



A sea change for shipping

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Shipping is in the midst of a massive transformation. The impact of COVID-19 is still being felt globally – as I write residents across New South Wales and Victoria are just weeks into seeing their cities reopen after facing one of the world's longest lockdowns.

Our industry has continued to play its essential role throughout the pandemic to deliver vital goods, food, medicine, and PPE, despite the challenges it has faced. Our seafarers have worked tirelessly, often at great personal sacrifice, to keep world trade running.

While the crew change crisis has improved – 400,000 seafarers were impacted at its peak – overly restrictive travel rules are still making it impossible for some crew to return home once their contracts have ended. Others are still unable to join ships to work. Access to emergency healthcare and the repatriation of deceased seafarers is denied; the toll this takes on crew and their families cannot be overstated.

This should not be business as usual. From the outset of the pandemic, ICS has lobbied governments to follow tried and tested industry protocols for safe crew change and to end travel bans. Unfortunately, these efforts have often fallen on deaf ears.

It is not all bad news. More countries are vaccinating seafarers each day and as much as 30% of our workforce have received jabs in arms. We now need heads of governments to collaborate, create harmonised travel rules for essential transport workers, agree upon a list of approved vaccinations and create vaccination passports that can be accepted worldwide.

ICS, along with major transport organisations IRU, the International

Road Transport Union, IATA, the International Air Transport Association, and ITF, the International Transport Workers' Federation, called on heads of government at the UN General Assembly in September to act on these demands.

Political leadership is required to protect our workers and the global supply chain. Shipping alone represents around \$14 trillion USD of world trade transported annually. ICS continues to work behind the scenes diplomatically to ensure our collective call is heeded by governments.

What is clear is that shipping no longer operates under the radar, something we have perhaps been happy to do for too long. The public and governments have woken up to the role shipping plays in their daily lives. Increased consumer demand, driven by a shift from spending in service-based industries to e-commerce, has put strain on an already beleaguered supply chain.

We continue to see logjams in major ports around the world, and we expect this to continue into 2022. Again, decisive political leadership is required to end the supply chain crisis and the solution remains clear: recognise transport workers as key workers and enact safe travel protocols developed by industry.

Looking to the near future, undoubtedly shipping will play an essential role in driving economic growth as we all emerge from the pandemic. Countries must not perpetuate a lock down mentality for global trade; a report by ICS this year revealed that cutting restrictive trade policies could boost global economic recovery from COVID-19 by as much as 3.4%.

And setting our sights on the next few decades, shipping is facing a pace and scale of transformation hitherto

unforeseen in our industry. We are at the beginning of our journey towards decarbonisation. At the time of writing, COP26 is in full swing in Glasgow and the shipping industry's Shaping the Future conference on Saturday 6th November brings together leaders in maritime, energy, finance and international ministers to translate government ambitions set out at COP's leaders' summit and identify actions and recommendations for all parties, including IMO member states.

We know that the time for words and commitments is over; action must be taken now. ICS has laid out its three point plan to achieve its pledge to double current industry ambitions and reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050: a global carbon levy, a review of training standards for seafarers, as this transformation will be impossible without people, and a \$5bn fund, paid for by industry, to accelerate the pace and scale of research and development needed to ensure we get thousands of zero-emission ships in the water by 2030.

We now call on governments to pass these proposals at the IMO. We are a pragmatic people; we need clear, unambiguous signals that reduce risk and enable us to invest in our zero-emission future.

This past year has proven the resilience of our industry and forged unprecedented collaborations that have seen us through hard times. We will need to maintain this spirit as our industry prepares for the biggest sea change of all; decarbonisation. As the custodians of our industry, we have a duty to ensure that we continue to shape the sustainable and equitable future of shipping, come what may. ▲