PROFILE

PNG Marine Services Co. benefits from restructure

Pacific Towing, a prominent marine services provider headquartered in Port Moresby, is reaping the benefits of a recent organisational restructure that has transferred the management and maintenance of its fleet to a newly established entity.

A key advantage of the change has been a marked improvement in fleet availability. This operational efficiency has also enabled leadership to sharpen its focus on securing new commercial ventures, including project-based opportunities tied to Papua New Guinea's growing oil and gas industry.

Founded in 1977, Pacific Towing (PacTow) operates within the Logistics Division of the 106-year-old Steamships Trading Company Ltd., which counts John Swire & Sons as one of its two major shareholders.

The division also includes Consort Express Lines (Consort), Papua New Guinea's largest coastal shipping operation.

Established in February this year, Steamships Ship Management (SSM) combines the in-house ship management activities of both PacTow and Consort under a single umbrella organisation.

Gerard Kasnari, General Manager of PacTow, notes that the restructure has delivered measurable results in fleet availability.

"Repairing and maintaining vessels, including dry docking, presents an ongoing challenge for fleet owners across PNG and Melanesia," Kasnari explains.

"Fleet availability is rarely where we want it to be, but this new structure is helping us get closer to those targets."

Vessel maintenance in PNG is a key operational challenge, driven by the high cost and limited domestic availability of parts.

Sourcing components internationally often involves prolonged lead times, particularly for oversized items that cannot be transported by air.

PNG also has limited docking facilities. As a result, PacTow has increasingly opted to send its tugs overseas for mandatory dry dockings, with two tugs, WAIOWA and KEERA, completing their life extension dockings in the first quarter of this year.

SSM has managed to improve PacTow's fleet availability relatively quickly through best practice technical management and via a more streamlined and systematic approach to preventative maintenance.

It is anticipated that further availability improvements will be realised under SSM's uniform dry dock management approach.

The company should also begin to realise cost savings through SSM's centralised procurement, rationalisation of spend, and economies of scale in purchasing.

Kasnari reports that another benefit of PacTow's restructure is the time he and his team now have to take advantage of new commercial opportunities.

"Under the old structure, we were spending an unsustainable amount of time trying to rectify sub-optimal fleet availability. However, with SSM now responsible for fleet maintenance, as well as vessel bookings, HSSE, crewing, procurement, and vessel IT support, we are able to focus more on business development.

"This includes pursuing international towage and other project-based work, some of which is tied to PNG's expanding oil and gas industry, as well as to other major resource developments and infrastructure programmes such as the upgrading of several of the nation's ports."

Pacific Towing is Melanesia's largest marine services business. It employs more than 250 staff and has a fleet of 20 vessels.

It provides a broad spectrum of marine services, including towage, emergency response, commercial diving, life raft services, and salvage. PacTow is part of a larger maritime and land Logistics Division of the Steamships Group.

To learn more about PacTow: www.pacifictowingmarineservices.com.

Pacific Towing has significantly improved fleet availability following a restructure in which a separate entity assumed responsibility for fleet management and maintenance.