

**Regulatory and/or Licencing Bodies**

- WA Port Authorities are governed under the *Port Authorities Act 1999* and operate as corporatised entities, each with a board of directors that reports to the Minister for Transport.<sup>i</sup>
- In WA, there are five Port Authorities responsible for nine ports. These are: Fremantle Port Authority, (Fremantle including the Outer Harbour at Kwinana), Kimberley Ports Authority (Broome), Mid-West Ports Authority (Geraldton), Pilbara Ports Authority (Port Hedland, Dampier and Ashburton) and the Southern Ports Authority (Albany, Bunbury and Esperance).<sup>ii</sup>
- There are also a range of other ports operating on the West Coast, many under the management of the Department of Transport (DoT) and some via private arrangement.<sup>iii</sup>

**INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENTS AND WORKFORCE CHALLENGES:****1. Existing and anticipated supply and demand for skills:**

- As China is a major trading partner for Australia there could be wide-reaching implications affecting industry from the COVID-19 outbreak. The full long-term impact of the COVID-19 on the maritime and ports and stevedoring industries is yet to be determined.<sup>iv</sup> *Please see Industry Impact from COVID-19 for further details.*
- The Channel Risk and Optimisation Project (CROP) at the Port of Port Hedland completed in 2019 is anticipated to improve trade capacity by increasing channel depth and extending windows. This will allow port users to optimise tonnage on their vessels. It will also increase the number of cruise ships who will be able to make berth at Port Hedland during cruising season.<sup>v</sup>
- In November 2019 the Port of Port Hedland received biosecurity certification to allow direct maritime freight services into the Pilbara. Recent upgrades to the Ports cargo inspection and fumigation processes will permit a wider range of cargo to enter the Pilbara. The Port of Dampier is also undergoing biosecurity upgrades and aims to encourage direct freight links and receive a wider variety of cargoes from 2020 once its facilities have received the relevant approvals.<sup>vi</sup>
- There continues to be an acute shortage of suitably skilled and experienced Ship's Masters to transition into land-based roles such as Harbour Masters. The decline of blue-water Australian flagged ships has greatly affected these shortages as Australian mariners must seek overseas training to gain the required sea time experience, with many not returning to Australia to work.<sup>vii</sup>
- There is some automation of cranes (mobile and harbor based) entering the Stevedoring industry, however the uptake of this has been slow in Western Australia. This slow transitioning has allowed employers to stay abreast of the training and transitioning required to introduce the new technology.<sup>viii</sup>
- Some regional ports are investigating the use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) within the port for several uses such as monitoring landslide traffic and stock, maintenance checks of wharves and as navigation aids. Trials currently underway have highlighted the importance of how to curate and analyse big data with future roles identified at the Ports for data analysts and RPAS pilots.<sup>ix</sup>
- For some organisations, being an employer of choice offering good employment conditions and being regarded as a desirable workplace has allowed them to maintain stevedoring numbers with very low turnover.<sup>x</sup>
- For stevedores, new entrants to the industry can be readily trained and the lead time for entry-level training is short. In some organisations there is an ability for employees to work their way up through the ranks, which is also seen as desirable by new and existing employees.<sup>xi</sup>
- There are currently no new roles expected to emerge as a result of innovation/technology in the Ports. However, due to the advancement of technology some mariners are no longer being offered the opportunity to develop critical skills such as manual ship handling skills, which would be useful in land-based roles.<sup>xii</sup>
- The following occupations continue to be in high demand for the Ports sector:
  - **Marine Pilots** – In Australia, the average age of Marine Pilots is 52, with approximately 350 Marine Pilots Nationally. The lack of blue water vessels operating in Australia is creating training

bottlenecks as the traditional pathway to enter this position and gain sea-time experience is no longer available. In approximately two to seven years it is anticipated there will be acute shortages as the current workforce transitions into retirement and the lack of a suitable training pathway means that Australia will be unable to establish a new generation of workers to replace them.<sup>xiii</sup>

