks are visible from the forecastle, thus leaving only the aft draught to estimate. This is a worthwhile exercise, as it will give a good idea of how well you estimate.

In what cases are accurate draughts important? "All," I hear you say! Generally, high-value cargoes like alumina, mineral sand, concentrates, etcetera, for obvious reasons. Coal and iron ore, for example, being big-volume revenue-earners, may call for somewhat less diligence, as dictated by industry and client acceptance of same, so, please, no self-righteous rants over this subject!

Calculate the corrected draughts using the appropriate distances corresponding to read draughts. What now? Keel corrections. This was almost a dirty word and I place the blame squarely with Chinese shipbuilders. Once such a thing was rare but now it is common. You can adjust your corrected fore, mid and aft draughts before calculating the quarter mean or calculate as read and then deduct.

Alternatively, your snazzy software may cater for this in some tricky way. (Ours does.) Nonetheless, it can be confusing if you wish to compare with C/O. Best compare the displacement in this case (getting to that shortly). It is important to read the "instruction" within the loading manual for how to calculate, so you can understand what is going on. Better still, only attend for Japanese-built with simple tables!

John Holden.

Once you have the mean of mean of means (quarter mean draught), then onto displacements. This is where the "tricky" maths occurs, including two trim corrections and a density correction (and, no, that's not a reference to your mental capacity). Dock-water density should be measured with a draught-survey hydrometer (the most common and industry-accepted being the ZEAL brand made in England), using a sample of water drawn from about mid-ships at half the vessel's mean draught. Density can also vary a lot during rainy seasons or if in a river, so take care and check often during these times.

Known weights – acceptance of engine room log fuel figures and freshwater figures is universal in Australia (okay, perhaps freshwater is occasionally checked), but ballast tends to go hand-in-glove with off-side draught reading: high-value cargo, check ballast; and high-volume cargo, agree constant. (See below.)

Constant – if it seems way too big, then likely it is. Ask for proof (previous surveys) or, better still, sound ballast to confirm. It is a good practice in any case. NB: Check for changed light ship weights due to fitting of exhaust scrubbers to comply with Sulphur Cap 2020.

Okay, so you have completed the initial – have you confirmed with C/O that you both have same displacement? Do you agree about the constant? Any other concerns?

Final survey – have they used freshwater or just turned it into grey water – did you discuss this at initial survey? (Note to self.) Discharge into harbours is strictly regulated!

Is ship listed (heeled) and is the manometer accurate? How do you check that? Are you using a ladder? Maybe a boat is available. Heeling gauges found in ship's office or ballast room may not be very accurate but give a reasonable idea to compare with manometer.

If loading (or unloading) at an established terminal, they may have reasonably accurate belt weighers that can greatly assist if required; they will certainly be used for cargo distribution, as there is little else to go by.

Some vessel loading programs will be quite accurate for this as another option but don't rely on that.

There you go – simple! Well, it may sound simple, but we have not discussed the biggest issue we all face: communication! Just remember that draught survey is only 10 per cent mathematics, and success comes down to how well you get along with the Master and C/O.

Good luck.

What is the correct spelling: "draught" or "draft"? I am in the "draught" camp; however, if your client wants "draft", just do it! That bit really is simple!

My parting advice – if things are not working out, slow down, check thoroughly and don't panic. When all seems lost, phone a friend. The Australasian Institute of Marine Surveyors has many dedicated, experienced members who will support you to become the competent, ethical surveyor we are renowned for.

So, now you all realise that this was not a technical article after all. I did try to warn you! However, I trust it has been helpful for some and entertaining for others. No doubt it will upset a few. We are a weird bunch like that! At the end of the day, it is simply to help those who are starting this journey.

Conundrum to help avoid Alzheimer's disease: why do a draught survey of a tanker with a molasses cargo? Answer, next time!

Hang on, what's a conundrum?

Common big ship surveys, Part 2

Here, in Part 2, I will share my experiences of On and Off Hire Surveys from a survey practitioner's point of view.

On and Off Hire Surveys go hand-in-glove – "a pigeon pair", one might say! Simply put, these surveys are conducted to provide a before and after perspective to enable a client or clients to come to a mutual agreement on the changes to condition of a vessel during a given period of hire or charter, and establish responsibility for any costs arising from these changes.

In the same way as car hire companies request you walk around before and after hiring to gauge condition and sign a waiver stating who will pay for what – a differentiation between damage and fair wear and tear!

Additionally, the quantity of bunkers (fuel) on board before and after may be assessed for the same reason. On and Off Hire Surveys may require both bunkers and condition to be established; however, this will depend on how the hire agreement or charter party is written.

Marine surveyors will be engaged for such surveys, with the appointment stating whether bunkers, condition or both should be assessed and reported to the appointing client. As with all such engagements, it is most important that the scope of work is clearly understood, and concerned parties are aware of the intention to conduct the surveys.

This is especially important if you have to travel; there is nothing worse than getting on board a vessel, only to find that the Master is not aware of the requirement and exercises their right to refuse you access to the vessel or crew to conduct the surveys.

So, key take-out number 1 – positive communication is key! If issues arise, this is where it will generally start. Focus on the appointment – you are looking at condition (and maybe bunkers), not conducing a hold cleanliness inspection.

Okay. You have all the preliminaries in hand, you have arranged permission to attend the terminal of facility to access the vessel, and you may also have gathered relevant information to assist with efficiently conducting the required surveys. Take some photos of the vessel at berth (or elsewhere as the case may be) and read the forward and aft draughts to enable calculation of vessel trim if doing a bunker survey. Please make sure you are allowed to take photos, as some facilities and vessels require prior permission for this to take place.

Once on board the vessel, introduce yourself to the Chief Officer or Master, stating why you are there. If doing bunkers, request to meet the Chief Engineer. Depending upon the situation, you may need to do some juggling with your time on board so all the survey tasks can be managed in a reasonable timeframe.

If the vessel is about to load, you should consider how your survey activities may impact cargo operations. You must also consider how to get bunker tank soundings and do cargo hold or other inspections at the same time.

Soundings should be taken prior to cargo / ballast operations so the vessel is not moving about. You will need about 20 to 30 minutes for this. "But how do I also inspect the ship at the same time?" I hear you ask. Cleverly allocate your resources. Consider not entering the first loading hold if you are conducting cargo-hold inspections; rather, take some notes and photos from deck level. If the ship-loader has positioned above that hold, it will provide enough light for night-time photos.

While the loading operations and ship-shore checks are being conducted, you can take the bunker soundings, then go back to inspections. (Ensure all terminal, ship and your own safety requirements are being met – hatch-covers positioning and radio / phone communication, for example). You should always have a ship crew member accompanying you as a spotter.

Never enter holds that are not partially open – ask the ship to test the atmosphere if uncertain – and never enter if wood products or chemicals have been previously carried without a full risk assessment. Cargo holds may be considered "confined spaces" in some instances; however, approached with caution, they are more often referred to as "restricted spaces" or "enclosed spaces". This is a rather grey area and open to a great deal of interpretation and debate.

As a ship surveyor, you will likely consider a cargo hold as a place of work, since crew are regularly required to enter and work in these spaces during hold cleaning and maintenance. Cargo spaces on tankers, however, are most definitely "confined spaces".

So, now that you are completely knackered and wet with sweat from climbing all those ladders, you can advise the C/O and ship-loader that you have completed your inspections and go back to calculating the bunkers.

Key take-out number 2 – safety, communication (again), time management, fitness and not impacting cargo operations. Although some terminals may wait for inspections to take place, it will inevitably be recorded as a delay on account of the appointing party, so I suggest you avoid causing any such delays unless agreed prior to the job.

I am making the assumption

that it is an on-hire, you are attending alone, and the vessel is a bulk carrier or similar. Of course, this may not be the case. It may be a barge, a tug, or any number of other vessels or craft that are hired or chartered. If the scenario is applied to off-hire, all the same principals apply. You may have to contend with remnant cargo; however, you must focus on the scope of appointment and see through this to describe condition. Mention the residual cargo by all means, but do not focus on it.

If you have enough personnel, I suggest attending with two surveyors, so that all the required tasks can be adequately completed in a timely manner, especially if the job involves substantial inspection time – a cape-size ship or a large multi-compartment barge, for example.

Key take-out number 3 – although principles remain the same, scope of appointment and circumstances will dictate how the job should best be undertaken.

