

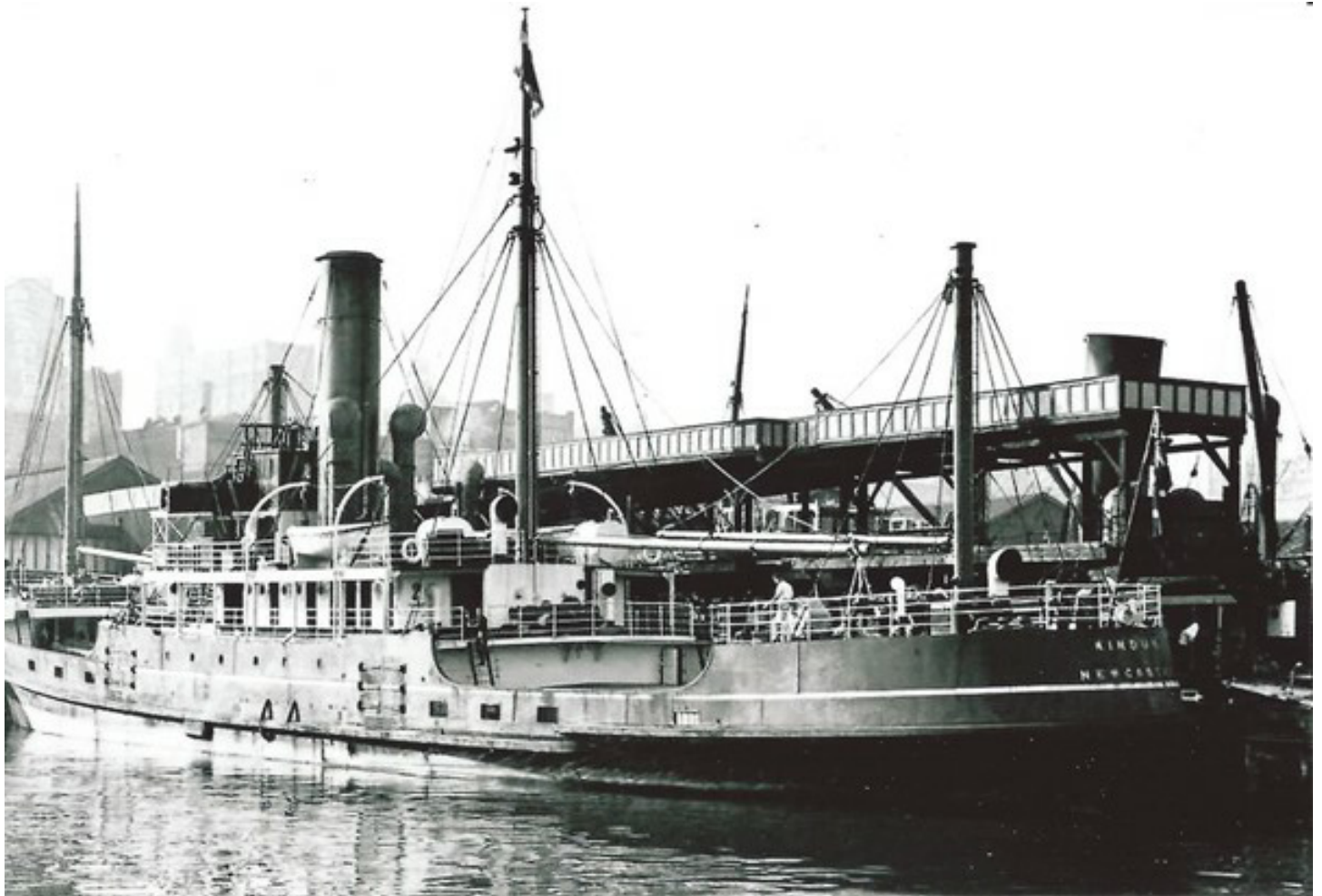
MERCHANT NAVY NEWS

Newsletter of the Merchant Navy Association and the
Merchant Navy Chapter of Forestville RSL sub-Branch NSW

Edition 32
Xmas 2023



TO FOSTER THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SEA



From an old postcard. - Courtesy of Jake Pattison

Writing on the back:

KINDUR

Cargo vessel built 1928 for the Newcastle & Hunter River S N Co, Newcastle
September 1930 two month charter to J Patrick & Co and placed on the Sydney -
Brisbane run.

August 14 1934 chartered out to AUSN for a 5 month period in carrying timber from
Brisbane to Sydney and re-chartered for four months from 31 July 1935.

July 1956 purchased by R.W Miller & Co, Sydney. Quickly sold in September 1956
to be broken up.



Seasons Greetings to All

Wartime Recollections
Ron Wylie 1921 –



I joined Burns Philp & Co. Ship owners (BP) as a Junior Cadet in 1937 and was in the company employ for 30 years. I gained my British B.O.T Certificates of Competency No.0471 F.G. at Sydney Australia. I served as a Deck Officer on the BP Mainline Passenger and Cargo vessels during the War Years 1939 – 1945. The ships on which I signed, Articles of Agreement were:

Merkur Singapore Register.

Neptuna Hong Kong Register.

Marella London Register.

Montoro London Register.

Mangola Singapore Register

My service records with Defence Department show as follow:

On operational service north of 14 degrees South.

Operational service in World War 2 from 3 September 1939 to 21 January 1941.

Operational service in World War 2 from 19 December 1939 to 21 January.

1941; Operational service in World War 2 from 30 May 1941 to 28 June 1941.

Operational service in World War 2 from 21 December 1941 to 31 July 1942.

Operational service in World War 2 from 6 September 1942 to 23 February 1944.

Operational service in World War 2 from 17 March 1944 to 4 October 1944.

Operational service in World War 2 from January 1945 to 9 June 1945.

Service with Burns Philip

MV Merkur June 1937

MV Neptuna December 1939

SS Marella May 1941

SS Montoro November 1941

SS Mangola September 1942

SS Montoro 1943

SAIL OR GAOL

During WW2 by Royal Decree all Mariners became subjected to certain controls and obligations as directed by their respective Governments. It was expected of them to serve on Merchant Ships engaged in all manners of War activities without question, be it carrying cargoes of materials, weapons of war, transportation of troops, or the evacuation of civilian women and children ahead of the Japanese southward advance on Australia.

Wartime Recollections Ron Wylie

“Massacre Order”

The Straits Times Singapore Wednesday March 19, 1941

Order received from General Headquarters.

“Due to the fact that the Army is advancing fast and in order to preserve peace behind us, it is essential to massacre as many as possible who appear in any way to have anti-Japanese feelings.”

General Yamashita ‘The Tiger of Malaya’ to Major General Kawamura
“This is not a private instruction; make a thorough job of it.”

FIRST TO GO LAST TO RETURN

The evacuation of women and children from Papua, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and North Australia, is considered one of the epic evacuations of the Second World War.

As the Japanese moved southward one of the main implications for the allied armed forces was the transportation of troops, logistics, artillery, food supplies and all the paraphernalia to wage the war.

