



Ensuring safe passage and safety on the seas

By GARY PROSSER,
Commissioner, Australian Transport Safety Bureau

I was honoured to have been appointed to the Australian Transport Safety Bureau's Commission in 2019 to help support and oversight the strong maritime work of the nation's transport safety investigator.

An independent, no-blame investigator plays a critical role in any nation's transport industry, and I am proud to be able to bring my more than 40 years of experience in the maritime industry to help the ATSB ensure appropriate outcomes and improvements in maritime safety.

Beginning my career as one of the inaugural Australian Maritime College (AMC) cadets, I served on a wide variety of Australian ships, in both the international and domestic trades. I then embarked on the onshore component of my career when I managed offshore supply vessel operations in the offshore oil and gas industry in Bass Strait, combining my commercial operations and safety management experience. I also led the P&O Polar Division, based in Hobart, managing the Antarctic and marine science vessels for the Australian Antarctic Division and CSIRO, to support their vital marine and environmental research in the Southern Ocean and Antarctica.

I would then join the Australian Maritime Safety Authority in 1997, where I held a variety of senior management roles before being appointed Deputy Chief Executive Officer (DCEO) in 2007. Then as the Australian Head of Delegation to the International Maritime Organization

(IMO) I was fortunate enough to help shape maritime regulation and policy and establish Australia as a significant contributor to maritime safety, as both a port state and significant coastal state.

In 2009, I was appointed as Secretary General to the International Organisation for Marine Aids to Navigation (IALA), headquartered in Paris, prior to returning to my DCEO role at AMSA in 2015, in which I served until retiring in 2019.

So my career voyage has covered all aspects of the shipping industry, from commercial to regulatory and more. These multi-disciplinary experiences provides a sound basis for my role as an ATSB Commissioner, having long read investigation reports published by the ATSB and its predecessor agency, the Marine Accident Investigation Unit (which sat within the former Commonwealth Department of Transport).

I have seen incident investigation evolve tremendously since my early days, with the ATSB now adopting a multimodal approach to investigation that sees investigators from a broad cross section of specialisations, who undertake specialised tertiary training, working on transport safety investigations across the three transport modes.

The results are world-class, independent no blame investigation reports that drive safety improvement in the maritime industry. As examples, this year has seen the ATSB release two prominent maritime investigation final reports, namely the loss of containers from the MV YM Efficiency, and the grounding of the bulk carrier MV Bulk India during departure from Dampier, Western Australia.

The Bulk India investigation highlighted that ship operators and crewmembers

should ensure that systems, machinery and equipment critical to the continued safe operation of the ship are thoroughly understood, as well as appropriately maintained and tested.

Subsequent to the grounding, the ship's operator made improvement to their safety management and operating systems, as well as staff education and training processes.

Separately, the port operator revised escort towage arrangements for ships departing its facilities in Dampier, following extensive simulation exercises and a review of existing risk assessments. As a result, a second tug remains in attendance with bulk carriers for further along the channel. Further, a comprehensive guidance manual for ship towage operations in Dampier and Port Walcott was developed.

The YM Efficiency investigation, meanwhile, that highlighted weather forecasting, routing and good navigational practices in adverse weather, all play a part in minimising the risk of injuries to crew and damage to ship, cargo and environment.

However, safe and effective container stowage planning is the primary control measure in managing the risks involved in carrying containers by sea.

As a result of this accident, the ship's managers have taken a number of safety actions to address the identified, including requiring checks of lashing forces during the initial cargo stowage planning stage ashore, providing regular training of shore planners in multiple aspects of cargo loading and securing, and training responsible ship's officers in the use of the ship's loading computer system.

I highly recommend all mariners and interested parties read these investigation reports, as they are excellent tools in enhancing maritime safety and environmental protection, and demonstrate the value of driving safety actions through no-blame investigation.

So, how does the ATSB's no-blame role fit alongside other maritime regulatory authorities and organisations such as AMSA, IMO and IALA?

AMSA provides the lead for Australian maritime safety regulation, maritime environmental emergencies, and maritime and aviation search and rescue. It promotes and implements safety standards and environmental policies, both nationally and internationally.

IMO provides the global role of creating a regulatory framework for the shipping industry that is "...fair and effective, universally adopted and universally implemented."

And IALA provides and promotes the development and adoption of standards and guidelines to support safe and efficient shipping. Its standards and guidelines are developed by member countries. These standards and guidelines inform the IMO.

As with any transport industry there is a maze of regulations, standards, guidelines, both internationally and nationally. My work across these organisations has helped me gain an appreciation of the intricacies that the maritime industry must navigate to ensure safe passage and safety on the seas, and the importance of the ATSB in fostering and encouraging continuous safety improvement for the maritime industry. ▲



SAL VOTING MEMBERS