I am not going into detail of bunker surveys here, as this will give me something to write about next time, nonetheless, you will find that they will test your mettle – and your patience.

Reporting styles vary greatly within our profession and there is no standard that would dictate best practice – in my humble opinion. The more traditional reporting styles will include a lot of information which is readily available to the clients in our internet-connected world. A modern reporting style may be tabular, contain only basic vessel identifiers and concentrate on the scope by providing little more than condition descriptions supported by photographic evidence.

The ease with which we can share high-quality photos has completely changed how we report. Personally, I prefer the middle ground with reporting – sufficient vessel-specific information with tabulated condition description and quality, meaningful photos. This is a very individual thing that develops between you and your clients. If they like your style, they will come back for more!

Key take-out number 4 – the resulting report that clients pay for is open to your own nterpretation. Most of us have taken the best bits from others and come up with our own style.

"I am not getting many on hire jobs" you say. This marine surveying business is a bit like hull fouling – it takes some time to grow but, once established, it can flourish under the right conditions. There are no secret recipes for success, so you must stick with it for the long term and offer cost-effective, quality service and reports if you want to get onto clients' radar. When I say cost-effective, I do not mean cheap.

It is a fickle business: clients will pay for good service, ethics and trustworthiness – but not too much.

Key take-out number 5 – you cannot build a successful business on these surveys alone and it is more of a supplement to your core business. The market is competitive, and it takes time to establish your reputation and client base.

Equipment revolution!

When people started using mobile-phone cameras about six years ago, I was somewhat skeptical. Would they provide the sort of image quality I was used to after having a high-end compact camera that could take photos in extreme, low-light conditions? However, I am a convert. For several years, I have used my smart phone camera with excellent results.

The software trickery enables very good quality photos across a wide range of conditions, both day and night. You may need to do some homework before you buy but, if you choose wisely, your phone can achieve great results as your principal camera, communications device and at-hand computer all in one.

This is the single greatest advance for a professional who is constantly on the move: constant communication, being on time for jobs and meetings, accessing scheduling and berthing web pages, and recording quality images to use in our reports.

Another item I have come to rely on in recent years is a quality, powerful headlight. This is attached to my safety helmet and offers two levels of brightness and adjustment from spread to spot beam. It is good enough to readily read draughts at distances up to 20 metres, so it provides more than adequate light for cargo-hold inspections.

The beauty of a headlight is that you still have both hands free to climb ladders and operate your camera / phone, thus improving safety while working. The additional weight soon becomes unnoticeable and you find yourself using it in all manner of situations where you require decent light – traversing decks, taking soundings, and noting features and damages, to name a few. The model I have is an intrinsically safe unit that I can use on tankers and in tank farms and petroleum terminals.

I trust that this will provide a few insights for those who are starting out in this field.

John Holden F.A.I.M.S
Managing Director – Marine Surveyor
SEAWEIGH Pty Ltd
Past Chair of AIMS

ATSB releases *Coral Adventurer* grounding preliminary report

AN ATSB preliminary report has outlined the order of events leading up to the grounding of the cruise ship *Coral Adventurer* near a remote port on the north-east coast of Papua New Guinea in December.

THE ATSB launched a transport safety investigation after the 93-metre Australian-flagged ship *Coral Adventurer* grounded on the morning of 27 December 2025, with 80 passengers and 44 crew on board.

The cruise, which had left Cairns 10 days earlier, had visited several sites in Papua New Guinea, with passages between them generally conducted overnight. On the morning of the accident, the ship was towards the end of one such overnight passage, from Lababia to Dregerhafen.

The planned route to enter Dregerhafen involved first turning to port, so the ship could pass south of Nussing Island, and then turning to starboard, to continue towards the harbour entrance.

During the night, the chief mate had made a small change to this route in the ship's Electronic Chart Display and Information System (or "ECDIS", the ship's digital navigation system), intending to smooth out the second turn.

At about 0512, as the ship approached Dregerhafen, the chief mate attempted to select this modified route in the ECDIS, but found it would not load until a "route safety check" had been performed via the ECDIS's route editor function.

While the chief mate was addressing this issue, the ship travelled past its first waypoint for the planned turn to port.

After resolving the ECDIS issue and realising the waypoint had been missed, the chief mate switched the steering from autopilot to manual, to expedite the turn to port and quickly regain the planned track.

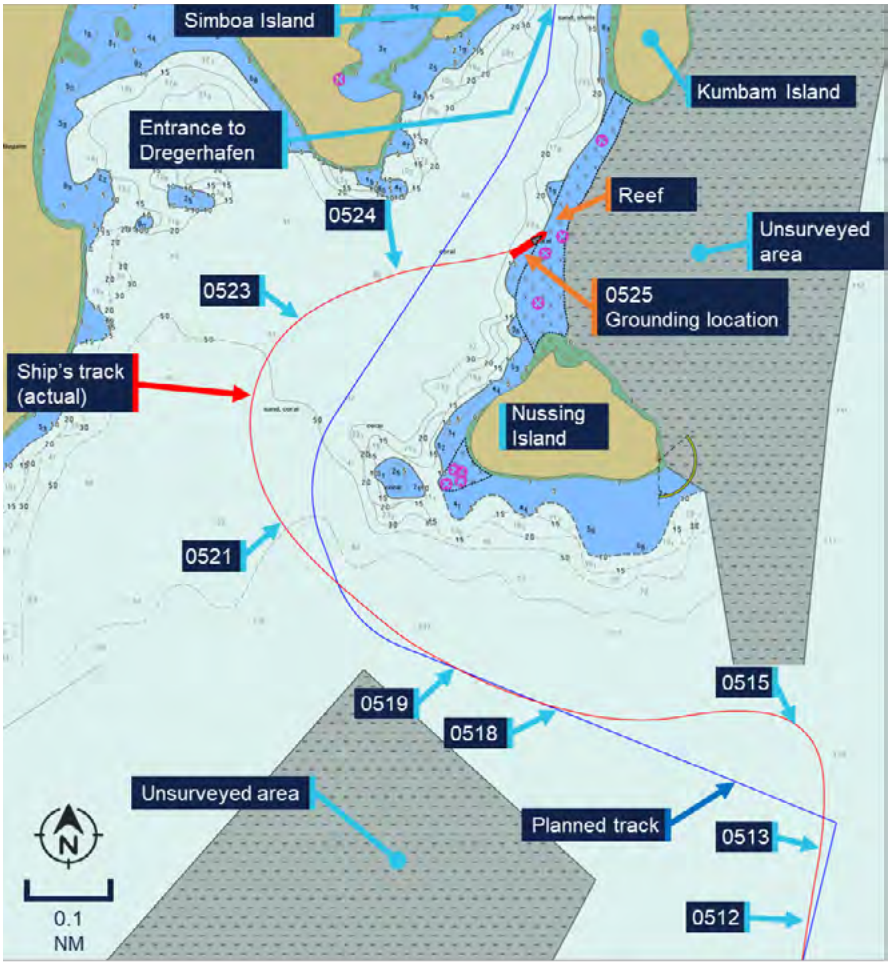
"During this hard manual turn, the ship slowed considerably, to 3.8 knots," ATSB Chief Commissioner Angus Mitchell said. "The chief mate, perceiving the loss of speed was due to a strong current, increased the RPM setting of both Azipull thrusters."

At about 0518, the ship had returned to the planned track, and the chief mate switched the steering mode back to autopilot. Speed had now increased to around 8 knots, 2.5 knots higher than planned.

As the ship arrived at the wheel-over point for its second turn, the chief mate altered course to starboard but the ship did not turn as quickly as anticipated, resulting in a wider than planned turn.

With the ship now travelling at 8.5 knots and roughly 200 metres west of its planned track, the chief mate switched back to manual steering and increased the rate of turn.

"At this point, in dark conditions and without navigational aids or lights ashore, the chief mate reported being unable to



visually identify the surrounding topography in relation to what was being shown on the ECDIS," Mr Mitchell explained.

The preliminary report notes the master arrived on the bridge around this time, however the ship continued past the planned track and grounded on a reef about 160 metres east of it.

Coral Adventurer came to rest and was heeled over about 6 degrees to port. There were no reported injuries to those on board. The ship sustained hull indentation damage, and some structural deformation.

After initial refloating efforts were unsuccessful, all passengers were disembarked on 30 December 2025. The ship was refloated a short time later, and navigated to a safe anchorage for further assessment.