“The most important road on the earth’s surface is the sea road. The world’s most important vehicle on that road was the cargo and passenger large seagoing vessel. Who controls the sea road wins the war”.

The Merchant ships of the allied forces carried the brunt of the wartime responsibility to utilize the sea roads, to maintain an ongoing supply of equipment and food to the fighting forces. Burns Philp vessels were requisitioned for War purposes and a long list of sunk and damaged ships attests to their function in maintaining supplies. Ships registered in London, Hong Kong, Singapore, Rabaul and Fiji were taken over by the British Ministry of War Transport. The Commonwealth Government through its Shipping Control Board controlled those ships registered in Sydney. The numbers of Burns Philp merchant seamen Killed in Action either official or unofficial, has never been published therefore we can only provide a figure that cannot be denied or substantiated, one, I feel must be on top of the list for an Australian Shipping Company.

Burns Philp & Co. Ltd. Records.

Macdhui, Sunk Port Moresby KIA 14.

Neptuna, sunk Darwin KIA 45.

Tulagi, sunk Indian Ocean KIA 47.

Mamutu, sunk New Guinea KIA 23 crew 119 Passengers.

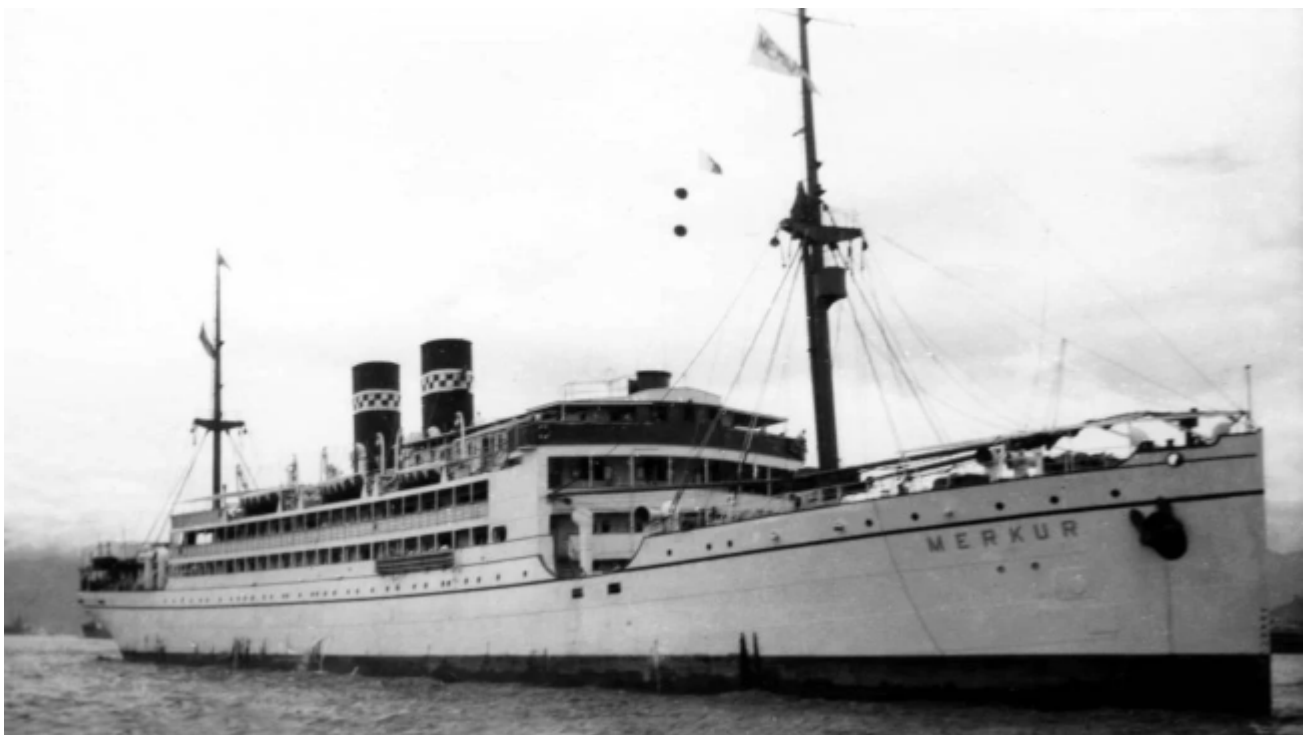
Official Total. KIA 127 Crew 119 Passengers.

MV Merkur Story

In 1941 the Commonwealth Government chartered *Merkur* to the Australian Navy as F.V.S.I.S. (Fleet Victualing Stores Issue Ship), She supplied, stores to American, British, Australian, and Allied naval units in the Eastern Pacific, from Noumea to the Philippine's. The American Campaigns in the Solomon Islands actively engaged her in the strategic advance to the north with Australian and New Zealand Forces, *Merkur* at all times sailed under the Red Ensign of the British Merchant. Navy and was manned by Burns Philp Sea going Officers and Seamen

At Hollandia in Dutch New Guinea while supplying ships preparing for the invasion of the Philippines at Seeadler Harbour, the largest American naval Base west of Pearl Harbour consisting of US Army and Navy also units of the RAN were Gen. Douglas MacArthur's invasion fleet for the landing on Mindanao Island in the Philippines.

MV Merkur while waiting for the arrival of the Australian Navy Ships to come alongside for stores, when an American Kittyhawk fighter streaked down at masthead height, passing between two lines of ships with the ammunition ship *USS. Mount Hood*. A moment latter there was an enormous explosion, followed by a brilliant ball of fire. *Mount Hood* was gone, blown out of the water, disappearing in one huge explosion. *Merkur* was abeam at the time and sustained minor damage. Speculation on what caused the explosion was it a Kittyhawk, flown by a Japanese pilot? Was it a high-level bomb dropped? Was it a torpedo? Tokyo Rose Japan claimed the sinking of *Mount Hood* belonged to a Japanese midget submarine.



It so happened that *Merkur* was at Morotai when hostilities ceased and sailed independently, with navigation lights burning to Subic Bay in the Philippines, where she victualled *HMAS Shropshire* to sail for Tokyo for the signing of the Peace Treaty.

MV Neptuna Story

China and Japan had been at war since 1937, but in 1939 Britain and Australia were not actively involved in war with Japan, although Australia was at war with Germany Japan had not declared war on Britain but had deployed naval forces poised for simultaneous attacks on objects separated over the whole half of the Pacific Ocean. The final decision to declare war was made by Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour on 7th December 1941. Prior to this, *Neptuna* was still trading Hong Kong, Saigon Service. (French Indo China).

Large Union Jacks were painted on both sides of the ship and the awnings facing skywards, to identify British and neutral.

Neptuna departed Sydney August 1941 on a voyage to Hong Kong via New Guinea, with Australian Army troops and logistic supplies and 3-inch anti-aircraft guns. This detachment was off loaded at Rabaul and augmented the 2/22nd Battalion, which garrisoned Rabaul as a deterrent to the Japanese southward advance.

