



SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



President's Message

2019 Annual Conference – 12-14 September 2019, Hilton Hotel, Auckland, New Zealand

Following last year's successful Annual Conference, I'm pleased to advise that planning for the 2019 Federal Conference is well progressed, thanks to the efforts and hard work of the New Zealand Branch Committee. The theme of this year's conference is Sea Change – Navigating the Future. We'll explore the changing face of the maritime sector, and the revolutionary technological changes affecting the maritime and offshore sector globally. We'll consider the legal and operational implications of those changes, what the changes mean to participants in the sector, and the opportunities thereby created.

The draft program promises a fabulous conference, with current, innovative and thought provoking sessions, and an exceptional calibre of international and domestic speakers.

Participation

Thank you also to those who have volunteered to present at the Conference – your participation is greatly valued and appreciated.

We are looking to have one of the sessions take the form of a hypothetical debate amongst our younger members. If you are interested in participating in this session please let us know. Rise to the challenge!

I commend the conference to all who operate in the maritime sector.

Sponsorship

As a not for profit organisation, MLAANZ is dependent on your generous sponsorship and on registrations, in order to be able to deliver the service we provide to our members and to the broader maritime community. We are keen to continue, and if possible, expand our role in supporting and advancing reforms in maritime law, promoting international and domestic harmonization of maritime law, and providing a forum for the exchange of ideas on critical issues affecting our members.

I would like to thank our members and our regular sponsors who have been generous in their support of the conference to date. It has been gratifying to see the level of support shown by our sponsors over the years. We welcome and appreciate your ongoing support, I would respectfully encourage others to support this worthwhile venture.

There will be an early bird registration opportunity, for which the rate and deadline is about to be announced – please do keep an eye on our Website for details. Full details of the Conference will also soon be available on our Website.

Call for Papers for 46th Annual Conference

The Board invites all parties interested in presenting at the 2019 conference to submit an extract of approximately 200 words on their proposed presentation. A deadline for receipt of which will again soon be announced on our Website. However, do please feel free to make early enquiries to the NZ Branch via Stacey Fraser <Stacey.Fraser@mcelroys.co.nz> or Hamish Fletcher <hamish@oceanlaw.co.nz>.

Technological Advances

Some of the technological advances that will be explored at the Annual Conference include the advent of autonomous vessels, the use of drones, digitalisation, blockchain technology, developments in robotics and digital currencies. These and other technological advances have proven to be both disruptive and potentially beneficial to the Maritime sector.

Rolls Royce has opened a facility in Finland to develop technologies in the arena of autonomous shipping.

Construction of the world's first autonomous fully electric container vessel, with zero emissions is underway. The Yara Birkeland is owned by Yara International ASA, and is designed and being built in partnership with Kongsberg Maritime. Testing of the vessel's autonomous capability is expected to be carried out this year, with delivery expected to be in 2020. The vessel is expected to reach fully autonomous status by 2022. The ship's green credentials will assist to meet the UN sustainability goals.

The construction of the world's first autonomous commercial vessel, has given rise to many legal challenges, and is likely to see many more as the vessel approaches commissioning – can unmanned vessels ever be classed as “seaworthy” in the traditional sense? Who is responsible in the event of a maritime misadventure cause by an autonomous vessel – the owner, the computer programmer or others involved in development of the algorithm? The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has commenced work to consider the advent of autonomous surface vessels. At least one organisation has released guidelines for a new class of vessel covering autonomous and remote operated vessels.

Blockchain technology is also set to revolutionise the global cargo trade and supply chain logistics.

The introduction of such technological advances has significant implications for cyber security in maritime transactions.

At least one P&I Club is looking to provide insurance cover for autonomous vessels.

Recent Appointments

In February 2019, the Attorney General for Australia announced the appointment of Angus Stewart SC as a Judge of the Federal Court of Australia, commencing in the Sydney Registry of the Court on 25 February 2019.

MLAANZ would like to extend its heartfelt congratulations to his Honour for his elevation to the bench and to thank him for his invaluable contribution to, and support of MLAANZ over the years.

Kind regards

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