ATSB investigators attended *Coral Adventurer* while at anchor to collect relevant recorded data and documentary evidence, and to interview members of the ship's crew.

Mr Mitchell said collection of other relevant evidence is being progressed, and the investigation was continuing, with analysis and findings to be developed for publication in a final report.

"As the investigation progresses, it will consider the data captured by the ship's voyage data recorder, as well as available CCTV footage," Mr Mitchell said.

"Investigators will also analyse human factors considerations, and will review the ship and its operator's passage planning and navigation procedures, including resource management.

"There will also be a review of the ship's emergency response procedures, and overall safety oversight."

If a critical safety issue is identified during the investigation, Mr Mitchell said the ATSB would immediately notify relevant parties.

"The final report will contain analysis and findings, as well as any safety actions taken, or our recommendations for such actions to be taken," he concluded.

Read the preliminary report: Grounding of Coral Adventurer, Nussing Island (100 km east of Lae), Papua New Guinea, on 27 December 2025 | ATSB

Australian Transport Safety Bureau
(Publication Date - 12/03/2026)

Coral Adventurer.

Is third-party marine inspection finished in Australia?

COSCO Shipping just quietly asked the question Australian maritime hasn't been willing to answer.

They posted a role. PSC Inspector and Cargo Operation Interpreter. Direct employment. Dual language. Post-PSC experience required. PSC Inspector Job

This isn't a cargo owner deciding to vet their ships more carefully. This is one of the world's largest ship operators deciding to build that capability internally. They know the inspection market. They use it. And they've decided to employ the competency directly instead.

No contractor arrangement. No daily rate. No four-letter acronym certifying something that three letters wouldn't justify charging for.

Just: here is a qualified person, we will employ them, and they will know our operation from the inside.

The third-party inspection model was always a compromise.

It assumed independence meant value. It assumed a rotating cast of inspectors, armed with laminated checklists and a rate card, delivered safer outcomes than someone embedded in the operation.

Findings from Fremantle get repackaged for Brisbane. Checklist from a tanker gets applied to a bulk carrier. $4,000 a day. Invoice rendered. Certificate issued.

And the industry accepted it, because the alternative, actually building internal competency, required investment and accountability.

Let's talk about those checklists.

Some third-party providers present enormous inspection schedules as proprietary methodology. Hundreds of line items. Colour-coded. Branded. Impressive at first glance.

They aren't proprietary. Port State Control inspection criteria are published openly by AMSA on their website. Always have been. That's the floor, minimum statutory compliance, not a value-add. Dressing a public regulatory checklist in corporate livery and charging $4,000 a day for it is not inspection. It's theatre.

And the four-letter acronym programmes? Three letters wouldn't justify the fee structure. The additional letter earns its keep on the invoice, not on the vessel.

I worked with one company that genuinely wanted to get it right. Good people. Serious intent. They arrived with an eighty page checklist for every vessel arrival into Australia.

I looked at it and asked one question: if you are doing all of that, what exactly am I here for?

The checklist had become the product. The expertise had been designed out of the process entirely. A competent inspector applies judgement to context. An 80-page checklist applies uniformity to everything, which means it is actually responsive to nothing.

Then there's currency.

One provider was found referencing Marine Notices that were out of date. Not by days. By years. The regulatory landscape had moved on. Flag state requirements had changed. AMSA had issued updated guidance. The checklist hadn't moved.

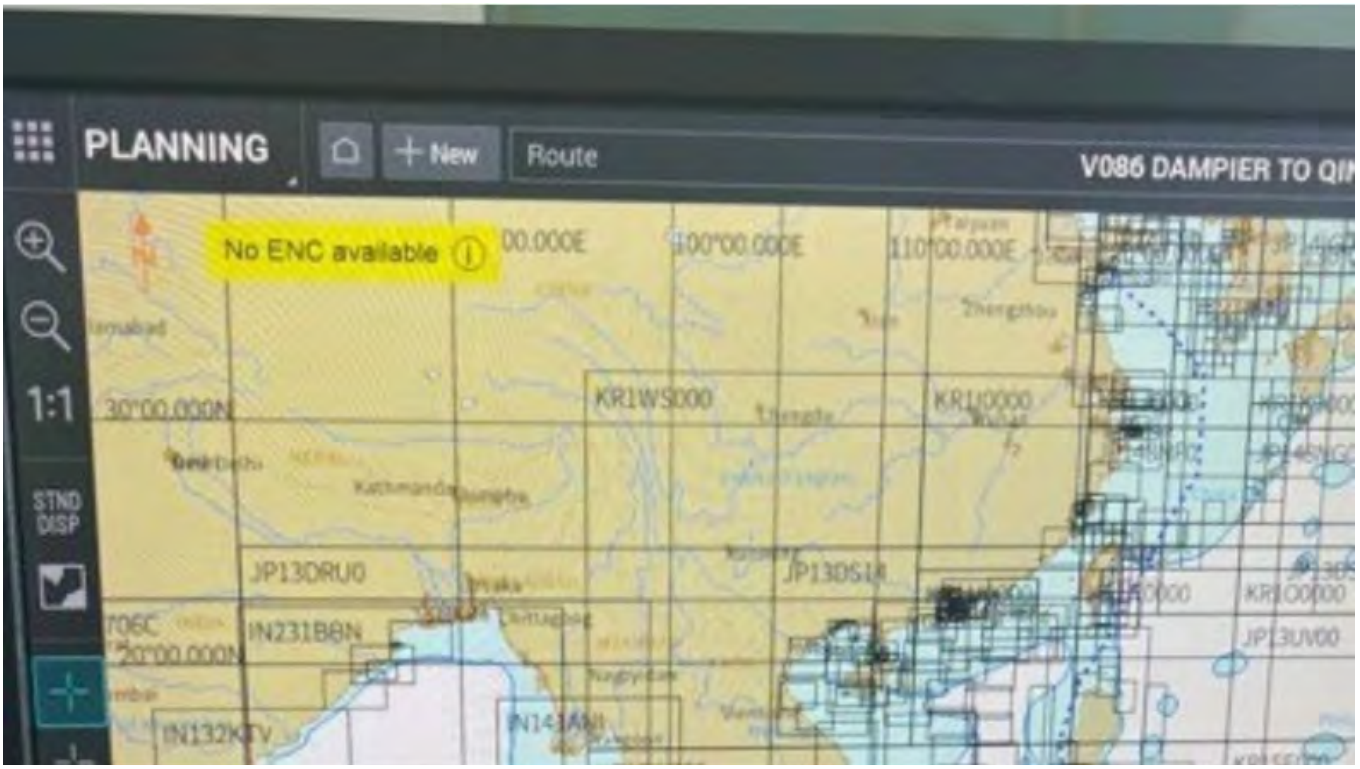
The inspector arrived with a document set that was years behind the current position. Confidently. Professionally. With a branded folder.

Nobody on the client side knew. That's the point.

Then there's the data integrity problem. And it's worse than it looks.

One operator runs what appears, on paper, to be a robust internal quality system. Documented processes. Audit trails. Quality assurance language throughout the marketing material.

The same spelling errors appear in every report. Every one. Across different vessels. Different ports. Different inspectors. Flowing through unchanged,



Port Dampier.

unchallenged, right up until the invoice is signed.

Not different errors reflecting different authors. The same errors. Copy. Paste. Invoice.

But the deeper problem isn't the spelling.

A third-party inspector is engaged by one operator on one side of the country. In the course of that engagement, they identify deficiencies, findings that belong to that client, that vessel, that trade. Findings the client paid to have identified.

Those findings reappear. In reports prepared for a different client, on the other side of Australia. Dressed as original analysis. Used to demonstrate how thorough, how rigorous, how valuable the inspection programme is.

Look how much we find, the report implies.

What it doesn't say is where it found it, who it belonged to, or who else is reading it now.

That's not a quality assurance system. That's a recycling operation with an invoice attached.

Then there are the LinkedIn posts.

An inspector, sometimes one who has recently hung their shingle after a career with a maritime authority, announces that they intervened to prevent a vessel from Port State Control detention. The post is measured, professional. The comments are warm. Industry connections offer congratulations.

It's understandable. Prevention is the goal. Nobody wants a detained vessel.

But consider the other side of that equation.

A PSC inspector who identifies deficiencies serious enough to warrant detention has a different obligation. Not to the operator. Not to the relationship. To the standard. To the seafarers who will sail on that vessel. The deficiency is real, the detention is the consequence, and the consequence exists because the alternative is a vessel in trade that shouldn't be.

