Advertorial

Maritime Sector Attracts and Benefits From Female Officers

PACIFIC TOWING

The maritime sector offers many rewarding and well-remunerated employment opportunities – both at sea and onshore.
The sector is exciting and has much to offer. There is travel to far-off countries, the mastery, operation and engineering of a range of vessels (some hundreds of metres long), rapidly evolving technological advancements, diverse projects, a strong sense of purpose and importance, and of course the world's best 'office' location – the everchanging ocean, as well as waterways and harbours.

Female crew Maria Nengo (right) – at one of Pacific Towing's dual tug assists of a tanker in Fairfax Harbour – and Eunice Tuwe (left) newly graduated as an officer of the watch under the Women in Maritime program, and now working for Consort Express Lines

The maritime sector in both PNG and internationally has long been male dominated. However, as shipping companies have come to appreciate the value of diverse workforces, they have introduced specific strategies to recruit women. As such, an increasing number of women are pursuing a maritime career.

The opportunities to work at sea presenting themselves to women in PNG are predominantly via cadetship programs, such as those offered by Consort Express Lines, Gulf Maritime Services, Pacific Towing, P&O Maritime and TWL. These include theoretical training as well as on-the-job training (i.e. on vessels, in engineering workshops, and on docks).

To date, the programs that have attracted and supported the majority of female cadets are those offered by Pacific Towing (PacTow) and sister Steamships' company, Consort Express Lines (Consort).

The standout cadetship program is PacTow's 'Women in Maritime' scholarship program, a partnership with the Australian Government, Consort and Swire Shipping.

The Women in Maritime program was developed for both business and moral imperatives. PacTow general manager Neil Papenfus says: "We wanted to tap into the enormous pool of talent that PNG women represent in order to bolster PacTow's junior officer ranks, while at the same time giving women equal access to careers – and therefore economic empowerment – in a sector they had largely been locked out of."

Commencing in 2018, to date 40 women have been awarded a Women in Maritime scholarship as either a deck or engine cadet.

Of these, 18 have graduated, with another five women anticipated to graduate by mid-2024, and a further two on track to graduate by end of year.

Not only do the cadetships afford women the opportunity to pursue a well-paid and rewarding career, they also literally 'grow' PNG's next generation of seafaring professionals. This is essential according to the Coastal Shipowners Association, which estimates there is currently a 30% shortfall of maritime officers in PNG.

The cadets, once they graduate as officers of the watch (deck or engine), will help fill a significant gap in the nation's seafaring workforce. When they do so, it will mean that more senior roles in the maritime sector will be filled by Papua New Guineans (as opposed to expatriates), which of course is good for PNG families, PNG communities, PNG businesses and the broader economy.

Seafaring is an important profession because it supports an essential industry. Without seafarers, shipping – and therefore global trade, would grind to a halt and PNG wouldn't be able to import vital goods or grow its economy via exports.

The significance of seafarers was showcased globally during the COVID pandemic. PNG masters, engineers and crews on all different types of vessels, from cargo carriers to fuel tankers, and from barges to tugboats, helped PNG bring in critically needed food, medical supplies, fuel, construction materials and much, much more.

Female officers graduating from the Women in Maritime program, as well as from PacTow's in-house program, have the same capacity to contribute to PNG's maritime sector and the nation's development. They will form an increasingly vital part of PNG's maritime workforce, given the growing demand for shipping services associated with PNG's expanding oil and gas sector.

Given time and the necessary seafaring experience, we will increasingly see women in charge of vessels on PNG's waterways. PacTow has already had women in leadership roles on its tugs, and Mr Papenfus has a goal of having an all-female captained and crewed tug operating out of its Port Moresby headquarters and tug base.

Women in Maritime scholarship holders begin their cadetships with a year of theoretical training at the PNG Maritime College in Madang before going on to receive 'at sea' training on Pacific Towing, Consort and Swire Shipping vessels

PacTow delivers excellent, reliable and safe marine services through PNG and the broader region. A well-maintained fleet, as well as a dedicated and exceptionally trained team, underpin the company's ongoing expansion and success. PacTow is part of a larger sea and land logistics group wholly owned by Steamships Limited.

Female seafarers are making significant contributions in leadership positions across Pacific Towing's operations, including marine salvages

• To learn more about PacTow, including its training and gender equality initiatives, visit:
www.pacifictowingmarineservices.com