Neptuna carried a compliment of 22 Officers and 125 Chinese crew. She was diverted to Madang, Lae and Salamaua, to evacuate women and children ahead of the Japanese advance and the known atrocities being committed by them.

After discharge in Sydney, *Neptuna* commenced loading logistic equipment for the Armed Forces in Darwin, 200 depth charges and a large quantity of ack-ack shells and ammunition etc. for Navy and Army, were also loaded, in specially prepared magazines built at numbers 3&4 hatches.

The voyage to Darwin under Naval escort was uneventful arriving on the 12th of February 1942. On completion of disembarkation of Army troops, she was ordered to a harbour anchorage. On the 19th she was ordered to berth alongside the main wharf.

At this time a formation of aircraft flying overhead was observed and remarks were made "Look, the Yanks have at last arrived" and "Look they are dropping leaflets".

Suddenly there was a huge explosion on the wharf, the ship gave an enormous shudder, was hit below the waterline, and began taking water. The turntable area of the wharf had received a direct hit, and was now destroyed, oil from the storage tanks ashore received a direct hit, and oil was now gushing onto the wharf and into the harbour, any escape via the wharf was now impossible.

Wartime Recollections Ron Wylie



The explosion of the MV Neptuna and clouds of smoke from oil storage tanks, hit during the first Japanese air raid on Australia's mainland, at Darwin on February 19, 1942. In the foreground is HMAS Deloraine, which escaped damage.

The Third Mate Brendan DeBurca with some Chinese crew were rigging hatch planks to make a gangway onto the wharf and into the water to escape the badly listing *Neptuna*.

Chief Engineer J McNamara appeared on deck and announced nothing further could be done in the engine room.

DeBurca now ordered “Abandon Ship” and saw everyone still alive had a life jacket, as the only means of escape now was over the side, and into the harbour. *Neptuna* was now on fire and oil from the pipeline was a light on the harbour, most of the crew still alive were rescued from the water.

MV Neptuna blew herself apart when the fire entered, numbers 3 and 4 hatches, with a huge atomic style mushroom cloud created by the explosion of the ammunition still on board.

The casualty list of Ships Company Killed in Action.

W Michie – Master.

J Gillies First Mate.

J Forman Second Mate.

3 Radio Off. A.W.A. Australian Merchant Navy.

R Stobo Cadet.

T Fowler Engineer.

C Cross Engineer.

N Wilson Engineer.

45 Chinese Crew Members were also Killed in Action.

The Chairman of Burns Philp & Co. wrote to the Prime Minister Mr. J Curtin. Recommending that Australian Government decorations be made to certain individuals of *Neptuna* Ships Company.

Dr. John Hyde	Ships Surgeon.	Member of British Empire.
Brendan DeBurca.	Third Mate	Lloyds War Medal For Gallantry at Sea.

John F McNamara	Chief Engineer	Honourable Commendation.
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James Renfrew	3rd Engineer	Honourable Commendation.
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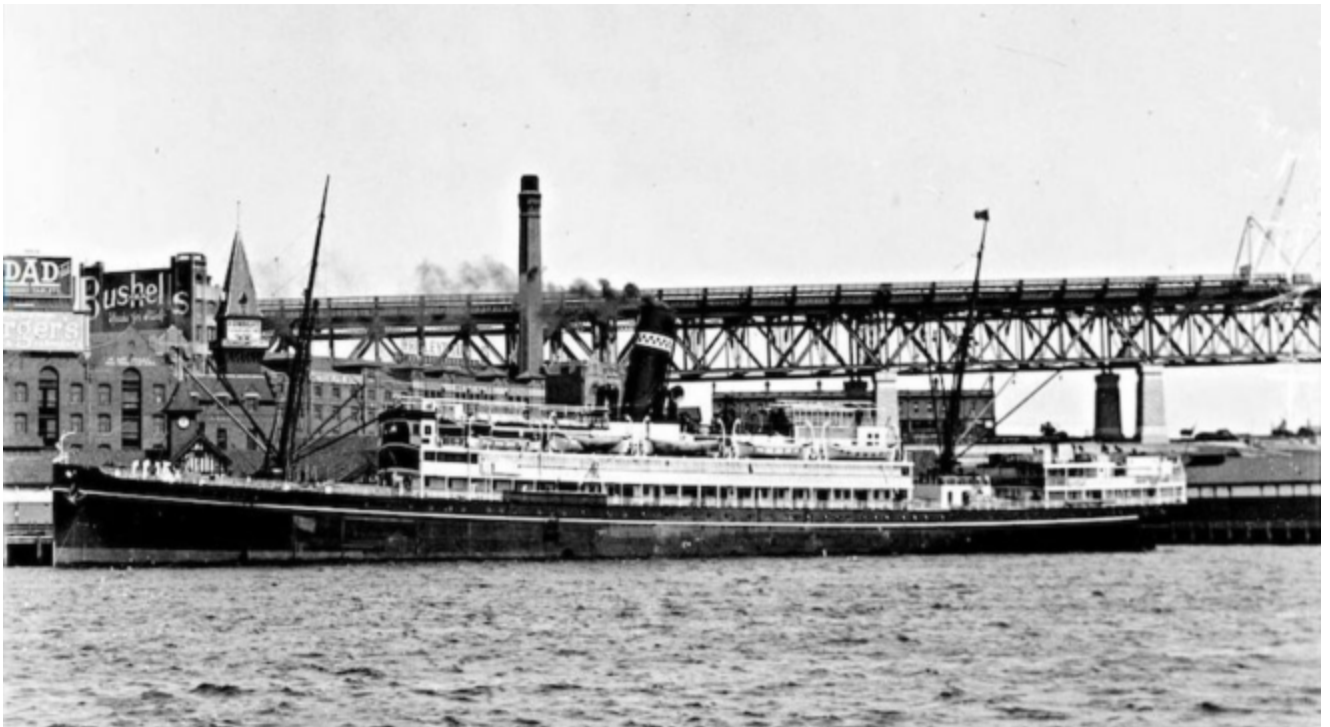
John Rothery	Deck Cadet	Honourable Commendation.
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George Kent	Deck Cadet	Honourable Commendation.
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Kwok Sing	Quartermaster	British Empire Medal. B.E.M
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B. Deburca, J.F. MacNamara, J. Renfrew. John Rothery, George Kent all signed on B. P's *MV Tulagi* The ship having been run aground and abandoned, during the raid on Darwin. She was re floated and crewed by Officers, Engineers, and Seamen from other ships in Darwin and returned to Sydney.

SS Marella Story



During 1939/40/41 *Marella* transported troops and passengers to Darwin and Singapore. Japan having now entered the War she was held in Darwin, The Naval Authorities ordered all passengers to disembark and transfer to BP's *SS Montoro*, also in port. December 29, 1941, was spent loading troops and equipment and the next morning, 800 Army were embarked, destination unknown. Two days later *Marella* sailed from Darwin under escort of Australian Armed Merchant Cruiser *Westralia*.