The honest conversation, the one that actually helps the industry, isn't "we saved you from detention." It's "here is what we found, here is why it matters, here is how you prevent this from happening again." Identify it. Name it. Explain the context. That's how an operator learns. That's how a fleet improves.

A celebrated save, without the honest debrief behind it, is a deferred problem.

The vessel will trade again. The deficiency culture that produced the problem doesn't disappear because the paperwork cleared this time.

And then there is the question nobody asks about the inspector themselves.

Some entering this space come fresh from sea. Knowledgeable about their own vessel, their own trade, their own flag state experience. That knowledge is real and it has value.

But there are 80,000 ships out there. Different flag states. Different classification societies. Different trade patterns. Different SMS cultures. Different

interpretations of the same convention applied across a hundred administrations.

Deep knowledge of one ship does not transfer automatically to the fleet.

The question that should be asked of every new entrant is a simple one: did you complete a recognised induction into PSC methodology and flag state inspection frameworks, or did you complete a refresher course on what you already knew? The two are not the same thing. One builds capability across the breadth of the fleet. The other reinforces a single vessel's perspective and calls it expertise.

A one-week induction is not the same as a career of cross-fleet inspection experience. The industry has been too polite to say so.

Port Hedland just published a bulletin that makes the argument better than I can. Thanks Behrouz Daei zadeh

The background section is worth reading slowly. It states that, for an extended period, industry stakeholders had been requesting alignment and standardisation of documentation across the port.

One of the world's major bulk export gateways. Inconsistent vetting. For an extended period. The market was supposed to be providing assurance. The Harbour Master has stepped in to impose a baseline because it wasn't.

Now read Section 10. The vetting form goes to the receiving terminal. Pilbara Ports does not require routine submission. The Harbour Master may request a copy at any stage.

"May request"

The Harbour Master is making channel integrity and pilotage decisions. The document those decisions depend on goes to the terminal. Not to the Harbour Master. Not routinely. The port authority sees what the terminal shares, or what it specifically asks for.

Then read Section 7. Third-party vetting organisations must use the Port Hedland form. Third-party inspection companies must have their scope approved by Pilbara Ports.

Nowhere does the bulletin specify what qualifications the inspector must hold. The scope can be approved. The person executing it can be whoever the company sends.

And then the compliance clause.

Acceptance of any vetting form, pre-berthing checklist or machinery inspection report does not constitute certification of the vessel's condition. It does not relieve the owner, operator or master of their statutory obligations.

The form is relied upon for pilotage and berthing decisions. Accepting it certifies nothing.

That tension is not a drafting error. It is an honest acknowledgement of where liability sits. But read alongside everything else in the bulletin, it maps precisely where the third-party inspection market has failed.

The port authority has stepped in and set the baseline. The qualification of the person conducting the inspection remains unaddressed. The Harbour Master does not routinely see the results. And when the form is accepted, it confers no certification of the vessel's actual condition.

This is not a criticism of the Harbour Master or of Pilbara Ports. The bulletin is a genuine and necessary step forward. Standardisation matters. Triggered physical inspections for first callers, vessels with recent machinery failures and PSC detentions are the right risk controls.

But a standardised form completed by an unqualified inspector is a standardised record of an unreliable assessment.

That gap is not filled by another checklist. It is filled by competent people.

The Fremantle incident is worth addressing directly, because the industry drew the wrong lesson from it.

A cargo gear incident occurred in Fremantle. The equipment had been inspected. It passed. Then it failed. The Harbour Master – Savio Fernandes, AFNI – became directly involved. There were issues serious enough to warrant that level of intervention.

The response from some quarters was predictable: we need a new rule. Tighter regulation. A new framework.

We don't.

Marine Order 32 is written in plain English. The Australian Government's own style guidance requires that regulatory instruments be readable by the people they govern, not just legal professionals. Marine Order 32 meets that standard. It is not complex. It is not ambiguous. It is written to be picked up, read and applied by the people it governs.

What it requires is not legal knowledge. It requires that the person holding the clipboard actually understands what they are looking at. The cargo. The vessel. The trade. The actual conditions at the berth. Not a checklist abstraction of those things. The real thing, in front of them, on the day.

The inspection passed. The gear failed.

If the inspection failed, the

regulation did not. The person did.

That's not a regulatory gap. That's a competency gap. No new rule fills a competency gap. It just gives the next incompetent inspector a longer checklist to misapply.

Consider the asymmetry. Marine pilotage in Australia requires demonstrated competency in approved simulators or on-water checks, assessed against a defined standard, revalidated year-on-year, independently verified, and regulated by some ports – though not all are. A pilot who cannot demonstrate current competency does not board a vessel. That standard exists because the consequences of getting it wrong are immediate and visible

Inspection has no equivalent requirement. Anyone can hang a shingle. Anyone can issue a report. The consequences of getting it wrong are deferred, diffuse and rarely traced back to the person who signed the report.

The industry doesn't need more regulation. It needs people who understand the regulations that already exist, and the operational reality those regulations are designed to govern.

And at the far end of the spectrum: conduct that goes beyond incompetence.

One organisation operating in this space misrepresented the nature and scope of inspections it had conducted. Not ambiguously. Not through poor record-keeping. It misrepresented what its inspectors had actually attended.

The consequence was direct. The flag state reviewed the evidence and removed the organisation's authorisation entirely.

Not suspended. Removed.

That's the endpoint of a market that prices availability over competency and brand over substance. When the authority with the most to lose, the flag state itself, concludes that the representation cannot be trusted, the certificate means nothing and the model is exposed.

We faced this competency question directly when we built the world's first accredited Diploma of Marine Surveying in Australia.

The 1912 Navigation Act made no provision for a private marine surveyor. The only recognised surveyor was one appointed by government. If you were operating independently, the Act had nothing to say about your competency, because it didn't contemplate you existed.

The diploma changed that, at least in part. A benchmark. Evidence that you could actually do the work.

But the diploma answered the surveying question. It didn't answer the inspection question. That conversation is overdue.

So, is third-party inspection finished in Australia?

Not entirely. There is a legitimate role for independent eyes, flag state, P&I, charterers with genuine verification interests. The structure isn't inherently broken.

But COSCO Shipping's move signals something the market hasn't wanted to say plainly: an operator running one of the world's largest fleets is no longer confident the third-party inspection market is delivering competent, independent, current work. They'd rather own the function, employ the person and build the institutional knowledge internally.

When a company operating hundreds of vessels across every major trade route decides to bring inspection in-house and keep it there, that's a signal worth reading. They aren't doing it because it's cheaper. They're doing it because it's better.

The roulette wheel of third-party rates, full Australian dollars here, half that in the UK, lottery odds in the US, has always reflected availability, not competency.

The industry has tolerated this because the alternative is harder.

Defining competency is uncomfortable. It requires acknowledging that a certificate of attendance is not a certificate of competency. It requires someone to say: this is the floor, below which we will not operate.

Australia started that conversation for marine surveyors with the accredited diploma.

The inspection side of the market hasn't had it yet.

COSCO Shipping just started it. Port Hedland has identified the gap. The rest of the industry is still looking the other way.

The floor exists. The industry just hasn't decided where it is.

The next flag state will. The next cargo incident will. The next detained vessel whose inspection report was a recycled checklist signed off by the wrong person will.

17) The question is whether the industry gets there first.

And if you want to know how to inspect with effect, reach out. Not hard to find me. Most countries can.

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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 king 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

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.

This article appeared in the February-March 2026 edition of *DCN Magazine*.

Dr Eric Perez
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AGSA Scheme, AIMS and Grain Accreditation Advisor

Marine surveyors: navigating the risks, looking to the future

The marine surveying profession continues to evolve through workforce diversification, technological advancement and expanding specialisation.

GLOBAL trade depends upon the safe, efficient movement of goods across oceans, air and land. Yet, behind every successful voyage, sits a discipline that is often unseen, undervalued and misunderstood: marine surveying.

Acting as a critical backbone of maritime commerce, marine surveyors provide independent, factual assurance that vessels, cargo and infrastructure meet stringent safety, regulatory and operational standards. Through skilled inspection, measurement and analysis, they help protect assets, manage risk and uphold trust across the maritime ecosystem.

