



MNZ's latest road kill: Surveyors

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Associate Minister of Transport, Hon Craig Foss will open this year's NZMTA Conference on Thursday, September 3. Initially planned for Waiheke Island, the conference and accommodation will now be in Auckland city due to hotel renovations on the island. Our traditional dinner and challenge will still take place on Waiheke on Thursday night. Registration forms will be sent out shortly and be available on the NZMTA website from June 30.

We'll confirm the agenda shortly. Presenters are already confirmed from the tourism and industry training sector. MOSS and SeaCert remain topical issues for every operator in the country – we hope to hear from Maritime NZ and industry speakers about progress. A highlight will be an update from the NZ Shipping Federation and NZ Maritime Forum chair Annabel Young who, as a well-respected political lobbyist, may, we hope, pass on some of her wisdom in that field.

In other industry matters, many Surveyors throughout the country have been struggling to come to terms with the new MOSS requirements and, crucially, Surveyor recognition assessments. There are not enough pages in this magazine to describe the individual anguish of so many of our experienced Surveyors who are now permanently lost to the industry because of the process.

During the MOSS roadshows Maritime NZ was highly critical of surveying under SSM, and made a commitment to improve surveyor standards. That goal is understandable – however, in MNZ's drive to achieve this, combined with a lack of insight and empathy when applying the new rule and performance standards for survey, the end result for industry is considerable added cost and the loss of marine technical expertise

As we stand at the moment, of the 71 Surveyors previously working under SSM, *more than 50 have left the industry* or, 'failed' to meet the new recognition criteria. This is a very serious matter – one which we need to be collectively concerned about. How did this happen?

Maritime rule part 44.25 details a set of "standards and requirements" Surveyors must adhere to when conducting surveys. That's a positive initiative, and an assurance the industry has long been asking for. MNZ has also introduced a set of "Surveyor Performance Standards" intended to provide guidance to surveyors in the conduct of their work. In part, they state:

"Recognised surveyors must comply with these SPRs when undertaking such a survey and producing the associated survey report. The SPRs do not include a detailed specification of each test, but expect the surveyor to be capable of performing the tests indicated."

Drafting these Surveyor performance standards may have cost a small fortune in consultant's fees, but they are really *useless in practice*, being silent on the technical detail that surveyors must exercise in their daily decision-making. Worse still, there are *no detailed surveyor work instructions* (say for hull repairs, permissible wastage, NDE requirements or welding/material application) that previously formed an integral part of SSM company quality systems.

MNZ's Surveyor training has so far consisted of a one-day seminar – focused more on administrative issues and mandatory report writing than anything technical. Even more alarming is the utter lack of flexibility shown when to transitioning existing

Surveyors. The rule clearly allows for this, but Maritime NZ has apparently chosen to ignore it.

To compound the problem, the Surveyor Recognition Framework seems not to have been applied consistently. This misinterpretation has left industry with a number of Surveyors who are clearly *working above their skill and experience level* – while locking out others who are desperately needed.

We are told that the exams for each surveyor were set differently – yet some were only given questions in areas they are least experienced, while others were granted a broader spectrum. In some cases, it's clear the questions were not related to a Surveyor's recognition application. These inconsistencies have left a bitter taste in the mouths of Surveyors who now watch their lesser-qualified peers inspect vessels for which they may not be qualified, while they themselves may not practice their profession.

In Australia, the assessment process is quite different. The question needs to be asked: Why has Maritime NZ chosen a different approach? To cull surveyors? Transitioning Surveyors across the ditch are not required to sit a written exam. They are asked to complete an application form and *automatically* receive accreditation against their existing categories. Their applications are individually assessed by a panel and AMSA only contacts a surveyor if more information, or an interview, is required.

The Australian assessment process uses a selection panel to review applicants *in accordance with the category they have applied for*. They may also observe a surveyor conducting a practical survey and provide recommendations of suitability for accreditation. Any interview or practical demonstration is intended to provide the selection panel with an opportunity to confirm, discuss, and expand on the information provided in the written application.

Additionally, Aussie Surveyors are required to hold Professional Indemnity Insurance. This is no longer a requirement of local Surveyors. Why not? Australian Surveyors must have a Quality Management System compliant with ISO 9001:2008 or equivalent. This *was* a requirement of SSM companies – but no such quality system is required for New Zealand Surveyors or Survey companies under MOSS. Furthermore, the Australians require their Surveyors to maintain a professional association membership (Marine Surveyors Association, IIMS, Royal Institute of Naval Architects etc.) and undertake continuing professional development to demonstrate their capability within their industry. Kiwi Surveyors are on their own, and no longer have the robust training and quality systems they enjoyed under an SSM company.

Given the variations above, and the lack of tangible technical instructions, it is difficult to understand how Maritime NZ hopes to achieve a higher and consistent standard of survey in our domestic sector – yet the culling of our existing pool of experienced Surveyors continues.

Suddenly labelling many incumbent Surveyors '*a risk to maritime safety*' or '*failing to meet the new standards*' when not passing the written examination is unduly harsh – particularly given that *there are no specific published standards* for surveyors to use in preparing for their exam. These Surveyors have served the industry nobly over many years.

MOSS now seeks a higher standard. This is understood and embraced. But the challenge is to ensure our Surveyors are well informed to meet this – not thrown aside due to an inflexible approach, or unsupported from a technical perspective.