Orders now, were to proceed to Port Moresby and rendezvous with the British troop transport *Aquitania*. On arrival all troops and equipment were discharged and *Marella* now sailed for Thursday Island, to embark Japanese pearling industry internees for Sydney.

These Prisoners of War were involved in the now famous Cowra POW camp breakout. Many lives were lost Australian and Japanese.

After loading food, stores, equipment, and troops in Sydney, *Marella* was ordered to Fremantle to join a convoy for Singapore, which also included BP's *Mangola* and ten other ships under escort of *HMAS Canberra*.

On arrival at Sunda Straits, one Danae class Cruiser and two Corvettes joined the escort. All Singapore bound ships were now ordered to Batavia, Java, the 5 tankers in the convoy were ordered to Palembang, Sumatra. Only one ship, the Norwegian tanker *Erling Brovic* survived, the others were bombed and sunk in the Banka Straits with heavy loss of life.

Marella anchored Batavia 8th February, on the 9th Japanese planes made raids on Batavia.

HMAS Hobart arrived at Batavia, and it was decided all ships capable of sailing be cleared of Batavia, as the only outlet of escape was through the Sunda Straits and to Australia, this option apart from capture the only alternative. After bunkering water *Marella* under escort of *HMS Exeter* and "God in Heaven Only Knew" how many people were aboard, women, children, by the hundreds, troops and crews from vessels lost, and civilian escapees from the fall of Singapore.

The next day in the Prince of Wales Channel the narrowest part of the Sunda Straits *Marella* left the convoy and proceeded independently to Fremantle Australia.

Six days later *HMAS Perth* and *HMS Exeter* were lost in the battle of the Java Sea

On arrival in Sydney the ship was taken over and armed with D.E.M.S. (Defence Equipped Merchant Ship) gunners.

She was now on the coastal run ferrying passengers, troops, guns munitions high-octane fuel and logistics for the armed forces also to New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, in support of Australian and United States Forces.

One trip to Torokina Bougainville in the Solomon's, she was put aground on a reef re floated under her own power, but sustained considerable underwater damage, she was repaired in Sydney and completed her war service and returned to trade 1945.

SS Montoro

I joined as a Deck Officer under Command of various Senior Masters, this was a period of service written into the annals of the history of war in the Pacific, an era that transferred these passenger cargo vessels from peacetime colours, into drab grey wartime camouflage paint, sailing under the Red Ensign of the British Merchant Navy, as supply and troop transports with Australian, American, and Allied Forces in the Pacific Campaign

Throughout 1940/41 *Montoro* was fitted with a 4 inch stern gun, Oerlikon guns, Para vanes, and De Gaussing Gear, 4 RAN DEMS gunners were assigned to the ship, the Deck Officers underwent gunnery courses at Naval Establishments.

On the 7th. December 1941, the Japanese destroyed the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour, they invaded Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Kota Baru, and Malaya. The British Far East Navy was destroyed with the sinking of the two Battleships, *Prince of Wales*, and *Repulse*, the Royal Navy was withdrawn to South Africa, and within 48 hours the Japanese had gained mastery of the land, sea, and air, on the 15th of February Singapore surrendered. The undisputed control of land, sea and air by Japan and the means to stop the advance in Australia was greeted with grim apprehension of the Japanese occupying forces, whose reputation as fierce fighters, was matched by their notoriety as cruel and savage victors.

1941/42 *Montoro* was engaged in the evacuation of women and children from Darwin, the war cabinet approved all civilians to be compulsorily withdrawn south of the "Brisbane Line". The Zealandia 206, US President Grant 225, *Montoro* 203, made the first withdrawals.

In addition to the US convoys, the ZK convoys transported troops and supplies to Northern Australia and New Guinea. These units were the Conscripted Militia Battalions (Chocos). As our 6th, 7th, and 9th Enlisted Divisions, had not returned to Australia, *BP's ships Montoro, Marella, Macdhui, Malaita, Mangola, Morinda* with *Zealandia, Katoomba, Manoora*, ships of the KPM (Dutch) and (Norwegian) played an important role. During this period (4112 New Guinea, 525 Thursday Island, 1593 Rabaul 916 Darwin Army Defence Units) all at a critical period, sometimes sailing independent and without escort.

Montoro continued service beyond Australian Territorial Waters north of 14 degrees south on operational service. This included the RAAF units based at Gove comprising 56 Operational Base Unit, 83, 42, and 13 squadrons, (Boomerang Fighters), Millingimbi No. 59 operational Base Unit, 308 Radar Station and No. 9 Zone Filter Centre. Wessel Island (offshore) No. 312 Radar



Extracts Operations Record Book R.A.A.F. 1 /4/43

Suspect enemy vessel in area 3/4/43, unidentified vessel in vicinity detected prepare for emergency 4/4/43, unidentified vessel again located by R.D.F. 5/4/43 submarine sighted visually by C.G. and located by R.D.F. action stations maintained. 12/4/43 visual sighting of submarine immediate transmission "TOP PRIORITY" Emergency Signal to "Fighter Squadron Townsville".

Extracts from *Montoro* W/T Log shows general activity in the area prior to, during, and after September 1943.

May 22 followed by submarine. June 24 mysterious flares observed near ship and sighted submarine periscope. July 20 suspected submarine-sighting 3 mines sighted. August 24 Lat. 11.13S 156 24E torpedo attack, two torpedoes fired. *Montoro* commenced firing at the enemy surfaced submarine, on September 15 suspicious craft sends blinking light.

From 7th November 1940 to 6th February 1945 during this period of uncertainty, sometimes under escort sometimes sailing independent *Montoro* with other Merchant Navy ships, some with U.S. and overseas register others on the Australian register kept the Allied Forces supplied under extremely hazardous conditions.

Operation "Cartwheel" the Australian and American advance of Allied Forces northward. The U.S. Infantry Divisions in the Solomon Islands and Bougainville, campaigns code named "Clean slate", "Toenails", "Goodtime", "Blissful", and "Cherry blossom", with the support of Australian and New Zealand Forces, was carried out from 1942 till the end of 1943. The 7th Australian Division advances on Tsili Tsili, The Markham Valley drop, the capture of and advance on Bogajim and Madang. The 9th Australian Division advance on Finschafen, Sattelburg, and Saidor, to link with the 7th Division at Bogajim, Madang Finschafen, Alexishafen and the push north to Aitape, Wewak, and Wom Peninsular. The Ships and Seamen of Australian and Allied Merchant Navies supported all these campaigns.

Unrecognised You Put Us in Your Debt
Unthanked You Enter or Escape the Grave
Whether Your Land Remember or Forget
You Saved the Land or Died to Try to Save
They Mark Our Passage as A race Of Men
Earth Shall Not See Such Ships and Men As These Again.
John Masefield.

I joined *Mangola* on 6/9/42 and served different periods, as 3rd 2nd and 1st Mate as required by the company, due to the acute shortage of certified Officers at the time.