Marine surveying is not easily explained in a single sentence. It encompasses a broad and diverse range of responsibilities, from inspecting hull integrity and verifying cargo condition to investigating incidents and assessing environmental risks.

These services safeguard shipowners, insurers, regulators and cargo interests alike, while supporting the reliability of global supply chains that depend on secure, timely delivery. Without accurate and impartial surveys, the risk of accidents, delays and financial loss would increase significantly.

In today's increasingly interconnected and technically complex economy, marine surveyors are required to adapt continuously. Climate change, evolving regulatory frameworks and rapid technological advancement – such as remote inspection tools, data analytics and artificial intelligence – are reshaping how surveying services are delivered.

By embracing innovation while maintaining technical rigour and professional integrity, marine surveyors continue to deliver critical value. While much of their work occurs behind the scenes, its impact is felt across every port, shipping lane and logistics network worldwide.

Scope and importance of marine surveying

Marine surveying plays a vital role across a range of industries, including insurance, maritime operations, logistics, engineering and infrastructure. The discipline spans a wide scope of services, such as:

- ❏ hold inspections;
- ❏ loading and discharge surveys;
- ❏ draft surveys;
- ❏ cargo superintendence;
- ❏ maritime warranty surveys;
- ❏ marine incident investigations;
- ❏ audits and compliance inspections; and
- ❏ pleasure craft inspections and valuations.

As global trade continues to expand and maritime operations grow more complex, the role of marine surveyors has become increasingly important. Their work underpins decision-making, supports risk mitigation strategies and contributes directly to the safe and efficient movement of goods.

In the insurance sector, marine surveyors assess risk exposure across vessels, cargo and transit operations. They investigate losses, quantify damage and provide objective reporting that informs claims outcomes, premium calculations and important decisions. Importantly, the scope of marine surveying extends beyond ocean transport to include road, rail and air freight, reflecting the integrated nature of modern supply chains.

In more traditional operational roles, marine surveyors conduct pre-loading hold inspections to confirm that vessels are fit to receive cargo and free from conditions that could lead to contamination or damage.

Loading and discharge surveys document cargo condition, oversee handling and stowage arrangements and help resolve disputes by providing clear, contemporaneous evidence. Draft surveys remain a critical tool for determining cargo weight, supporting transparency between shipowners, charterers, cargo interests and port authorities.

Incident investigation is another core pillar of marine surveying. When maritime accidents or failures occur, surveyors combine technical expertise with analytical and reporting skills to establish cause, assess damage and identify contributing factors.

These findings not only support claims resolution and legal processes but also contribute to improved safety practices and loss prevention across the industry. In parallel, audit and compliance services

help ensure vessels and operators meet national and international regulatory requirements.

Beyond commercial shipping, marine surveyors also play an essential role in the recreational boating sector. Inspections and valuations of pleasure craft provide reassurance to private owners, support insurance placement and protect asset value in resale scenarios.

These examples represent only a portion of the profession's breadth. Marine surveyors also contribute expertise in insurance loss adjusting, marine engineering and naval architecture, applying specialised knowledge to complex technical challenges across the maritime landscape.

Evolution of marine surveying workforce

Marine surveyors were traditionally drawn largely from seafaring backgrounds, often master mariners or senior officers with extensive operational experience at sea.

While this pathway remains valuable, the profession has evolved significantly. Increasing regulatory complexity, advances in technology and heightened risk awareness have driven a shift towards a more diverse, onshore-based and formally-educated workforce.

Today's marine surveyors may specialise in areas such as cargo operations, compliance auditing, offshore energy, marine infrastructure or forensic investigation. Educational institutions and professional bodies have responded by developing targeted training programs covering maritime law, ship management, risk assessment, safety systems and advanced surveying techniques.

This evolution has broadened the talent pool, enabling those without traditional seafaring careers, but with strong analytical, technical or engineering skills, to enter the profession.

Workforce ageing and the risk of "skill drain"

Despite these advancements, the marine surveying profession faces an ageing-workforce challenge. Many experienced surveyors are approaching retirement age and, in some cases, the physical demands of fieldwork are no longer sustainable.

Without proactive succession planning, the industry risks a significant loss of institutional knowledge (often referred to as a "skill drain").

Addressing this challenge requires deliberate collaboration across industry stakeholders. Knowledge transfer through structured mentorship, work-shadowing and apprenticeship-style programs is essential.

Support from larger organisations, industry bodies and regional skills development initiatives can help fund and formalise these pathways, ensuring critical expertise is passed to the next generation.

Training, compliance and the need for collaboration

Education and training remain among the most significant barriers to entry for aspiring marine surveyors. While theoretical learning is widely available – often through online or international institutions – practical, supervised experience is essential to achieving professional competency.

Smaller surveying businesses often struggle to absorb the financial and operational burden of traineeships, while larger organisations must balance training investment against commercial pressures.

Regulatory requirements further complicate the process, as many authorities mandate a specific number of supervised assignments completed alongside certified surveyors before formal recognition is granted. In a competitive market, this can present practical and commercial challenges.

At the same time, marine surveyors must continually update their knowledge to remain compliant with evolving legislation, standards and industry best practice. Ongoing professional development is critical but adds further pressure to already demanding workloads.

These challenges reinforce the need for industry-wide collaboration. Educational institutions, professional bodies, regulators and employers must work together to create clear, accessible pathways into the profession. Raising awareness of marine surveying as a viable and rewarding career – through engagement with schools, universities and adjacent industries such as engineering and logistics – will be a key to attracting new talent.

Diversity, inclusion and work-life balance

Like much of the maritime sector, marine surveying has historically experienced low levels of diversity, particularly gender diversity. Encouraging greater participation from women and other under-represented groups is not only a matter of equity but also of performance.

Diverse teams bring broader perspectives, enhanced problem-solving capability and greater adaptability in a rapidly changing environment.

Work-life balance presents another ongoing challenge. Marine surveying rarely operates within standard business hours. Inspections, incidents and cargo operations often occur around the clock, creating unpredictable schedules that can impact personal and family life.

While this reality will not disappear, greater flexibility, team-based delivery models and the intelligent use of technology may help create more sustainable working arrangements – vital in attracting and retaining younger professionals.

The digital tide - technology transforming marine surveying

Marine surveying is undergoing a profound digital transformation. Once dominated by manual inspections, hard-copy references and paper-based reporting, the profession is increasingly supported by advanced technology that enhances safety, accuracy and efficiency.

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs), remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) and robotics now enable high-resolution inspections of vessels, offshore structures and subsea infrastructure without the need for high-risk physical access. Equipped with imaging systems and advanced sensors, these tools allow surveyors to capture detailed data more safely and efficiently.

Real-time monitoring systems embedded in vessels and cargo provide continuous insight into structural integrity, vibration and environmental conditions. Combined with predictive analytics, this data supports proactive maintenance strategies and reduces the risk of costly failures on downtime.

Artificial intelligence and data analytics are further transforming raw survey data into actionable insight. Automated image recognition, trend analysis and cloud-based reporting platforms allow surveyors to collaborate in real-time and deliver timely, consistent outcomes across global operations. Emerging applications of augmented and virtual reality also enable remote support and virtual walkthroughs during complex inspections.

While the pace of digital change can appear confronting, it ultimately supports a safer, smarter and more resilient marine surveying profession – one that is well equipped to meet the demands of an increasingly complex maritime world.

Looking ahead

Marine surveying remains a vital pillar of the maritime industry, supporting safety, efficiency and confidence across global trade. Its impact spans insurance, logistics, engineering and infrastructure, with surveyors playing a critical role in managing risk and protecting value.

The profession continues to evolve through workforce diversification, technological advancement and expanding specialisation. However, challenges related to education pathways, workforce ageing, diversity and work-life balance must be addressed to ensure long-term sustainability.

By fostering collaboration, investing in training and embracing innovation, the marine surveying industry can attract the next generation of professionals and continue to deliver trusted expertise in an ever-changing global environment.

In doing so, marine surveyors will remain not just observers of maritime activity, but essential contributors to its safe and successful future.

This article appeared in the February | March 2026 edition of *DCN Magazine*.

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Merchant Navy commemoration service

THE Australasian Institute of Marine Surveyors CEO Dr Eric Perez partnered with MNWMF Chairman and Master of Ceremonies Sean Barrett for laying of a wreath to remember the Merchant Navy sailors who have crossed the seas to return no more.

