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For Immediate Release

Shipowners reject MUA concept of a national stevedoring code of practice

“Shipowners are strongly supportive of a national code of practice for stevedoring to enhance safety but do not accept the MUA version, which in our view will not improve safety outcomes overall”, Llew Russell, Chief Executive Officer of Shipping Australia said today.

The Maritime Union of Australia has informally advised that they are proposing a National Day of Action from MUA rank and file and concerned members of the community to demand their version of a national stevedoring code of practice be adopted and that rallies will be held in Sydney and Brisbane on 30 October.

“In our view, the real difference between ourselves, the stevedores, and other industry associations and the MUA is the question of who is responsible for safety on the waterfront and on vessels?

“In our view, management must be solely responsible and accountable for the high levels of safety that shipowners expect them to provide but workforce advice and suggestions are constantly sought if there are any areas of risk that they believe could be reduced or eliminated.

“SAL acknowledges that this is a high risk working area similar to some other industries that does need special attention and we are very concerned to ensure that safety issues are a high priority”, he said.

Shipping Australia supports a code of practice which is a guidelines document rather than being made mandatory to ensure flexibility in implementation and to cater for unforeseen circumstances that may arise in the future.

“The MUA Code of Practice is too prescriptive and does not address the different safety risks posed by different work sites.

“The Australian Maritime Safety Authority has issued a Marine Order (Part 32) covering these matters including the use of hatchmen in certain circumstances. However, the MUA revision includes matters different from and in addition to this Marine Order.

“If the MUA view was adopted, there would be more rather than less workers put at risk.”

“In addition, automation in container terminals would also reduce the risk of injury but the MUA has opposed automation of a container terminal at Port Botany,” Mr Russell said.

Shipping Australia is disappointed that the MUA chose rallies and confrontation rather than discussions in an effort to possibly narrow the difference in views.

Editor’s note:

For additional information please contact Llew Russell, Chief Executive Officer on 0414 958 247.

Shipping Australia is a peak national shipping association comprising 35 member shipping lines and shipping agents that would be involved with over 70% of Australia’s container and car trades and over 60% of our break bulk and bulk trades.