

The challenge of change

Jillian Carson-Jackson of the Nautical Institute examines efforts to bring about greater gender diversity in the maritime workforce

WELCOME BACK TO DCN'S COLUMN

dedicated to women in maritime. Last month we highlighted how this column provides an exciting opportunity to recognise the work of women in the industry and also raised awareness of how diversity and inclusion contributes to successful organisations. For this column I'd like to start off with a story – are you sitting comfortably? Then let's begin.

A TYPICAL DAY

Close your eyes for a moment.

Imagine a vessel arriving at Port Botany. In the predawn light the pilot launch churns out of the fairway, the coxswain chatting amiably to the pilot about the coming day. The pilot boards the vessel, greeting the third mate at the ladder and saying good morning to the deck hand. The pilot then climbs to the bridge to be welcomed by the master and completes the pilot-master exchange, setting the scene for effective bridge resource management with the bridge team.

The vessel proceeds to the harbour entrance, noting the vessel traffic information provided by the VTS operator. The ship's deck crew ready the lines and the chief engineer checks the schedule for the delivery of an urgently needed pump.

The stevedore team secures the vessel. The ship's agent, along with other officials, boards the vessel and arranges clearance documents. The ship and shore team begin arrangements to offload cargo while the chief officer meets the AMSA surveyor. The company representative brings the much-needed pump and the engine team begins replacing the part. All proceeds apace, following the process of the many vessels that transit to the ports of Australia and the world each day.

Now, open your eyes.

WHO WERE THE SEAFARERS?

Did you actually visualise the scenario? If so, how many of the people doing the various tasks in the course of the ship arrival were actually women? Likely not

many. While it is true that, at present, many of the roles are performed by men, there is no reason why it should be this way. Traditional attitudes and practices tend to shape our thinking in many ways. Sometimes, to make progress, we need to visualise something different from what we are used to, and to focus work to have that vision become a reality.

WORKING FOR CHANGE

This is exactly what various industry groups that are doing; changing the image and symbols in people's minds to consider the possibilities and benefits of diversity in the maritime industry. Today I will try to provide some insight into just a few of these organisations.

The Nautical Institute, South East Australia Branch, via the Women in Maritime initiative, has been active through successful focus events in recent months. But, we are not the only ones working in this area. There is a wave of activity to promote, inspire and connect women in maritime not only in Australia, but regionally and internationally.

WISTA Australia ran an effective program for its 2018 annual general meeting conference recently. In addition to the exciting events for WISTA Australia, WISTA International recently was awarded consultative status by the IMO (see www.wista.net for more details).

IN THE REGION

In the region, the list of Pacific Women in Maritime Association (PACWiMA www.pacwima.org) national branches continue to grow. With branches now established in the Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, PACWiMA members are making waves promoting Pacific Island women in maritime activities. The regional support reflects the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UN SDG) 5 – “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”.



Jillian Carson-Jackson, senior vice-president, the Nautical Institute (International) and chair of the NI South East Australia branch

Further afield Women Offshore hosted its first meetup, “unite”, in July. Women Offshore (www.womenoffshore.org) was formed in 2017 for women who work on the water in the maritime and offshore energy industries. Its website provides a host of articles and practical advice for women working in the industry.

AT THE UN

In keeping with the support for UN SDG 5, on 9 July IMO Secretary General Kitack Lim announced the theme for World Maritime Day 2019: empowering women in maritime. He noted the theme would ensure a focus on the IMO women in maritime program throughout 2019.

With all this energy around women in maritime, there is a real opportunity to help raise the visibility of the amazing women involved and to help achieve a vision of the future where, in our story of the ship arriving to port, we imagine a diverse group of maritime professionals involved in all aspects of the journey.

For more information on the Nautical Institute SE Australia Branch's women in maritime activities, visit www.nisea.org and click on the appropriate tab. ■