The one minute's silence ended with eight bells, rung by Garry Marks. "Who are they?" it whispered in mind of all. "Perhaps they are those that were not forgotten for the price that they paid for the nation."

Then Sean Barrett declared it was the 61st annual coomemoration Merchant Navy War Memorial and Columbarium in Sydney. Then the Last Post was played by the bugler, a sound that brought out memories. David Young did it justice.

The Rouse sounded. The flag attendants, the McKenzie sisters, Callisto and Tanzin, were on duty and did not disappoint as the flags went from half-mast to the masthead.

The officiating clergy – Sister Mary Leahy, OAM, Chaplain Apostleship of the Sea and John Kewa, Lay Chaplain Missions to Seafarers – brought spiritual significance to the occasion, as Josh Clark, the Music Director, set the tone with "Abide with Me".

We were reminded that Jesus Christ did calm the sea, then beckoned the preacher to be a sea calmer for others, as Merrill Barker brought the gospel of Matthew 8: 23-27 to our attention.

Occasions of this nature will never end without a poem. It was in memory of the ones who crossed the bar since April 2025.

"Crossing the Bar" is a poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. "Sunset and Evening Star" was recited. The flags were not left out in the address, with an explanation how the Red Ensign, the Merchant Navy flag, keeps flying, and to maintain the course for the laying of the wreaths after Captain Mark McIntosh, RAN (Rtd), delivered the guest of honour 2026 Merchant Navy address.

Capt Bronswijik gave the ode, "Lest We Forget".

The Australasian Institute of Marine Surveyors, represented by Chief Dr. Emmanuel Ezekiel-Hart, was called to lay the wreath for AIMS.

They went to sea but did not return, yet they died on national assignment, encountering wars and battles with courage to deliver supplies and recover battles' essentials and casualties, their graves no family can visit or care for. Their hope for national recognition remains a pressure point as an issue still today. Who shall save the service and sacrifice of the Australian Merchant Navy seafarers. Remember o' nations that deployed the Merchant Navy, they died not with a gun in their hands but in the supply of war materials under the command of national assignment.

At the ceremony at the Merchant Navy War Memorial in Sydney, I reflected further about the meaning of the occasion with each step with the wreath.

It dawned on me that I am a Merchant Navy seafarer who returned to tell the story. We served as unsung heroes. Some of us did not return to our families, making the seas the last resting

place at the seabed or within a ship under the sea.

The nation may forget them because they did not bear arms for the nation, yet they faced more dangers and risk to their lives supplying, receiving and transporting the necessities of war, as well as troops and the wounded. It is not too much to ask that the Merchant Navy emblem receive funding for fast installation on existing war memorials throughout Australia, along with equal recognition of the Merchant Navy Ensign on National Flag Day, and reinstatement of the Merchant Navy Flag on the top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and on the Bridge pylons.

The recognition of the Merchant Navy within the Australian War Memorial – with protocol for the Red Ensign to be flown with the Australian National Flag above the Australian War Memorial, and a Merchant Navy representative among those laying wreaths at the Last Post ceremony on September 3 – is not too much to ask for after a great service for the nation and the continuing death of seafarers on national assignment, even in the Strait of Hormuz. They shall be remembered when they go and return no more.

While I represented the Australasian Institute of Marine Surveyors, I recalled my service to the freedom and peace today in Liberia and Sierra Leone, supplying relief to the Nigerian-led Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peace-keeping mission as part of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

Our ship in Monrovia faced attack by rebel forces but was let go in time and sent offshore to Freetown before saying "bon voyage" to Lagos! I never was paid a cent for that sacrifice but I am happy that Liberia and Sierra Leone regained peace and freedom.

Professor Chief Emmanuel Tam Ezekiel-Hart

Professorial Chair, Faculty for International Trade Relations and Logistics Management, EBS / HIBC College of Divinity, and AIMS Member

A week in the life of Stella Walter, professional surveyor

I HAVE been asked to write an article to showcase the different types of work that a surveyor – and, more specifically, a female surveyor – undertakes in her professional role.

Growing up in the island State, I attended the University of Tasmania and completed the surveying degree in 1992. After graduation, work was scarce and I did a backpacking trip around Tasmania, visiting as many survey firms as possible, to see what might be available but without success. I applied for positions across Australia and finally secured a position in Windsor, New South Wales.

I packed up all my possessions and drove my car north, across Bass Strait on the ferry, to NSW, where I started a new stage in my life.

I am fortunate to have a varied role as a Registered Surveyor covering all the topics that are assessed in the registration process: cadastral surveying, strata, engineering and town planning, in addition to project management and contract administration.

Many surveyors, following registration, will become specialised in one particular area of surveying but I have always been happy to take on different projects and learn during the process. I have become more of a generalist and this certainly makes for an interesting career.

My work as a Registered Surveyor today is very different to what it was like earlier in my career, when I was mostly in the field. Over time, as responsibilities increase, it is natural to find yourself spending more time in the office coordinating projects, managing clients and overseeing delivery.

An example of a typical week for me might look something like the following.

Monday

A regular client contacts me, as they are looking to purchase a development site and need to know what subdivision yield they can achieve and understand the likely cost of development.

I spend time looking into planning controls to determine lot sizes, widths, etcetera, site constraints such as bushfire, flooding and ecology, and engineering factors such as site drainage and road-width controls. Armed with all this information, a lot layout evolves, which is then the basis for starting a costing.

Tuesday

I have a site meeting for a new subdivision under construction. As the superintendent, I am reviewing the progress of the construction to ensure that claims by the contractor represent what has been completed, and at the meeting we discuss any site issues, potential variations or delays.

Having the dual role as the project manager, I am ensuring that all the required servicing plans are coordinated and approved and that all items covered in the development consent are being actioned to ensure final signoff by Council at the completion of the works. This means liaising with multiple consultants and statutory authorities as well as the contractor and the client.

Wednesday

As another subdivision is close to completion, I need to check the final "Deposited Plan", administration sheets and "Section 88b" to ensure they are compliant with the regulation and ready for lodgement with council and then LRS. I check the "Work as Executed Plans" and prepare the necessary "Surveyor's Certificate".

Thursday

Today it is a problem-solving session with the engineers to work out the area impacted by temporary on-site detention and water quality for a subdivision and how to satisfy safe traffic flow with the use of temporary roads and turning heads until adjoining land is fully developed.

I contact neighbouring consultants to share engineering designs and prepare plans to show what consents may be required from adjoining owners.

Friday

After several weeks of coordinating multiple external consultants, as well as our inhouse surveyors and engineers, I have put together the package of documents required to submit a "Development Application" for a subdivision.

The "Statement of Environmental Effects" is


Stella Walter.

finalised bringing together all the information to demonstrate the compliance and merits of the proposal to Council. Finally, everything is uploaded onto the planning portal and the "Submit" button is pressed.

This is obviously an idealised version of my working week, where I am able to focus on one job at a time each day. Of course, in the real world, each day is also punctuated with phone calls, emails, questions from colleagues, continuing professional development, completing time sheets, invoicing and business development matters.

For most professional women, the path of their careers does not follow a straight upward trajectory. For those who choose to, and are lucky enough to, have children, there is inevitably an impact on their careers.

In my case, I was fortunate to be offered the flexibility to come back to work gradually after the birth of my children, increasing my number of working days over time and maintaining my connection with the profession. I was invited to become a director in the business when my children were still very young, and I am grateful to my fellow directors who gave me the flexibility to balance motherhood and business ownership.

If the profession wants to retain women in surveying, it is important to take a long-term strategic view. Supporting capable young female surveyors through the years when family responsibilities are high is an investment in the future leadership of the business.

While caring responsibilities are becoming more equitable, women are still often the ones who take time off when a child is sick or who manage school and day-care logistics. That may mean a female employee is not always able to stay late but it does not mean a lack of commitment. In many cases, women in this phase of life work efficiently within the time available and develop strong organisational and project management skills.

A Treasury Working Paper prepared in March 2023 found that women with less access to flexibility in the workplace were more likely to exit the labour force entirely.

This challenge is not unique to surveying but the profession must ensure that it not only attracts women but also retains and develops them over the long term. Recognising and valuing the skills and experience gained during care-giving roles, offering flexible working arrangements, encouraging a culture of work-life balance, and providing a clear pathway for career progression for women are all ways that employers can assist in the retention of women in surveying.

Diversity of experience strengthens our profession, and thoughtful support at key life stages can make a lasting difference.

