Recognising PacTow Seafarers

Each year, the International Maritime Organisation's 'Day of the Seafarer' provides an opportunity to recognise the men and women who keep global trade moving.

The 2026 theme, 'Carrying world trade. Carrying the risks', is a timely reminder that the contribution of seafarers is often out of sight. Goods arrive in ports, ships berth and depart, fuel and cargo continue to move, and economies continue to function. Behind that movement are seafarers working in difficult, demanding and potentially dangerous conditions.

For Pacific Towing (PacTow), this theme has particular meaning because the majority of its seafarers work on tugboats; with a smaller number crewing line boats and other support vessels.

Tugs may not be the largest vessels in the maritime industry, but their role is essential. Every day, tug crews help large ships enter and leave ports safely. They assist vessels to berth and unberth, support port efficiency, and help reduce the risk of accidents in busy and confined harbour environments.

Without tugboats, many larger vessels cannot access ports. Without access to ports, trade slows down. Cargo is delayed. Fuel, food, construction materials, project cargo and essential goods take longer to reach the people and businesses that depend on them. In this way, tugboat crews play a quiet but vital role in keeping trade moving.

PacTow's core business is harbour towage, but the work of its crews extends well beyond routine port operations. Its tugs and seafarers are also involved in salvage, emergency response, wreck removal, oil and gas support, and other specialist marine services.

These operations can be technically complex and operationally challenging. Tug crews often work close to much larger vessels, under heavy lines, in restricted waters, at night, in poor weather, and in situations where timing and communication are critical. Salvage and emergency response work can be even more demanding, with crews called on to assist vessels that are disabled, grounded, damaged, drifting, or otherwise in distress.

There are also potential risks that are less visible.

Life at sea and marine operations can place pressure on people and families. Seafarers spend time away from home. They work irregular hours. They may be called out at short notice. They must remain alert and professional in high-pressure situations where decisions matter and where the safety of others may depend on their skill and judgement.

Safety is given absolute priority at PacTow. The company continues to invest in training, safe operating procedures, toolbox meetings, risk assessments, re-fleeting, vessel maintenance, emergency drills and supervision to help protect crews during daily operations.

PacTow also recognises the importance of wellbeing. This includes encouraging open communication, supporting staff to identify concerns early, promoting a culture where people can speak up about safety, and providing access to support when staff are facing personal or work-related pressures.

One of PacTow's most important safety investments is in training the next generation of seafarers via its two cadetship programs – its long-running in-house program and the Women in Maritime programme. These programmes are helping to address a significant shortage of qualified seafarers in PNG, Solomon Islands and globally, estimated at around 30 per cent. That shortfall is not only a workforce issue; it is also a safety issue. When there are not enough trained and experienced seafarers, the risks increase for crews, vessels, ports and the companies that depend on safe marine operations. By training more seafarers, PacTow is helping to strengthen the skills base needed to operate safely in a demanding industry.

PacTow's crews play a vital role in keeping ships, ports and trade moving safely in high risk environments. – Picture supplied

PacTow is proud of the professionalism of its seafarers. Their work is not always visible to the public, but it is visible to the vessels they assist, the ports they support, and the industries that rely on safe and reliable marine services.

On this Day of the Seafarer, PacTow acknowledges and celebrates all of its seafarers across its PNG operations as well as those in Solomon Islands.

The skill, discipline and resilience of these seafaring men and women help keep ports operating and trade moving.

PACIFIC TOWING
DAY OF THE SEAFARER
—25 JUNE—
RECOGNISING AND CELEBRATING OUR
SEAFARERS
Carrying World Trade.
Carrying the Risks
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