December *Mangola* departed Sydney for Singapore north about with general cargo, arrival Port Moresby and owing to the war Torres Straits was closed to shipping, returning to Sydney *Mangola* departed south about to Fremantle, and joined a convoy which included BP's *Marella*. The Japanese advance made Singapore untenable and after passing through Sunda Strait *Mangola* and *Marella* were ordered to Batavia, Java (Dutch East Indies). Shortly after this another vessel collided with *Mangola* causing extensive damage to the steering gear aft. The Engineers and Crew rigged a jury steering apparatus to keep the ship on course, she arrived Batavia 8th February 1942. At the time constant bombing by the Japanese caused chaotic conditions and cargo could not be discharged.

After delay in taking on water and missing one convoy, the ship was directed to rendezvous with another convoy on 21st February 1942. Arriving at the marshalling position, and with no sign of escort or other ships and the possibility escape through Sunda Strait cut off by Japanese Forces, it was decided to sail independent to Fremantle, arriving on 2nd March, where repairs were carried out on the damaged steering gear, having sailed many miles under jury rig, quite an achievement, arriving in Sydney 2nd April 1942.

On 28th August the Japanese are aware of the existence of the Milne Bay Garrison (New Guinea) and are preparing to launch an attack, and it is doubtful if we have enough troops to hold them.

On 28th June General MacArthur decided to construct an air base in the Milne Bay area, The US Army Airfield Construction Unit (the only US Forces in the area at this time) commenced work on Number 1 strip known as Gili Gili. *Mangola* was dispatched south to Newcastle and berthed at B.H.P. steel wharf to load a large quantity of Marsden Matting, (a steel mesh type plating laid down after the jungle type vegetation had been cleared by bulldozers, graders and earth moving equipment). A large quantity 44 Gallon drums of aviation gasoline, spares, stores, ammunition, and equipment were also loaded, all this in anticipation of the arrival at Milne Bay of R.A.A.F. 75 & 76 Squadrons.

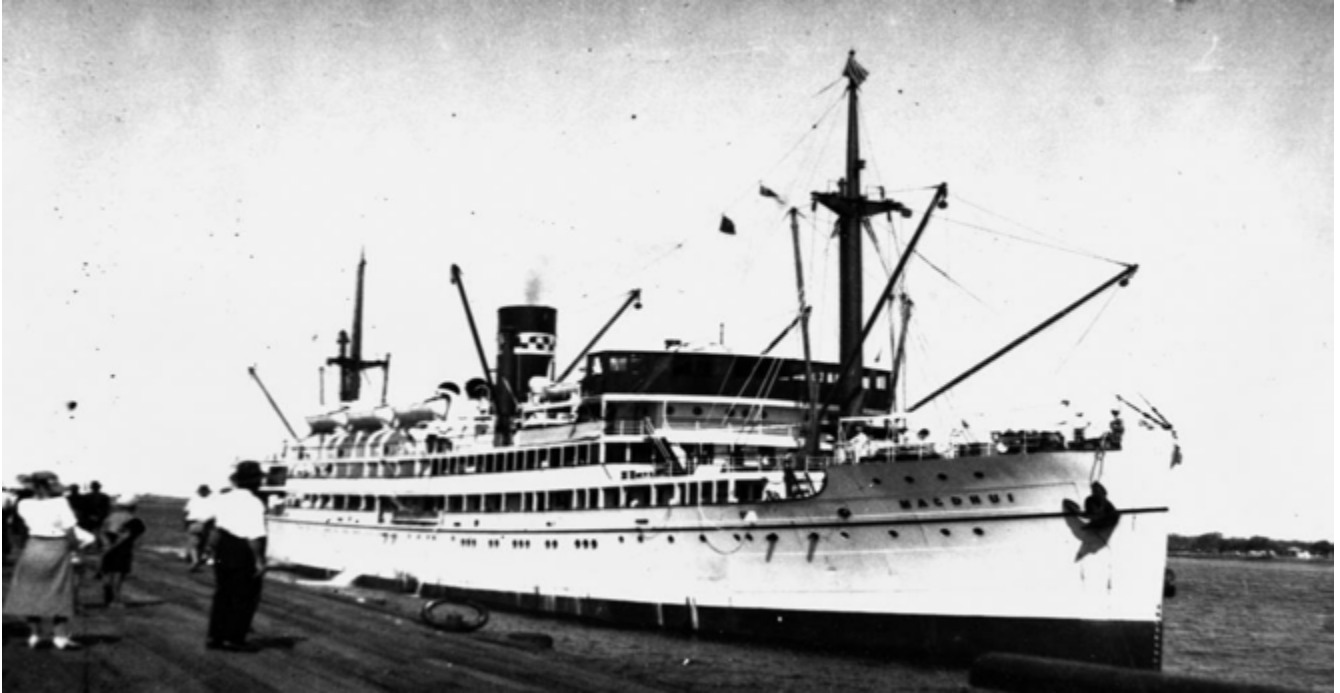
During our stay at Newcastle the Port was shelled by Japanese long-range Submarines off Nobby's Light (quite another story). *Mangola* also made calls to Port Moresby, as it was now possible for the planes to operate against the Japanese. Without these jungle airstrips, the Royal Australian Air Force that had now acquired Kittyhawk Fighter planes from America was now capable of combating the Japanese Zero Fighter.

It cannot be fully stressed here the important part played by the cargo ship *Mangola*, her Officers and Crew. If she doesn't complete this consignment, there would have been no Kittyhawk 75 or 76 Squadrons, no jungle airstrips at Moresby Milne Bay Gili Gili, no support for the ground forces, and a grave doubt as to whether the Japanese Forces would have been defeated and turned back by the Milne Force Dispositions on the 28th of August 1942.

The advance southward, defended only by the 30th Brigade, comprising the 39th 49th and 53rd. Supporting the infantry was a field artillery regiment, and a Battery of heavy anti-aircraft artillery, also ships of the Allied Merchant Navies, troop transports, cargo ships large and small etc. Every drop of high-octane fuel, petroleum, every piece of war equipment the hardware, the software, the entire frontline campaign of the war effort depended on the fleet of Allied Merchant Ships and the Mariners who manned them. There was only one place for the merchant seaman, at sea in his ship exposed to attack by submarine, surface raider, aircraft, and the element at any time, with the added risk of any minefields laid in coastal waters. This was the situation existing to our north at the latter part of 1941 and 1942.

The Ships Masters reports of all vessels, troop transports, and supply ships were scathing and critical of the inadequate support and protection afforded shipping generally at Port Moresby.

Captain J Campbell, Master MV *Macdhui*, Port Moresby 16th 17th 18th June 1942. The Ship Masters report was critical of the very inadequate protection afforded this ship, and shipping generally at Port Moresby he wrote, "The anti-aircraft fire was quite ineffective on the 17th and 18th June, and on neither occasion were there any Allied Fighters, making any attempt to break up Japanese formations.



