

Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP  
Minister for Skills and Training  
PO Box 6022  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Email: [Brendan.o'connor.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:Brendan.o'connor.mp@aph.gov.au)

29 August 2022

Dear Minister,

**Re: Urgent need to address critical maritime skills shortage**

Maritime Industry Australia Ltd (MIAL) and the Australian Resource and Energy Employer Association (AREEA) write to raise with you the urgent need to address the nation's critical shortage of essential maritime skills.

The training, skills and experience obtained while working at sea are utilised in a range of industries and government services across the Australian economy, including in port operations (pilotage, harbour masters, port operations), the resources industry (shipping superintendents, marine managers, and towage operators) and maritime compliance (AMSA, classification societies). The decline in Australian ships has seen a corresponding decline in training opportunities, and the supply of highly skilled Australian seafarers has all but dried up. Compounding the issue is the fact that many end users of maritime skills, with a few exceptions, cannot and do not train or contribute to training and skills development for current and future needs.

The 2019 MIAL Seafaring Skills Census predicted a shortfall of more than 560 seafarers by 2023. The Census did not predict industry attrition resulting from COVID 19, the upswing in maritime skills demand resulting from increased activity in the existing offshore resources industry, or consider future demand driven by the burgeoning offshore wind industry and the Government's commitment to building a maritime strategic fleet – a policy that we strongly support to enhance Australia's maritime capability.

There is an urgent need to address the industry training structural issues, including training capacity and funding, that are leading to this critical skills shortage. Besides the significant impact on existing business seeking these skills, the Government's ability to fulfill commitments relating to the fast-tracked development of Australia's offshore wind industry and the maritime strategic fleet are at stake. Importantly, on this issue, there are many areas where the views of employers and the maritime unions are very much aligned.

To address the critical maritime skills shortage, MIAL and AREEA are working together on the development of an options paper that will map a possible way forward, considering complex issues such as funding, employment of trainees, and coursework and sea time capacity, with a view to urgently

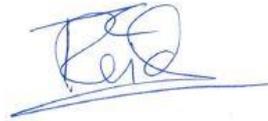
increasing the supply of critical maritime skills to the broader economy along short, medium, and long-term timeframes.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues with you and your team at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,



Angela Gillham  
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Tom Reid  
Acting Chief Executive, AREEA  
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CC: Hon. Richard Marles MP, Deputy Prime Minister  
Hon. Dr Jim Chalmers MP, Treasurer  
Hon. Catherine King MP, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Local Government  
Hon. Chris Bowen MP, Minister for Climate Change & Energy  
Hon Madeleine King MP, Minister for Resources