Stella Walter
Senior Registered Surveyor
and Project Manager
SDG

The human element under siege: maritime resilience and the moral responsibility of Port State Control

THE ongoing geopolitical tensions in the Strait of Hormuz and the southern Red Sea have precipitated a severe humanitarian crisis within the maritime sector.

As of April 2026, Lloyd's List Intelligence reports more than 600 vessels – including 325 tankers – stranded in the Gulf, while the International Maritime Organization (IMO) confirms that approximately 20,000 seafarers remain aboard ships unable to transit the Strait of Hormuz.

This article examines the psychological, legal and systemic dimensions of this crisis through the lens of Port State Control (PSC) authority and responsibility. Drawing on direct field experience and parallels with the COVID-19 crew change crisis, the author argues that PSC must evolve beyond technical compliance auditing to encompass active humanitarian advocacy.

The article concludes with a set of operational and policy recommendations aimed at strengthening the protection of seafarers in high-risk and conflict-affected areas.

Introduction: a Fleet in limbo

As of April 2026, the maritime industry faces a critical escalation in regional tensions with direct and measurable humanitarian consequences. The effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz – driven by intensifying geopolitical tensions and severe security threats – has produced a maritime emergency of unprecedented scale in modern times.

According to Lloyd's List Intelligence, more than 600 commercial vessels, including 325 tankers, remain stranded in the Gulf, unable to transit the Strait.

The IMO has confirmed that approximately 20,000 seafarers are currently aboard these ships, facing what the IMO Secretary-General described as "dwindling supplies, fatigue and severe psychological stress" (IMO, April 2026).

These vessels are not detained by any formal legal order; they are operationally entrapped, immobilised by the convergence of security threats, insurance suspensions and the practical unavailability of safe transit corridors.

This distinction is legally and operationally significant. A significant proportion of stranded crew members have now remained aboard for periods that substantially exceed the maximum 11-month service period stipulated under the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC, 2006).

This situation must not be framed merely as an operational disruption; it constitutes a collective immobilisation of a critical segment of the global maritime workforce, with severe and compounding humanitarian consequences.

The psychological toll: a war of attrition on the human element

The impact on affected seafarers is both profound and multi-dimensional. Prolonged operational entrapment within a designated high-risk area (HRA) or active conflict zone generates conditions of sustained psychological stress with identifiable clinical manifestations, including the following.

Chronic anxiety and hyper-vigilance

The persistent threat of drone and missile attacks in the surrounding area – with at least 21 confirmed attacks on commercial vessels recorded by the IMO since hostilities began on 28 February 2026 – induces a state of combat-induced fatigue that demonstrably impairs cognitive function and operational decision-making capacity.

Compounded isolation

Seafarers report experiencing a dual sense of confinement – constrained by both maritime geography and geopolitical forces entirely beyond their individual agency or professional remit. Some crew members have begun rationing food and fresh water supplies, with reported cases of vessels relying on limited provisions of sugar and rice (Bloomberg, March 2026).

Secondary trauma and family system breakdown

The psychological impact extends beyond the vessel to affect the seafarer's immediate family unit. Spouses, children and dependent relatives are subjected to sustained uncertainty and severely limited communication, a condition associated in clinical literature with secondary traumatic stress. The resulting deterioration of the seafarer's primary support network exacerbates the risk of depressive disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among crew members.

The port of Salalah in Oman.

Field observation: a personal testimony from Port State Control

In my capacity as a Port State Control officer, I have conducted inspections aboard vessels where the psychological atmosphere among crew members was immediately perceptible.

During one such inspection, I encountered a seafarer whose contract had been unilaterally extended to 18 months – far exceeding the 11-month maximum prescribed by the MLC, 2006. The seafarer displayed clinical indicators consistent with prolonged psychological distress: flat affect, marked social withdrawal and an evident deterioration of professional engagement.

Despite the unambiguous provisions of the MLC, operational and geopolitical barriers had rendered the Convention's protections functionally unenforceable in practice. This experience crystallised a form of institutional helplessness that merits serious professional reflection.

Port State Control officers are trained to identify and rectify technical deficiencies, such as a malfunctioning fire suppression pump, an expired certificate or an inadequately maintained liferaft. However, the existing inspection framework provides no corresponding mechanism for addressing the systematic erosion of a seafarer's psychological wellbeing across hundreds of days of involuntary operational entrapment.

This encounter reinforced the conviction that PSC's mandate must evolve – from technical compliance auditing to active humanitarian advocacy.

Strategic failure: lessons unlearned from the COVID-19 pandemic

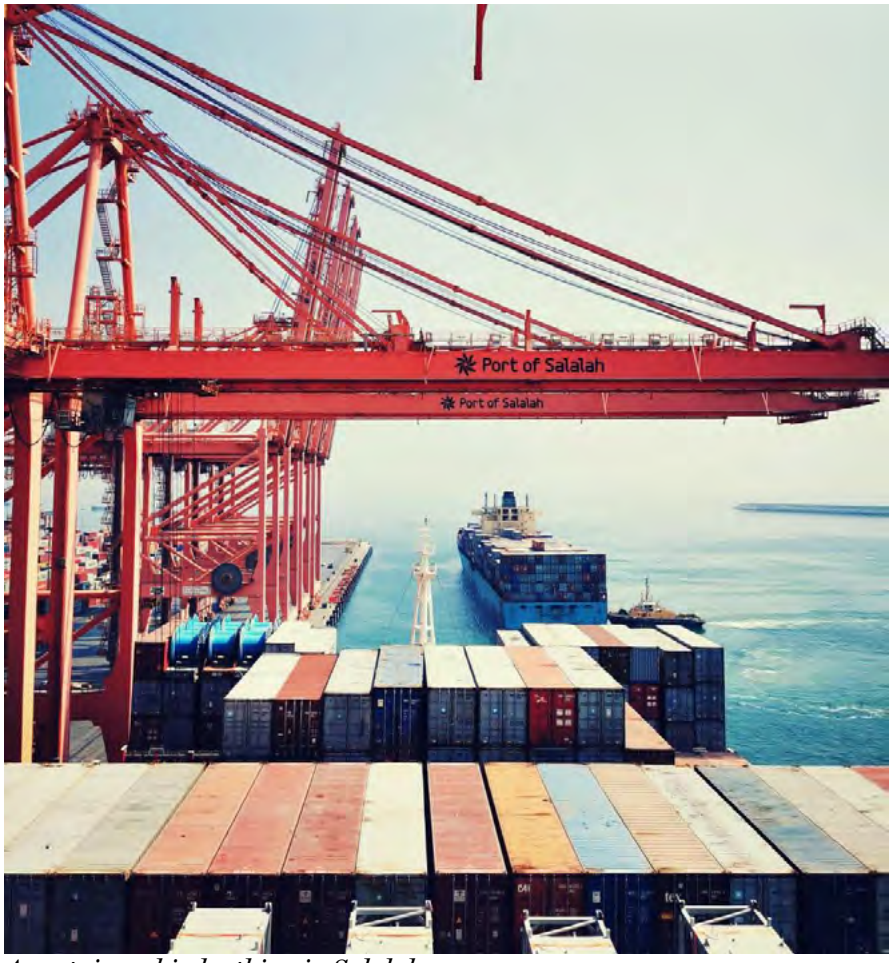
A dispassionate assessment of the current crisis reveals a troubling pattern of institutional repetition. During the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 400,000 seafarers were stranded aboard vessels globally due to the collapse of crew change mechanisms.

The international maritime community's response, though ultimately effective, was reactive, fragmented and chronically delayed.

Today, while the absolute scale differs, the nature of the entrapment is qualitatively more severe: it is driven by active military conflict, sustained drone and missile threats, and the de facto suspension of freedom of navigation through a critical global chokepoint.

The industry's continued failure to establish protected humanitarian corridors for crew relief operations in such scenarios – despite the COVID-19 precedent – represents a structural gap in global maritime resilience.

Five weeks into the Strait of Hormuz crisis, the IMO declared a humanitarian emergency, with



A container ship berthing in Salalah.

the number of stranded seafarers still unchanged at approximately 20,000 (*Container Management*, April 2026). This institutional inertia places operational continuity, legal compliance and human welfare in direct, unresolved tension.

The role of Port State Control: expanding the mandate

Port State Control must be repositioned as the last effective institutional line of defence for seafarers in conflict-affected and operationally-entrapped scenarios. To fulfil this expanded mandate, PSC inspection regimes should be augmented to incorporate the following measures.

