



MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS' FEDERATION

Celebration of World Maritime Day leaves Australian seafarers out in the cold again

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Australian maritime safety regulator under fire for excluding worker representatives.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) has been accused of running a political and ideological agenda after excluding worker representatives from a forum aimed at increasing the number of women working in the maritime industries.

The event, taking place at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Darling Harbour tonight, includes a key-note presentation by International Maritime Organization (IMO) Secretary-General Kitack Lim, along with presentations by bureaucrats and employers, but no input from worker representatives.

The International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) said AMSA's approach was completely out of step with global efforts to boost female participation in the maritime sector, which have been built on a tripartite model that brings together workers, employers and government.

ITF Maritime Coordinator Jacqueline Smith, who is a former president of the Norwegian Seafarers' Union, said AMSA was out of step with international efforts to increase the number of women working in maritime industries.

"Earlier this year, representatives of governments, employers, and unions from more than 40 countries came together in Geneva to identify a plan to break down the barriers that are holding back the recruitment and retention of female seafarers," Ms Smith said.

"Globally, there is consensus that tripartite cooperation is the backbone needed to successfully drive this important change in the maritime industry.

"Rather than support these productive efforts, the Australian maritime safety regulator appears to be running a counterproductive and deeply ideological position that actively excludes seafarer representatives.

"It is estimated that only 2 per cent of global seafarers are women, but that will never change without the active input and involvement of workers in the industry.

"It is beyond belief that an event about encouraging women in seafaring could take place without the organisation that actually represents these women being included."

ITF President Paddy Crumlin said the IMO would also be concerned after discovering worker representatives had been excluded from taking part in the event.

"No organisation have advocated more strongly for the increased recruitment, retention and promotion of women in maritime ranks than the international union movement, yet AMSA seems more interested in carrying political favour with Canberra than actually driving change in the industry," Mr Crumlin said.

“This is a deeply political step by an organisation that is meant to be an independent regulator, but who instead is seeking to push the Coalition Government’s anti-union agenda.

“Perhaps the reason for our exclusion was the fact that AMSA knows we would highlight the most effective way of getting more Australian women working in the maritime industry: by having the Federal Government stop providing temporary licenses to foreign flag-of-convenience ships that are taking the work of Australian seafarers.

“This decision to put a political and ideological agenda ahead of international best practice and good governance is an embarrassment for the IMO Secretary General, which we understand also requested that a worker representative speak.

“The decision not to give all social partners equal opportunity to participate goes against all IMO conventions and follows the long neglect of tripartite consultation by AMSA under Australia’s Coalition Government, which for years has brought AMSA’s independence into question.

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ABOUT ITF: The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is a democratic global union federation of 665 transport workers trade unions representing over 20 million workers in 147 countries. The ITF works to improve the lives of transport workers globally, encouraging and organising international solidarity among its network of affiliates. The ITF represents the interests of transport workers' unions in bodies that take decisions affecting jobs, employment conditions and safety in the transport industry.

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