



AIMPE



State Controller
Tasmania

30th November, 2020

By email:

Dear State Controller,

Request for Exemption – Trident LNG employees

The Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers (AIMPE) and the Australian Maritime Officers Union (AMOU) write to request an exemption for Trident LNG employees from certain aspects of the “Maritime Crew - Important update to international maritime policies” issued on 26th November 2020.

From our reading of the update Australian seafarers returning to Australia from overseas on ships, and returning home to Tasmania, will be required to quarantine in Tasmania for 14 days if the ship they are on has not been at sea for at least 28 days before arrival at an Australian port.

In the new Class 4 exemption terms [copy attached] Tasmanian resident maritime crew returning from being on a ship that has travelled overseas may be exempt from the quarantine requirement if all of the crew are tested on arrival in Australia and all are negative for COVID-19.

This latter requirement for full crew testing on arrival is impractical for a number of reasons. The crew changes happen in Karratha but only a proportion of the crew sign off the ship on any one occasion. The remaining crew stay on board so testing would have to be conducted on board. When crew changes happen at anchor this would be problematic to say the least. The testing would have to be done prior to anyone departing the ship. And the samples would have to be tested and results notified prior to anyone departing the vessel or their replacements joining the vessel. This would build in several days of delay to each crew change.

The next crew change for Trident LNG is due on or about 4th or 5th December and it is likely that there will be four Tasmanian residents signing off the ship at that time. In order to ensure that the LNG export operations have continued smoothly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic crews have undertaken extended swings [periods of service on board] and if this opportunity for a crew change is missed then they would have to undertake another round trip before the next opportunity to take their leave would arise. This would impose additional stress on the individuals – not to mention their families in Tasmania who may not have seen their loved ones for three months or more.



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AIMPE and AMOU seek that an exemption be granted to Trident LNG from the obligation to test all of its employees when they disembark from one of the following nominated vessels:

Northwest Sanderling
Northwest Sandpiper
Northwest Snipe
Northwest Stormpetrel

These four LNG tankers are all Australian registered ships which means that Australian law applies at all times to the ships and the crew on board them. These ships are the only four Australian flag ships which engage in international trades. No other Australian flag ships undertake regular international trading voyages to and from Australian ports.

The 4 LNG Tankers are operated by Shell Tankers Australia /Trident LNG and trade exclusively for the North West Shelf project. The first of these ships commenced trading in 1989 carrying LNG to Japan. The four ships have been dedicated to this trade for their entire lives. They do not trade to any other ports. After discharging their cargoes in Japan, they steam directly to Australia. They do not visit ports in any other country.

Ever since the first outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020 there have been zero cases of coronavirus infections on these 4 LNG Tankers.

This result has been achieved because strict protocols that have been implemented by Shell Tankers Australia /Trident LNG on all 4 ships. AIMPE and AMOU visited all four of these ships in late February/early March 2020 and even at that stage the hygiene regime on board these ships was exemplary. Social distancing was enforced on board the ships. As visitors we were required to wear a face mask and were limited to restricted areas on board which were cleaned before and after our visit. Hand sanitiser was provided on every table – and this was before the pandemic was declared. Protocols have been greatly tightened since that time.

Gas terminals are very secure facilities and access to and from the facilities themselves is heavily restricted. No unauthorised access is possible through these terminals. The crew members on these four ships have been refused shore leave ever since the outbreak of COVID-19 so they do not even set foot on Japanese soil while the ship is in port or at any other time.

The current protocols also ensure that the Japanese terminal staff conduct contactless discharge of cargo – that is the procedures have been altered so that there is no interaction between the ships' crews and the terminal staff. The terminal staff are not allowed anywhere else on the ship apart from the discharge pipe area adjacent to the embarkation



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point. Specifically, the terminal staff are not allowed to approach or enter the ships accommodation area.

The Marine Pilots are the only Japanese personnel who enter the accommodation area – in order to access the Bridge to direct the berthing of the ships. Extreme precautions are taken by the Marine Pilots and by the ship's personnel on the Bridge including the use of full PPE and sanitizing routines before and after the pilotage period.

Additionally, Trident has implemented strict COVID-19 control measures and sanitisation procedures throughout the ships' accommodation. The Trident LNG crews are also subject to twice daily temperature checks to ensure the health status of all crew members.

In Australia when crew changes are conducted – in the Port of Dampier, WA – all crew comply with the protocols of the WA Government which include quarantine for some interstate seafarers and pre-boarding PCR tests for all of the Australian seafarers to ensure that all personnel who board the ships are COVID-19 negative. The pre-boarding PCR tests are carried out in Perth so that no-one who is COVID-19 positive can take the flight north to Karratha to join the ship. Having the tests done in Perth also facilitates quick turnaround of the test results from the laboratory which is also in Perth. Trident LNG requires its staff resident in WA to isolate for 7 days prior to their boarding date and they are subject to the requirement for a COVID-19 negative test result prior to travelling to Karratha.

The WA Government also requires Trident to supply an exclusive charter aircraft to transport their off-signing personnel to Perth for onward flights home. This is to ensure no intermingling with any other seafarers who may have arrived from overseas.

These four ships can clearly be distinguished from the foreign-registered vessels which have recently visited some Australian ports and had COVID-19 positive crew members on board.

If there is a need for verification of the above, Shell Tankers Australia /Trident LNG would no doubt provide a full presentation of all measures on board that are being taken to prevent COVID-19 infection. The company can, of course, provide documentation of the protocols outlined above.

The new Update will mean that the Australian seafarers working on these four ships that trade internationally out of Australia will be required to quarantine for 14 days each time they join their ship [sign on] and each time that they leave [sign off]. That is for each full work cycle they will be required to quarantine for 28 days. This compounds the already serious issue of extended on board swings by further extending time away from family.



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AIMPE and AMOU request that the Tasmanian Government give consideration to exempting the maritime crews on the 4 LNG tankers named above from these new quarantine arrangements.

It seems that the recent problems with foreign flag ships with foreign crews have led to a response that is going to have a significant and adverse impact on a particular Australian operation which has been an exemplar in COVID-19 management.

Yours sincerely

Martin Byrne
Federal Secretary

Mark Davis
Executive Officer