



Attendees at the SEA18 Conference, held in Canberra

Skilling our maritime nation – a wicked problem

Teresa Lloyd shares insights from MIAL’s recent SEA18 Conference, where industry thrashed out issues of Australia’s maritime workforce, present and future

THE AUSTRALIAN MARITIME

industry recently met in Canberra to discuss the crisis that has become skilling our maritime sector. The assembly was united in the view that a fresh approach was needed and new pathways are required to complement traditional training models.

The MIAL Seafaring Skills Census, the first results of which were released at the conference, has identified a disparity between the projected seagoing skills training and the likely demand for those skills across the economy over the next five years.

TIME INVESTMENT

It takes upwards of 10 years working and training on a suitable vessel for a person to achieve the skill set that is required to service many critical shore-based roles. It is clear that we do not have an attraction issue for people wishing to pursue a career

to train the strategic seafaring skills that nation needs was discussed by several speakers. Many saw an expanded seafarers’ income-tax regime as key to facilitating Australian seafarers gaining work overseas.

The uncertainty that has gripped the industry was discussed in the context of lack of career progression opportunities for people as those approaching the end of their careers hold out for a redundancy, where once they would have retired by now.

APPROACHES TO TRAINING

The disparate nature of training efforts was obvious. Individual ports and pilotage companies are now taking on cadets and sorting out arrangements for sea time with shipping companies. It was acknowledged that what the nation needs is not cadets, but those with more experience and skills, and the prospect for today’s cadets to



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in maritime, but the cost of training for strategically important skills is a burden borne by an ever-shrinking pool of industry participants.

The establishment of a strategic fleet to secure supply chains and provide platforms

find work after they finish their cadetship remains poor.

The combined effort, however, could potentially be put to better effect if it were organised centrally. The concept of oversight or a portal being created was roundly

welcomed and MIAL is already looking into what would be required and how it might work. Making the most of every training dollar and every training effort will be key to our national success in this space.

The conference was reminded that industry needs to demonstrate how the government will benefit from the outcome if we seek their assistance, in whatever form.

For the first time in decades the industry is pulling in the same direction when it comes to securing our maritime skills and we need to continue to work together to fix this wicked problem. ■