



SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



Crew Mental Wellbeing Remains Priority – Stella Maris

Leading global maritime charity, Stella Maris, is urging ship operators to ensure crew mental health and wellbeing is a priority on their agendas.

Launching its “Life at Sea Report 2024” on World Mental Health Day on 10 October, the charity noted that many seafarers still fear the stigma of speaking openly about their struggles while working at sea.

Stella Maris chief executive and national director Tim Hill said although seafarers were tough, being part of a small crew was inherently challenging.

“The work is relentless and emotions such as loneliness, fear and boredom are difficult to endure,” he said.

“But it can be hard for seafarers to talk about their worries. The fear of being judged or lowering morale among crew often keeps them silent. When seafarers are concerned about their families, they can feel powerless and isolated.

“At Stella Maris, we believe that face-to-face interaction makes a huge difference – a friend in port, a listening ear, a welcoming smile. When you ask seafarers about life at sea, they often say they miss



the feeling of being connected. Human connection is what Stella Maris chaplains provide in their tens of thousands of ship visits each year.

“And when crisis strikes, the value and impact of our chaplains’ support is even greater, providing a unique service to the world’s seafarers wherever they are.”

This year’s report focuses on the importance of mental health in the maritime industry and the role played by hundreds of Stella Maris chaplains and volunteers around the globe to support the mental wellbeing of seafarers.

As with previous editions, the publication features case studies highlighting how Stella Maris’ support has provided a lifeline for many seafarers caught up in crises. These include Ukrainian seafarers anxious about their futures and that of their families, seafarers worried about sailing through the current conflict zones of the Red Sea and the Black Sea, a seafarer in emotional distress after being arrested, and a crew under enormous financial strain after not being paid for weeks.

Additionally, the report highlights how Stella Maris’ partnership with the shipping industry – including P&I Clubs, shipping companies and other welfare agencies – has proved “vital in helping to address and solve crews’ concerns”.

Clinical psychologist Charles Watkins, who is featured in the edition, said ensuring seafarers continue to get caring, compassionate human contact was “one of the most important things the industry can invest in”.

“Stella Maris has chaplains around the world, in all cultures, and they have a really good feeling for culture and what that means for mental and physical health,” he said.

“These small things – going onboard, chatting to crews, asking about their families – they are not small at all. They are huge. I’ve been onboard vessels with Stella Maris chaplains and have seen for myself. This is significant, impactful work.”

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

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Rise in Seafarer Happiness

Meanwhile, the latest Mission to Seafarers Seafarers Happiness Index reveals a “steady increase in satisfaction in several areas of seafaring life to 7.16 in Q3 2024”, rising from 6.99 in the previous quarter.