Captain L Millar master SS *Mangola* Port Moresby 10th 11th July 1942. "At 26,000 feet two formations seven and fourteen tackled me and dropped about 100 H.E. bombs. No damage sustained. Next day they came over again in perfect formation, and pattern bombed *Mangola*, they all let go with about 190 H.E. bombs ranging from 250 to 500 lbs each.

Nothing is more certain, that unless we get more protection, we are going to lose many valuable lives and ships, and as far as we are concerned, the whole can only be described as a "sitting shot" in other words, Japanese aircraft are attacking the shipping without opposition. We are putting on a Roman's Holiday for all concerned and being attacked from the air with complete impunity."

This was the position with *Macdhui* when she was sunk, with the loss of 14 lives at Port Moresby, The *Mangola* survived these attacks.

In June 1942 these two vessels and others of the Burns Philp Fleet, were the only regular and reliable transport link between Australia and Papua New Guinea, for troops as well as others. In the month before the loss of *Macdhui* the Captains concerns for the safety of their crews and ships was directed to the Directors of Burns Philp & Co. who wrote to the Australian Minister for Army and Defence.

“Would Ships Be More Precious Than Men?

Winston Churchill “Battles may be won or lost, enterprises succeed or miscarry, territories may be gained or quitted, but dominating all our power to carry on the war, or even keep ourselves alive, was our mastery of the ocean routes and the free approach and entry to our ports, The only thing that frightened me during the war was the U-Boat peril.”

King George VI “Never was I prouder of the title “Master of The Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets” than at the time of the Normandy Landings, when thousands of Merchant Seamen in hundreds of ships, took across the Channel our Armies and their equipment.

Never was pride better justified. This was the greatest combined operation the world had ever seen, perhaps the greatest it will ever see. The three fighting services and the Merchant Navy worked as one vast complex, but a perfectly constructed machine, and won a resounding victory.”

General Douglas MacArthur. US Southeast Asia Command.

“They have brought us our lifeblood and they have paid for it with some of their own. I saw them bombed off the Philippines and in New Guinea ports. When it was humanly possible, when their ships were not blown out from under them or torpedoed, they have delivered their cargoes to us who needed them so badly. In war it is performance that counts.”

U. S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

“[Mariners] have written one of its most brilliant chapters. They have delivered the goods when and where needed in every theatre of operations and across every ocean in the biggest, the most difficult and dangerous job ever undertaken. As time goes on, there will be greater public understanding of our merchant fleet record during this war [World War 2].

Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse, Commander-in-Chief, Fleet Falklands

“I cannot say too often or too clearly that without the Merchant Ships taken up from trade and those remarkable Merchant Seamen, this operation could not have been undertaken, and I hope this message is clearly understood by the British Nation.”

The War Years (1942 1945) Australia, the South and Southwest Pacific areas. The fleet of passenger and cargo ships available, and belonging to the many Australian Shipping Companies, the highly trained and skilled Engineers, Deck Officers, and Seamen, who all became part of our Nations survival. The Australian Merchant Navy during the ‘Battle for Australia’ can only be described as the “Fourth Arm of Service” during the Japanese thrust south to a (now Malaysia) Burma (now Myanmar), Nauru, Papua New Guinea, and Northern Australia.

I can only recount my experiences and dates on those ships I served on, and their involvement and briefly outline the history of each.

SS Mangola Story

Mangola built at the Commonwealth Naval Dockyard Sydney, was of 3350 gross tons length 341ft. and breadth 48ft. Launched in 1920 she was originally named Eudunda. The Burns Philp Group acquired her from the Australian Government's Commonwealth Line of Steamers in 1926 and renamed her *Mangola*.

Pre-Second World War service included various destinations, Singapore Malaya (now Malaysia) Burma (now Myanmar), Nauru, Papua New Guinea, and Northern Australia.

In December 1941 whilst serving on the *Mangola* as Third Mate we left Sydney for Singapore heading north with general cargo. On reaching Port Moresby it was found that owing to the war the Torres Strait was closed to shipping and we had to return to Sydney, leaving again for Singapore via Fremantle, where we joined a convoy, which included *Marella*.

The southward advance of the Japanese made Singapore untenable and after we had passed through the Sunda Straits, some ships of the convoy were ordered back to Sydney, whilst others including *Mangola* and *Marella* were ordered to Batavia in the Dutch East Indies (now Jakarta, Indonesia). Shortly after this diversion another vessel collided with *Mangola* causing damage to the steering gear aft. The Engineers and crew rigged a jury steering apparatus to keep the ship on course; she eventually reached Batavia on 8 February 1942. At that time constant bombing by the Japanese caused chaotic conditions in the port and cargo could not be discharged.

The Master was mistakenly told that all communication was restricted to the Armed Forces and that he could not get in touch with Sydney. After much delay in taking on essential water and missing one convoy, he was directed to rendezvous with another on 21 February. On arriving at the marshalling position to which the ship had been directed there was no sign of the escort or other ships and with the critical state that existed and the possibility that escape through the Sunda Straits would be cut off with the occupation by Japanese forces, it was decided to sail independently and still under jury steering. On 2 March *Mangola* reached Fremantle where repairs were carried out on the damaged steering gear. We arrived in Sydney on 2 April 1942 with the cargo still on board.

Captain L Millar, Master of *Mangola* which was under attack in Port Moresby on the 10th and 11th of July 1942, reported that “at 26,000ft two Japanese bomber formations, seven and fourteen tackled *Mangola* and dropped about 100 H.E. bombs. No damage sustained.”

Next day the bombers returned in perfect formation, and pattern bombed *Mangola*, they all let go with about 190 H.E. bombs ranging from 250 to 500lbs each.

Captain L Millar wrote to Burns Philp” Nothing is more certain that unless we get more protection, we are going to lose many valuable lives and ships, and as far as we are concerned the whole can only be described as a “sitting shot.” In other words, Japanese aircraft are attacking the shipping without opposition. We are putting on a Roman Holiday for all concerned and being attacked from the air with complete impunity.”

During a voyage from Darwin to the eastern States in December 1943, *Mangola* was caught in a cyclone off Princess Charlotte Bay North Queensland, and blown aground onto Corbett Reef, being stranded, and left high and dry. There was extensive damage to the ship but fortunately no lives were lost. (The Union Steamship Companies *Wanaka* was caught in the same cyclone, and completely capsized, with the loss of 12 lives on nearby Eden Reef.) The well-known firm of Johnson, Williams, and Heard (of Niagara gold fame) salvaged both vessels, this being one of the many epic salvage jobs achieved by the Australian Commonwealth Salvage Board, in the South Pacific war zone. There being such a shortage of ships due to the vast amount of shipping being sunk and losses suffered it was imperative that ships were salvaged whenever possible. The refloating of *Mangola* was successful with the aid of the Salvage Board Tugs, Bars1, Bars2, and *Tancred* after the dumping overboard of the spare propeller, tail shaft, jumbo derrick, and guns, to lighten the ship. These were retrieved after the war.

