

Report of the Pastoral / House Committee of the Melbourne Mission to Seafarers to the AGM 2017

Our Committee has met most months. We receive reports from the Manager, the Chaplain, volunteer representatives and from the Port Welfare Committee. We also have a growing concern for mental health welfare issues. Our Chaplain attended a special Seminar in December in Sydney sponsored by The Mission to Seafarers UK. We hope to provide this information more widely within the MTS family in Victoria (and perhaps Tasmania).

We attempt to identify trends from the various statistics provided. These show a gentle increase in Club visitors and a slight change in country of origin of seafarers. Filipino (41.2%), Chinese (23.23%), Indian (13.01%), Ukrainian (3.31%) however remain the bulk of seafarers visiting our Port. We are able to visit about a third of the ships in Port, but our contacts on board ships has greatly increased and we are better able to monitor this.

As yet the Government's Sale / Lease of the Port hasn't had any impact upon our work. The full implications of the MLC 2006 has yet to be implemented. Late in the year we had a seminar hosted by AMSA (The Australian Maritime Safety Authority) as well as a 'first five minutes' training session. Both provided insight and skills.

We are also trialling some software to track seafarers and their ship across borders - co-operating with the International Maritime Christian Association (IMCA). Without it being a burden it could greatly aid follow-through of seafarers as they sail around the world visiting different Ports and Centres. Careful sharing of information could help ship visitors and Chaplains with their contacts. The rapid turn around of ships in the Port remains a challenge. We have a hope to be able to open the Club earlier in the morning to better link with ship board rostering, but it is hard to attract volunteer bus drivers and hosts to come during peak city traffic times.

We remain very grateful to all volunteers - whatever their role. A bi-monthly Volunteer BBQ has been arranged with some amazing entertainment talent from the volunteers on display, including 'Sam the Magician' and Madeleine's Master's Project Film 'On Shore'. We have also added a roster newsletter page featuring a member of staff, a volunteer or a Board Member. We certainly have some talent!! Our beloved gardener, Tom, died in May and we miss him, his jovial smile and his expertise in the seafarer's garden.

We have received a steady supply of beanies (wooly hats) from kind knitters and these are much appreciated especially during the winter months. We provide them free to seafarers but occasionally they donate by way of saying thanks.

Phone cards and money transfers issues continue to occupy a lot of our best endeavours to aid seafarers. The field is constantly changing

There has been a slight relocation and design of the Shop and limiting the stock items and drinks to the more popular items. The relocation of the computer terminals has been appreciated. Small incremental changes in the day to day operation have improved the working of the Club. Funding always remains a challenge.

MYKI cards have been made available for seafarers use, even though local tram travel is free. Sometimes they wish to go further.

Sea Sunday occurred in early July and we are grateful to the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral for the evensong Service. Sadly the Service was not promoted by the Cathedral. We hope to correct this in 2017.

The Seafarers Memorial Service held during October in St Paul's Cathedral was again well attended and appreciated by seafarers and their families. The Sea Cadets featured as did the Royal Australian Navy Band.

Our ship visiting team of Chaplain Inni, Tony, Andrew, Julia and Max continue this vital work and a number of additional Ship Visitors are coming 'on board'. Freddie Fisher has joined our Committee during the year. A Training Day for volunteers with the National Executive Officer - Revd Canon Garry Dodd was held April 2016. A member from the Hastings Centre joined us. We are always in need of trained volunteers and a further Training Day is planned for late 2017. Please contact our Chaplain if you are interested in more details.

Seafarers on cruise ships remain a concern. We have considered a 'Pop up' Centre at Station Pier for the couple of months during the cruise season. We hope to be better organised in 2017 for this busy time. It is complicated in that turnabout is often within hours of arrival. Clearly, though it is not possible to bring seafarers to 717 Flinders St.

Our Centenary Year is 2017 and some preliminary thinking and planning has commenced.

Please continue to pray for us and the welfare of all seafarers and workers in the Port.

Ken Rogers,
Chair, Pastoral / House Committee