



The Maritime Union of Australia calls on the McGowan Government to add seafarers to the essential workers list.

Oil and Gas

1. Various parts of the Maritime industry are on the verge of shutting down in Western Australia. This includes the Oil and Gas Sector which would have further impact on economically strategic Offshore oil and gas facilities and shoreside operations.
2. Currently, international seafarers can enter into WA to crew change but Australian domestic seafarers are refused entry at the WA border.
3. The industry is facing serious and imminent consequences to its operation and economic stability which will result in shut downs and a preventable crippling of the industry
4. Many seafarers have been forced to relocate to WA from other states with no indication when they may be able to return to their home states or be re-united with families and vital support networks. Many have been away from their loved ones for over 6 months. These workers, plan to return home for Christmas, meaning they will be unable to return to WA and provide critical skills given the current border closures.
5. Currently in WA even with these relocated workers here, there is a shortage of seafarer's in each of safety critical classifications required under law to operate vessels. Each classification requires specialist skills and certification, including Masters and navigational officers, engineers, deck ratings, catering staff and other trades.



6. Critically for the industry and the WA Government, should the workers from NSW/ Victoria and other states return home vessels here in WA will not meet the minimum legislative crewing standards resulting in many vessel operations ceasing. The flow on effect will see oil and gas facilities unable to be supplied with safety critical components, food and personnel which will force shut downs under the relevant safety case This stands to exert dire pressure on the Western Australian economy and will signal hundreds, possibly thousands, of job losses..
7. Some of the biggest operators in the Oil and Gas sector have advised of their concerns. We have also become aware that CME, AMMA, MIAL and others have also pleaded with the WA Government to have seafarer's added to the WA essential workers list.

LNG Vessels

8. There are four Australian-crewed, Australian-flagged LNG ships, the *Northwest Sanderling*, *Northwest Sandpiper*, *Northwest Snipe* and *Northwest Stormpetrel* that operate under the LNG Continuation of Operations Agreement out of Karratha.
9. These vessels have maintained continuous operation for more than 25 years and have safely operated throughout the COVID-19 health pandemic. The WA WA Government and WA Police, under special arrangement, have rightly ensured exemption arrangements were in place to allow the operation of these strategic vessels.
10. A significant portion of the crews of the ships are based on the East Coast of Australia. Due to the recent increases in COVID cases in both NSW and Victoria, a hard border with those states has been established,
11. This has created a serious shortage of Engineers with the appropriate qualifications to work aboard the LNG ships. This problem is further exacerbated with approximately 45% of the crew across the deck officers, engineering officers and ratings reside in NSW and Victoria.
12. Engineers being unable to travel cross-border from their home states has resulted in 7 resignations of key personnel across the past twelve months. Each ship has a compliment of five engineers each across two "swings," many in safety critical cryogenic functions, equating to 40 engineers across the 4 Australian ships. It is not possible to safely and continuously operate the four ships with insufficient engineers, all have been forced to undertake longer swings to meet the shortages.

13. There are three engineers that reside in NSW who are available to travel and cover the shortages.
14. Trident LNG who provide crew for these LNG vessels made two applications a fortnight ago for exemptions for crew to transit through quarantine and then move to Karratha under the COVID controls that have been established with the WA Police. Twice, this was rejected by WA Police.
15. The net effect is that NWSSSC who operates the four Australian LNG ships have advised that they intend on suspending operation on the *Northwest Sanderling* as a result of the engineer shortage. The vessel will load out at the Woodside Karratha Gas Plant tomorrow, 29 October 2021 and discharge in Japan on 12 November 2021. It is then expected to proceed to Singapore where it will be laid up for at least four months, if not indefinitely.
16. NWSSSC have advised that they are experiencing issue obtaining a ship under charter to replace the *Northwest Sanderling* on the run. They have further advised that the charter rates have been “astronomical”.
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18. If the engineers were given exemption, there would still be a shortage of engineers, however, it would facilitate the continued operation of the LNG ships and stop the *Northwest Sanderling* from being removed from trade.
19. Should the *Northwest Sanderling* be taken off the run due to the border restrictions and the inability to get these engineers across from NSW, it will mean Australian jobs will be replaced by foreign jobs in Western Australia.

The MUA is seeking immediate intervention by the WA government to facilitate the safe and effective movement of Australian domestic Seafarers across the WA border. There is a wealth of best practice seafarer movement methodology available from other states in Australia. The MUA echoes the pleas from the wider industry to immediately develop a pathway for seafarer travel into WA and would welcome a considered solution that safely and effectively addresses this desperate situation.