- **Marine Surveyors** – There is a current shortage of Marine Surveyors. There are issues with replenishing the current pool of candidates due to a lack of training pathways, or cadetships being offered by industry, and by the regulators who are using Marine Surveyors. This is a highly specialized role, and in some instances, this type of work can be sporadic due to the employers' scope of work. Typically, a Masters' Unlimited is required to work in this role.<sup>xiv</sup>
- **Harbour Masters** – Australian employers are seeking Harbour Masters with Master Unlimited experience, with short based operations command and some other skills. Although employers prefer to hire locally, this role and that of Deputy Harbour Master are mostly sourced from overseas (particularly, from the UK, Indonesia, South Africa, and New Zealand), with approximately only one third of those employed as Deputy Harbor Master originating from Australia.<sup>xv</sup>

### Regional Concerns

- Within the regional areas, the lack of training providers is continuing to cause concerns for industry. Particularly for industries experiencing ongoing skills shortages. This negatively impacts the pipeline of entrants into the industry and places additional pressures on the already limited supply pool of workers.<sup>xvi</sup>
- Regional Ports are finding it the most difficult to source and retain quality candidates. Smaller regional Ports are considering using alternative training pathways and experience levels (i.e. Master 3 or Master 4) to fill positions. In some instances, regional Ports are using Fly-In, Fly-out (FIFO) workers to fill roles due to a lack of highly skilled mariners. Many of these workers do not want to live regionally (i.e. due to availability of secondary and tertiary schooling, housing, amenities and infrastructure) and they are able to be selective regarding where they work/live. In these instances, FIFO has become the only option for these employers.<sup>xvii</sup>
- The State Government has announced priority works in Esperance Port to increase export and import capacity. This initiative will more than 100 local jobs in the construction phase.<sup>xviii</sup>

### INDUSTRY WORKFORCE PRIORITIES: Strategic directions, policies and priorities for industry

- The Maritime Regulator is requiring more training (such as Radio Communications) to be done for Vessel Tracking Officers. Organisations then need to further develop additional skills that are required (i.e. shipping management and scheduling for Ports based roles).<sup>xix</sup>
- There is a greater need for industry, unions, regulators and Government to explore the potential for new training opportunities and alternative pathways into industry. Industry is considering implementing alternative training models to the traditional proved pathways to source and retain Harbour Masters and to ensure they possess the high-end skills and experience required to operate in these roles (i.e. UK model). These alternative models would potentially allow for the replenishment of the Maritime workforce.<sup>xx</sup>
- Some ports in WA are continuing to sponsor cadetships to assist individuals to attain sea time experience with overseas companies with the hope they will return to the Ports sectors.<sup>xxi</sup>
- The effects of Cyclone Damien are still being felt with a slight effect on decreasing tonnage for Dampier Ports. Following the adverse effects of Cyclone Damien in the Pilbara, including the total constructive loss of vessels which broke their cyclone moorings, there is a need for shipping companies to review how they provide cycle management training and to ensure their equipment meets industry standards for these conditions. During the Cyclone, four out of five ports closed and typically companies choose to moor vessels rather than taking ships out to sea during this time.<sup>xxii</sup>

### Industry Impacts Caused From COVID-19

- As China is a major trading partner for Australia, there were impacts on the maritime, ports and stevedoring industries due to lower levels of economic activity. In early March 2020 there was a reduction in the number of Chinese vessels able to berth in WA.<sup>xxiii</sup>

