

Raising the bar

Diversity and inclusion is no longer simply about recruitment quota filling, writes **Jeanine Drummond**, newly appointed Newcastle harbour master

WELCOME TO THE DCN'S FIRST

column dedicated to women in maritime. This is more than just an opportunity to recognise the work of women in the industry; it gives us a platform to discuss issues and raise awareness about how diversity and inclusion contribute to successful organisations.

So why do we need this column? Well, the number of female participants in most maritime industry sectors in Australia remains remarkably low.

Statistics are difficult to find but if qualifications are anything to go by, around 98% of Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) qualifications are currently issued to men. That is similar to the percentage of male marine pilots, tug masters, tug engineers and tug crews across Australia. These on-water results can have an adverse effect on medium/long term career progression for women in maritime into shore-based management and leadership roles.

Although employers increasingly acknowledge the importance of equal employment opportunities, the reality is well-meaning equal employment policies often result in little or no actual improvement in gender diversity in the medium to long term.

However, in recent years there has been a quantum shift in the approach to diversity at work. It's no longer based on recruitment quotas, but on increasing the industry's visibility, educating job seekers and students on career pathways, creating awareness of opportunities and inspiring people to take them.

And that's important, as diversity and inclusion in the workplace gives an organisation a different approach to problem-solving, strategising and collaborating – key elements needed for innovation and future success.

As one of the 2% of female Australian STCW holders, it's pleasing to see this change. So many organisations now recognise value in being an equal opportunity employer.

Twenty-three-years ago I was the only female among our company's 28 deck and engineering cadets starting our first year at the Australian Maritime College in Launceston. It was an amazing opportunity and, like many women, I've worked hard to get to where I am today.

Now, there are organisations that are helping others pursue similar opportunities. Two such organisations working to create equal opportunities in the Australian maritime industry are the Women in Shipping and Transport Association (WISTA) and the Nautical Institute – South East Australia Branch.

Formed in 2011, the Women in Shipping and Transport Association (WISTA) is an international networking organisation whose mission is to attract and support women at the management level in maritime, trading and logistics. WISTA Australia holds engaging, education and informative professional networking series, speaker events and launched a mentoring program last year.

The Nautical Institute is the international representative body for maritime professionals. The NI – South East Australia Branch recently partnered with Port Authority of New South Wales for a 'Women in Maritime' initiative that's open to all people and maritime organisations. Its first networking event at the end of 2017 attracted 80 maritime people to hear more about efforts to 'connect women in maritime'.

The initiative quickly gained momentum and in March 2018 Glenn McPhee, executive manager at Manpower Group and director of Recruiting Services for Defence Force Recruiting, presented at a 'Recruiting for Diversity and Inclusion in Maritime' workshop to aid HR professionals in the industry.

These, and similar networking and workshop events, provide a forum to discuss the obstacles that women have faced in our industry and to find ways of attracting women to maritime roles.

Initiatives like this not only assist women already in the industry, but



Above: Jeanine Drummond is general manager, operations and deputy harbour master for Sydney Harbour. She is also vice-chair of the International Association of Ports and Harbours Women's Forum.

inspire those wanting to pursue a maritime career. These events help organisations and others in the industry understand why diversity and inclusion isn't just about hitting targets but about delivering a service that is world class.

I'm proud to contribute to these organisations and encourage you to get involved in their networking and social events; professional development; and education opportunities.

By working together, we can find better ways to encourage and empower women to develop careers in maritime and make choices that will let them develop their skills, seek improved workplace practices and embrace leadership opportunities.

As a start, why not review what your organisations can do to encourage further gender diversity in your operations and leadership teams?

In this column, you will find out more about the women who are contributing to the future success of our industry and discover what diversity and inclusion can mean for maritime. We hope it inspires.

Visit wista.net/au and nisea.org ■