International Day of the Seafarer

MY HARASSMENT–FREE SHIP

Safe, skilled, respected

Celebrating the seafarers behind PacTow's success

AS the world celebrates the 2025 International Day of the Seafarer, Papua New Guinea's own Pacific Towing (PacTow) is reaffirming its commitment to safe, respectful, and inclusive workplaces for all seafarers and every member of the PacTow team.

A homegrown company with nearly 50 years of service, PacTow has built a reputation across PNG and the South Pacific as a market leader in marine services from harbour towage and salvage to pollution prevention, commercial diving, and life rafts. At the heart of this success is a resolute team of over 250 maritime professionals, including a fleet of skilled seafarers committed to working safely .

A workplace culture of respect and safety

This year's IMO theme resonates strongly with PacTow, which has long recognised that maritime safety must go beyond technical procedures and personal protective equipment it must include psychological safety, inclusivity, and zero tolerance for harassment or discrimination.

PacTow is the first maritime company globally to implement 'Gender Smart Safety', a programme developed by the PNG Business Coalition for Women. The initiative recognises that women often face different safety and security concerns in the workplace particularly in male-dominated industries like shipping and ensures that women's voices are heard in every step of the safety management process, across every step of safety management from hazard identification and risk mitigation to regular safety reviews.

"Every employee deserves to feel safe, valued, and protected not just physically, but emotionally and culturally too" says general manager, Gerard Kasnari.

"We're proud to lead by example and to show that safety means more than procedures it means dignity, inclusion, and respect."

Training the next generation

PacTow invests heavily in training and development across all levels of its workforce whether on land or aboard its fleet. Nearly half of PacTow's employees are seafarers, many of whom have trained and worked internationally, bringing global experience to PNG's maritime sector.

Two cadetship programmes are growing the next generation of PNG mariners: PacTow's in-house programme, which primarily supports young PNG men entering the maritime profession, and the Women in Maritime partnership with the Australian Government, Swire Shipping, and Consort Express Lines, helping to build a more diverse and qualified maritime workforce. In 2025, PacTow extended its cadetships to include Solomon Islanders, further supporting regional maritime capacity building.

"Developing local talent is at the heart of our mission and we believe strongly in nationalisation.

"Ninety-eight percent of our staff in PNG are Papua New Guineans and our Solomon Islands operation has a 100 per cent nationalised workforce. Significantly, more than half our team has been with us for over 10 years a reflection of the culture we have built," Kasnari said.

A safety-first operation

PacTow's safety record is underpinned by ISO 45001 (Occupational Health and Safety) certification, as well as ISO 9001 (Quality) and ISO 14001 (Environmental) certifications. Its commercial diving activities, some of which are technically complex and high-risk, are conducted to AS NZS 2299.1:2015 standards.

The company's internal Safety Awards programme actively rewards safe work practices, encouraging incident reporting, learning, and continual improvement.

"There is no such thing as 'too much safety.' Not just for ourselves, but for the broader industry. Safety is not just our top priority it is at the core of everything we do at PacTow," emphasises Kasnari.

Services that keep others safe

PacTow's commitment to safety extends far beyond its own workforce. Its services protect other seafarers, vessels, the environment, and communities throughout the Pacific.

Emergency response: Operating 24/7, PacTow has responded to nearly one hundred maritime emergencies, including oil spills, mechanical failures, and vessels adrift. Its crews have saved hundreds of lives, often rescuing passengers on unseaworthy boats in remote areas.

Salvage and wreck retrieval: As Melanesia's only full member of the International Salvage Union (ISU), PacTow has salvaged more than seventy vessels in the last 25 years. These operations have prevented environmental disasters by recovering fuel and oil before vessels could break up and pollute fragile reefs and coastlines.

Pollution prevention: A member of the International Spill Control Organization (ISCO), PacTow works closely with the National Maritime Safety Authority (NMSA) and PNG Ports Corporation to support national oil spill readiness. Its pollution control booms are regularly deployed to support the oil and gas export industry, as well as for larger vessel refuelling such as when international naval vessels visit.

Life Rafts: PacTow sells, leases, and services premium life rafts for commercial and recreational vessels. Its certified technicians ensure these critical devices are maintained to the highest global standards.

Commercial Diving: Central to many of PacTow's services that protect lives, vessels, our environment, and communities, are its internationally trained and certified divers. PacTow's commercial divers have performed numerous underwater repairs and class surveys, as well as played critical roles in the search and recovery of many vessels.

This International Day of the Seafarer, PacTow salutes its team of seafarers and its onshore staff not only for their skill, professionalism, and dedication, but for sustaining a workplace culture rooted in safety, equality, and mutual respect.