Mandatory verification of mental health support provisions

Inspections should systematically verify that shipowners have made provision for professional psychological counselling services for crew members transiting or operating within designated HRAs. Compliance with this requirement should be treated as a condition of port entry.

Rigorous contractual service period audits

Any vessel carrying crew members whose service periods have exceeded the 11-month MLC limit must be subject to immediate deficiency notation and escalated to flag state authorities through established diplomatic channels. Extended operational entrapments resulting from geopolitical circumstances should be formally recorded and reported to the IMO.

Guaranteed digital connectivity as a fundamental right

Access to reliable digital communication must be formally recognised as a basic welfare entitlement for seafarers operating in high-tension zones. PSC inspections should verify the adequacy of onboard communication infrastructure, with particular attention to vessels operating in or transiting conflict-affected areas.

Conclusion

A safe ship, within the modern understanding of maritime safety, is not simply one that achieves technical compliance with SOLAS or MARPOL. It is a vessel in which the psychological and physical integrity of every crew member is actively protected.

The more than 20,000 seafarers currently stranded in the geopolitical crosshairs of the Strait of Hormuz are not incidental casualties of an abstract political dispute; they are the indispensable human infrastructure of global civilisation.

If the maritime community continues to subordinate seafarer welfare to commercial expedience and political convenience, the long-term consequence will be a structural exodus of experienced professionals from the industry – a talent loss that global trade will prove ill-equipped to absorb.

The moral and institutional responsibility to prevent this outcome rests, in significant part, with Port State Control.

Author's note: The views expressed in this article are those of the author in his personal capacity and do not represent the official position of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology of the Sultanate of Oman or any other governmental body.

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Beyond prompting: measuring the generational AI gap

RMIT Online and Deloitte Access Economics have released a report focusing on the embedding of AI in everyday work and exploring the following – now that AI is here, how prepared are our workforces to use, to our benefit, AI tools?

The surveys findings are more than informative; they suggest a complex picture of just how prepared industries are with respect to maximizing the benefit of AI.

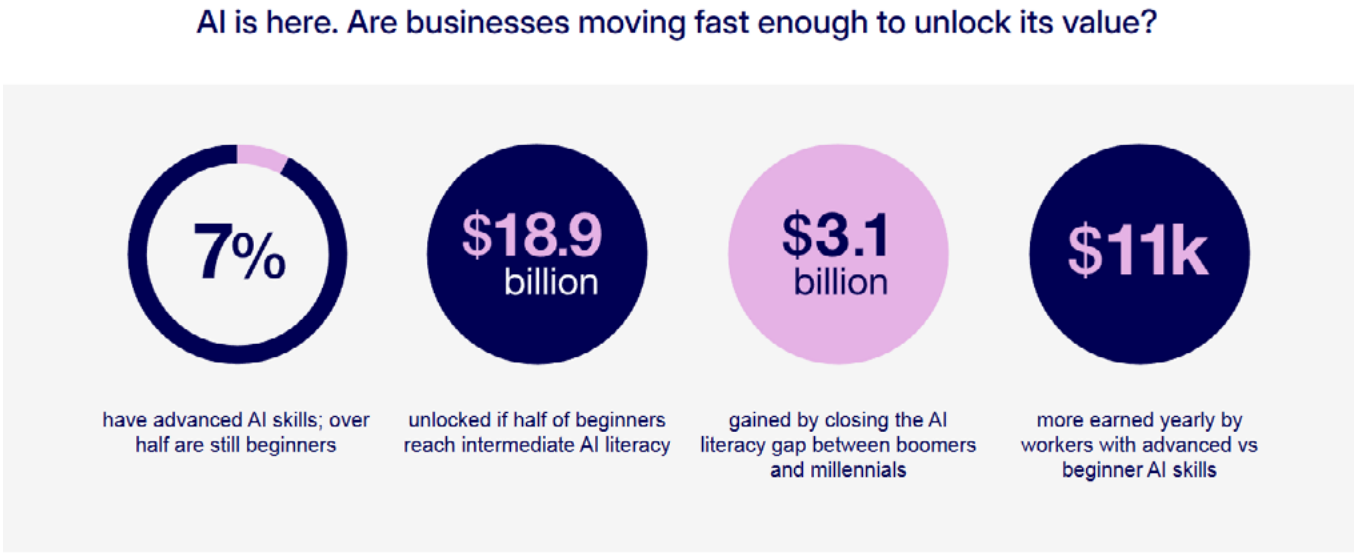
The survey findings include (Reference A):

AI is being adopted widely by Australian workplaces, automating routine tasks and reshaping higher-value work. Yet, adoption is racing ahead of understanding. While 84 per cent of workers have used at least one AI tool, only 7 per cent reach advanced literacy, and over half are still beginners. The gap is not just about how often people use AI, but whether they can use it safely, effectively and strategically.

The literacy gap has a generational edge. Younger workers (gen Z and millennials) score higher on technical AI skills than gen X and baby boomers (boomers) but face a distinct risk of over-confidence. Among millennials, 17 per cent overestimate their AI literacy, compared with 10 per cent of gen X and 8 per cent of boomers. For gen Z, the rate is 21 per cent. This over-confidence raises the risk of inappropriate use, such as deploying AI without adequate judgement, missing hallucinations, or overlooking ethical and legal implications.

Boomers, by contrast, perform relatively better on judgement-based skills but are more hesitant to use AI at all. Three quarters (76 per cent) of boomers possess only beginner AI literacy, compared with 43 per cent of millennials. This hesitancy means they risk under-utilising AI where it could add value.

Given that boomers tend to hold more senior decision-making roles on average, their AI fluency, or lack thereof, can shape how organisations deploy the technology. Organisations therefore face dual generational challenges: technically capable younger workers may misuse AI due to overconfidence, while senior decision-makers may



RMIT Online and Deloitte Access Economics have released a report focusing on the embedding of AI in everyday work.

limit adoption through excessive caution.

Data for this report was drawn from a survey of 2,025 workers in January 2026 and established a new measure of AI literacy across six domains. This covers technical capabilities like knowledge and practical skills to judgement-based skills such as critical evaluation, ethical and legal awareness, and strategic application.

Workers are twice as likely to be advanced in technical AI skills than they are in judgement AI skills. Many can write a prompt; far fewer can spot a hallucination, question bias or recognise when an AI-generated decision creates legal or reputational risk. Misuse brings real costs in rework, bad decisions and misplaced trust; according to a separate study by Infosys, 95 per cent of respondents experienced an AI-related incident over the past two years, and that the average financial loss was $800,000 (Reference B). Yet only 48 per cent of workers receive any AI training from their employer and just 11 per cent get structured, ongoing support.

The upside of investing in lifting AI literacy is substantial. Workers who lift their literacy from beginner to advanced levels see almost $11,000 in higher wages per year and save an average of nine hours a week, a figure that will likely grow as AI use becomes even more valuable. Millennials benefit most, saving 11 hours weekly, while boomers save just six. Nearly half of workers use their extra time to complete more tasks and one in four invests in further skill development. Yet, these benefits come with a trade-off – digital natives, who gain the most time, also report the highest pressure to work faster, raising risks of fatigue and burnout if expectations aren't managed.

In aggregate, even if only half of beginners improved to intermediate levels, that would unlock an aggregate wage dividend of over $18.9 billion. Closing the gap between boomers and millennials alone would deliver a further $3.1 billion.

Australian workplaces now have an opportunity to upskill employees where it matters most, focusing on critical evaluation and transferable AI skills, which are the largest gaps in AI literacy. Workers who receive employer support (training) are 2.6 times more likely to see AI skills as a key to their next promotion.

Training should prioritise practical use cases, clear guidance on permitted AI use, and pathways tailored to different experience levels. Senior leadership involvement is essential to foster firm-wide knowledge sharing, collaboration and the adoption of AI best practices across generations. Organisations that account for both generational tendencies and experience are better positioned to maximise AI adoption and embed sound judgement alongside technical skills.

You can access the full report here: https://www.rmit.edu.au/online/insights/beyond-prompting-measuring-the-generational-ai-gap

RMIT Australia and Deloitte Access Economics

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(B) 1 Infosys (2025) Responsible enterprise AI in the agentic era, https://www.infosys.com/iki/documents/responsible-enterprise-ai-agentic-era.pdf

(C) Images sourced from the report.

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