By September 1944 repairs were completed in Sydney. New armament was fitted comprising one 4-inch gun, two twin Oerlikons, two twin machine guns, and anti-aircraft weapons. *Mangola* sailed again, now with ten R.A.N. gun crew to man the new weaponry, a great change from 1939, at the beginning of hostilities.

Voyages were made to Darwin with continued calls to Thursday Island, and Melville Bay, to service and supply the military installations in the north of Australia.

Mangola resumed trading in the Singapore service at the end of hostilities and was transferred to the Papua New Guinea service in 1949. An eight-day

stranding on Kar Kar Reef north of Madang in 1953 carried on her tradition of surviving near misses.

Mangola's last voyage for Burns Philp ended on her arrival in Sydney on 3 May 1957. Sold to Hong Kong owners she was later owned by the Peoples Republic of China. She was acquired by Hong Kong ship breakers in November 1964.

Thus ended the life of a ship well-remembered by all who sailed in her under the Red Duster of the British Merchant Navy, and the Scottish Thistle House Flag of Burns Philp & Co. Ltd. General Merchants with its Hong Kong, Saigon, Java, Singapore, and Island Line of Steamers.

Ron (Steve) Wylie (Rtd) Australian Merchant Navy.

Burns Philp

James and John Burns arrived in Brisbane in December 1862. After a couple of years jackerooing at Springsure – Central Queensland, they set up as storekeepers at the Gympie goldfields in 1865.

By the mid-1870's, James Burns and Robert Philp had gone into a more diversified Townsville-based partnership, which included shipping links to Brisbane and Sydney for inter-colony and overseas trade.

After 1876, James Burns worked from an office in Sydney, where Burns, Philp & Company Limited was incorporated in 1883.

The modest North Queensland beginnings were followed by establishment of branches and steady expansion into a wider range of merchant activities and ship-owning, and establishment of Pacific Island plantations and trading points.

The Company was destined to become a pioneer and ambassador for Australia in much of the Southwest Pacific area, and in due time, a much-respected multi-national group of companies.

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KINDUR



EDITORS NOTE: My father served in this ship in October 1945 as a 16 year old 'Bucko' after serving his time as a Deckboy in the Iron King. His ship after the Kindur was the T.S. Ormiston.



ONWATCH

The official journal of the Australian Institute Of Marine And Power Engineers

Strategic Fleet Report

The report of the Strategic Fleet Taskforce

was released on 8th November together with the initial response from the Australian Government to the 16 recommendations contained in the report.

The release of the report and the Government response is a welcome development. It indicates that there is an intent to implement the strategic fleet which some people may have been wondering in the months since the Taskforce submitted its report.

A summary of the recommendations from the Taskforce and the response from the Government

Watch. The full report and the complete set of responses has been uploaded to the AIMPE website <https://www.aimpe.asn.au/latest-news1.html>



The Government responses are in three categories – the recommendations Government agrees with, recommendations the Government agrees in principle with and recommendations the Government notes.

It is very good that the Government agrees that strategic fleet vessels be registered on the Australian general register. That is, the

Strategic Fleet vessels

will be Australian flag. AIMPE has always taken the view that the vessels must be Australian flag and this con-

Another recommendation that is agreed by the Government is that there be a review of the Australian International Shipping Register (AISR). The AISR was introduced at the same time as the Coastal Trading Act 2012 and was intended to expand Australian participation in the shipping of the nation's exports and imports. It failed to achieve that objective. It was never in the contest with the flag of convenience shipping that carries so much of Australia's trades.

The Government also agrees with the recommendation that there be a review of Coastal Trading Act 2012 post implementation of Strategic Fleet. The Coastal Trading Act has been flawed and has allowed the withdrawal of all of the coastal tanker fleet and many other vessels too. It did not achieve its objective to revive the Australian coastal trade. It looks like it will take some years to implement the Strategic Fleet so this is a medium to long term matter.

The alignment of defence and civilian training is another recommendation that the Government agrees with. If this means the Navy modifying its training to match Merchant Navy training then this may be a good thing. The expansion of the Defence Marine Support Services in recent years has already seen the closer co-operation between Navy and the Merchant Navy and it is unsurprising that this has exposed the differences in training. Merchant Navy training ensure compliance with the STCW Convention and this represents Australia's international obligations. These cannot be subject to compromise.

A post implementation review has also been recommended by the Taskforce and agreed by the Government. This is another longer term matter.

On the other hand, there are four recommendations of the Taskforce which the Government "notes". This is not quite as strong as rejecting the recommendations but does send a signal that these recommendations will not be implemented.

The Government merely noted the Taskforce recommendation on the Strategic Fleet structure. The Government clearly does not want to be bound to the

list of vessel types specified by the Taskforce (which included geared container vessels, multipurpose vessels, roll-on roll-off vessels, tankers, dry-bulk vessels, and break-bulk ships).

Of more significance is that the Government only noted the recommendation to fund the Strategic Fleet by a levy on foreign ships. This leaves open the question of "where is the money coming from?"

In addition, the Government noted the recommendation for a training levy. Again, if there is no training levy how will the workforce of the future be trained?

The fourth Taskforce recommendation that was noted by the Government was

Australia relies on a professional and highly-skilled maritime workforce to ensure vital maritime trade operates safely and efficiently. Suitably qualified and experienced seafarers are critical for at sea roles – such as crewing vessels, pilotage and towage – and onshore to meet increasing demand for seafarers to fill highly skilled roles.....

that in support of targeted migration. Temporary migration has been used by some employers to operate vessels in Australian waters instead of training Australians to fill these positions. Permanent migration has been a feature of the Australian economy for many decades but temporary migration often exposes the migrants to exploitation because

they do not have the same rights in the workplace as Australian citizens and permanent residents.

On the balance of the Taskforce recommendations, the Government "agreed in principle". This response gives the Government room to move on these other recommendations. These recommendations included the introduction of mandated training berths, cadetships funded by a training levy and better co-ordination between Government and industry on maritime training.

AIMPE has been advising the Government since shortly after the 2022 election that a new maritime industry training program needs to be commenced as soon as possible to ensure that Australia has the maritime workforce of the future. This is especially the case because of the long training times for Engineer Officers and Deck Officers.

This lobbying needs to continue until we have a new maritime industry training program – without it, Australia may not be able to roll out the Strategic Fleet.

Martin Byrne

Extracts from Strategic Fleet Taskforce Report and Australian Government Response

Recommendation 1

The Taskforce recommends the identified cost gap between Australian and foreign vessels be addressed through a combined measure of shipping taxation incentives in line with international norms, and Australian Government financial assistance provided to ship owners and operators.

Government response

The Australian Government agrees in-principle with this recommendation.

Recommendation 2.

Composition of the fleet

The Taskforce recommends that the strategic fleet comprise vessels of the following types, and be of a size that will meet the three prime strategic purposes of the fleet – to respond to disruption events, support sovereign manufacturing industries and to support the Defence Forces:

Government response

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

Recommendation 3.

