



Focus

Work, rest and learning



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It was fascinating to attend the World Maritime University during April and to discuss with many maritime professionals the recording and management of the hours of work and rest experienced by seafarers. The discussions broadened to include the role of the Safe Manning Certificate and how accurately this 'crewing assessment' reflects the operational needs of the vessel.

From the evidence provided it is a complex picture with countless variables.

Many people take the view that there is a very real difference between the hours of work carried out by the seafarers and what is shown in the official records. If this is correct, it is disappointing. We can only improve decision-making if we have accurate data on which to base any changes. It is vital that the Master, the Designated Person Ashore (DPA) and the management of the vessels take a keen interest in the work, rest and well-being of their crews to ensure effective and safe manning for the demands of the trade and the ship.

This should also be reflected in the Safe Manning Certificate, which should, in my view, take full account of the specific demands of the vessel type, the voyage duration and any special tasks required for the safe and economic operation of the vessel. It seems to me there is an important role for the Flag administration in this regard. We were told that many vessels sail with actual crew in excess of the Minimum Manning requirement according to the certificate, which does bring into question how thorough the initial assessment has been. Work to do, I think.

Ensuring fairness

I, along with most in the maritime community, was horrified to see the devastating loss of life and damage following the collapse of the Francis Scott Key bridge in Baltimore last month. This incident highlights the great challenges of conning such large vessels and especially when the clearances and tolerances for safe passage will undoubtedly have changed over time. Thorough investigations in the coming weeks and months will help us learn much about what might have prevented

such an accident and how we can help make our operations safer for the future.

For the moment, let us have thoughts for the family and loved ones who lost their lives. Let us also praise those with the presence of mind to call 'Mayday' and alert the authorities to close the bridge preventing even further loss of life. And as we move forward and the investigations begin, let us ensure the Master and crew of the *Dali* are treated with fairness and respect. Too often such incidents are taken as an opportunity to 'blame someone'. To seek out an easy target to hold responsible. This leads to criminalisation of the seafarer, often in unfair circumstances, and they deserve better.

Supporting early career seafarers

Providing opportunities to learn is central to the work of The Nautical Institute. This year I am delighted we will be able to explore many of the key issues affecting early career seafarers in the Philippines as we hold our Annual General Meeting in Manila on 27th and 28th June.

Our President, Captain André LeGoubin, has dedicated a huge amount of energy and commitment to listening to cadets, understanding their concerns and making interventions that have really made a difference. André will lead some of the discussions at the AGM as we gain further insights and tackle some ongoing matters of concern including sea berth availability for training, job availability at the end of training and of course equal opportunities for all those aspiring to go to sea.

Providing equal opportunities is very important. We might not be short of seafarers, but we are certainly short of the right skills at sea. Encouraging and supporting more women at sea can help form part of the solution, and later this month (May), I am looking forward to working with WISTA Australia, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority and colleagues of the NI from Australia discussing the real issues of today and the barriers to attracting more women to join this fabulous profession and this wonderful community. 🌍



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