Establish a strategic fleet levy

The Taskforce recommends that the Government establish a levy on vessel arrivals as a mechanism to fund the strategic fleet.

Government response

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

Recommendation 4.

Strategic Fleet vessels must be on the Australian General Shipping Register (AGSR)

The Taskforce recommends that strategic fleet vessels must be registered on the AGSR.

Government response

The Australian Government agrees with this recommendation.

Recommendation 5.

Improving the Australian International Shipping Register (AISR)

The Taskforce considers there is merit in the Government reviewing the provisions of the AISR to identify if they can be made more attractive to encourage the registration of vessels under this Australian register.

Government response

The Australian Government agrees with this recommendation.

Recommendation 6.

Review the Coastal Trading Act

The Taskforce recommends that the Government should review the Coastal Trading (Revitalising Australian Shipping) Act 2012 (the Coastal Trading Act) to ensure the object and the provisions of the Coastal Trading Act support the implementation of the strategic fleet

Government response

The Australian Government agrees with this recommendation.

Recommendation 7.

Increase Fair Work Ombudsman compliance activities relating to the payment of wages on foreign vessels engaged in coastal trading

The Taskforce recommends that the Government provide additional funding to the Fair Work Ombudsman to increase compliance activities relating to the payment of Seagoing Industry Award 2020 Schedule A Wages on foreign vessels operating under Temporary Licence.

Government response

The Australian Government agrees in-principle with this recommendation.

Recommendation 8.

Legislate the power for requisitioning

The Taskforce recommends the Government legislate the power to requisition Australian-flagged vessels and establish a complementary capacity to requisition vessels through contractual arrangements with vessel owners and operators of strategic fleet and non-strategic fleet vessels to provide it with the greatest flexibility and assurance of access to vessel capability when required

Government response

The Australian Government agrees in-principle with this recommendation.

Recommendation 9.

Better coordination between governments and industry on maritime training

The Taskforce recommends that the Transport and Logistics Jobs and Skills Council (JSC) expedite its Maritime Workforce Development Plan and work in collaboration with Commonwealth and state government agencies and industry to ensure that the maritime training package is fit for purpose and considers the needs of Australia's maritime industry in the context of implementation of the strategic fleet.

Government response

The Australian Government agrees in-principle with this recommendation.

Recommendation 10.

Implement a training levy

The Taskforce recommends that the Government should legislate to implement a training levy on maritime industry participants that are beneficiaries of STCW qualified seafarers to fund a financial assistance package to assist employers and sponsors of trainees and cadets to meet the costs of training seafarers to obtain STCW qualifications.

Government response

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

Recommendation 11.

Establish a cadetship program funded by the training levy

The Taskforce recommends that the Government should establish a cadetship or similar scheme to provide financial assistance to organisations that provide berths for cadets and trainees to complete mandatory sea time requirements to obtain STCW qualifications

Government response

The Australian Government agrees in-principle with this recommendation.

Recommendation 12.

Mandate a minimum number of training berths on strategic fleet vessels

The Taskforce recommends the Government mandate a minimum number of training berths be offered on each vessel in the strategic fleet per annum on top of the existing minimum number of trainees as required to access the zero corporate tax regime

Government response

The Australian Government agrees in-principle with this recommendation.

Recommendation 13.

Greater alignment between Defence and civilian maritime training and qualifications

The Taskforce recommends:

a. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority, civilian mariner institutions, Defence and the Transport and Logistics Jobs and Skills Council work collaboratively to explore opportunities to facilitate greater alignment between Defence and civilian maritime training and qualifications to enable more flexible movement between Navy and the commercial sector.

b. The Australian Maritime Defence Council be re-established to become the principal forum through which the Defence/Navy sealift and other requirements such as workforce development can be harmonised with the civilian shipping industry and strategic fleet ship owners/operators to support the Government's national security and defence

objectives, including those arising from the Defence Strategic Review.

Government response

The Australian Government agrees with the first component of this recommendation.

The Government agrees in-principle with the second component of this recommendation.

Recommendation 14.

Consider a short-term increase in migration for STCW seafarers

The Taskforce recommends the Government consider targeting an increase in migration for STCW qualified seafarers to help alleviate labour shortages in Australia's maritime industry until such time as the supply of appropriately qualified Australian seafarers increases sufficiently. Skilled migration should only be pursued as an option of last resort if an adequate supply of STCW qualified seafarers cannot be sourced domestically.

Government response

The Australian Government notes this recommendation.

Recommendation 15.

Other measures

The Taskforce recommends that the Government undertake further investigation of opportunities identified for measures that could complement the strategic fleet or support broader outcomes of Government.

- a. Working with Defence
- b. Partnerships with other countries and companies
- c. Links to decarbonisation efforts and use of green fuels
- d. Ships operated by government agencies
- e. Servicing Australian External Territories
- f. Partnerships with states and territories

Government response

The Australian Government agrees in-principle with this recommendation.

Recommendation 16.

Monitor the outcomes through a Post Implementation Review

The Taskforce recommends that a Post Implementation Review (PIR) be conducted a year after the first strategic fleet vessels are selected and receive government assistance. This should also cover the impacts of training and workforce initiatives.

Government response

The Australian Government agrees with this recommendation.

Report by the M. N. Chapter Coordinator.

Merrill Barker confirmed the Chapter membership as reported above. He has attended four Forestville committee and two general meetings since our June Chapter meeting. He stressed it is important that as many of our local members as possible attend the monthly general meetings.

Comments were made about both the Canberra and Norah Head events.

The main task during the last few weeks, has been to transfer all content from the seven-year-old M. N. laptop by providing a separate M. N. Chapter address on his personal laptop. The result has given improved speed, efficiency in addition to cost saving for internet, virus protection and the purchase of a new laptop not being required. As with all such projects, difficulties have been experienced, but all solved with the expert cooperation from Mr. Tony Mooney and our Speednet Communications consultant. We now have a very efficiently functioning system. I have thanked Mr. David Field, for the kind donation of the M. N. laptop by the MNWMF. Having retired the old laptop, I have made my suggestion for disposal be to a suitable charity or company serving needy people, rather than creating more e-waste. I am currently waiting for his response.

The Forestville sub-Branch is preparing a 70th Anniversary book, for this anniversary in May 2024. At their request we have prepared an article of M. N. History for their consideration.

The new RSL NSW President and Board members have just taken office. There has been advice that there may be changes being made to the Anzac Day Dawn Service and the Anzac Day March. Response from sub-Branches is being requested. This is obviously in our interests, as we are represented in both these highly important events. Our members will be kept informed once developments / changes are put forward for consideration.

Acceptance of the Chapter Coordinator's report was proposed by Don Kennedy,

THOSE WHO HAVE CROSSED THE BAR

**FREDERICK GEORGE (FRANK) O'DWYER 9/04/2023
WWII**

MICHAEL KIRLEW 24/5/2023 WWII

STANLEY MERVYN SHARDLOW 28/10/2023 WWII

THEY SAIL FOREVERMORE UNDER THE RED ENSIGN



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