- This industry has not yet been affected by job losses and is currently operating as 'Business as Usual'. However, although not yet heavily impacted by COVID-19, there remains a shortfall of high-level mariners within industry and an alternative training pathway is needed to progress individuals through to Master Unlimited as needed for land-based roles such as Harbour Master. <sup>xxiv</sup>
- With the proximity and turnaround times to destination ports such as Singapore, health checks and social distancing requirements are being observed and cargo ship movements are continuing. <sup>xxv</sup>
- During the initial stages of COVID-19 the Ports and Stevedoring workforce were affected by temporary job changes such as decreases in work hours, brought about by some decreased demand for goods/services and higher financial and regulatory risks. For the most part, industry was able to operate with some restrictions. <sup>xxvi</sup>
- Before any international vessels are allowed to berth at any port, they must be vetted by Australian Border Force and granted "Pratique", which are the standard operating procedures undertaken to check incoming vessels, increased due to the pandemic. This will only occur if the vessel has been vetted and found to be a "healthy" ship. Australian Border Force undertakes an intensive interrogation of the ship's circumstances and only on satisfaction of this interrogation process with permission to be granted for a vessel to enter an Australian port and berth. <sup>xxvii</sup>
- This industry did not experience net changes in job losses, however there were changes in tasks and hours worked. This includes but is not limited to cleaning, disinfecting, social distancing and health checks. <sup>xxviii</sup>
- Fremantle Ports experienced a 12% increase in imports compared to the same time last year. <sup>xxix</sup>
- Fremantle Ports are continuing to offer Port services, with an expectation that the volume of freight movement will start to increase again as ships respond to new 14-day quarantine restrictions prior to ships docking and unloading. Stevedoring services are still in demand and Ports across the State are all still operating while new work practices have been put in place to ensure safe work practices around the COVID-19 pandemic. <sup>xxx</sup>
- Port Hedland and other Ports that are involved in bulk exports to Asia are experiencing some delays in shipping due to the quarantine restrictions, but these have not been as severe as previously predicted. <sup>xxxi</sup>
- Pilots in some Ports, such as Port Hedland, operate on a FIFO roster, with many based on the east coast of Australia or in Asia. Pilots in the regions are being offered residential options during the lockdown period, but as these are specialised positions there could be a shortage if those that come from overseas are quarantined. <sup>xxxii</sup>
- Although initially Pilbara's economic output dropped by approximately 20%, (excluding Pilbara Ports which has just completed record tonnage of 17 million tons for iron ore), a recently commissioned report suggests that economic growth in the Pilbara will exceed January 2020s figures by the end of the year indicating full recovery for this region. <sup>xxxiii</sup>
- Despite best efforts by companies to source local workers, Marine Pilots are FIFO for some regional Ports, with many based on the east coast of Australia or in Asia. Although initially declined, these workers currently meet the requirements for specialised skills not available in WA (i.e. Marine Pilots) and can thus enter WA borders for work purposes only. This is subject to strict isolation requirements (for instance, these workers can only travel outside of their isolation location to travel to, and from work, and for no other purposes). However, this is constantly being reviewed by the State Government and there is now growing concern that Marine Pilots will be removed from the Essential Worker List. As these are specialised positions there could be a shortage if this occurs. <sup>xxxiv</sup>
- Pilots, who are used to guide bulk carriers, LNG carriers and other vessels into most Australian ports, and other Australia-based workers will not board vessels that left mainland China after 1 February until they have passed a 14-day quarantine period. This could cause delays for vessels arriving from China to Australian delivering iron ore, LNG, bauxite and other mineral loading terminals in WA, which are usually less than a 14-day journey from key Chinese ports. <sup>xxxv</sup>
- The uncertainty created by the possible extension of quarantines for vessels is likely to cause problems for multi-user ports, like the WA iron ore and lithium concentrate export port of Port Hedland. This port operates complex schedules designed to maximise access to congested channels for multiple users and the pressure on those schedulers will be increased, while all rosters will need to be reviewed as the Port operates a complex work roster. <sup>xxxvi</sup>

- Although industry is optimistic about the future, it should be noted that there are some pre-existing shortages and concerns that will take a long lead time to resolve post COVID-19 (i.e. for marine pilotage it takes several years to train a marine pilot to both an unrestricted licence and fully confident and competent).<sup>xxxvii</sup>

### Impacts to Training and Delivery

- This industry is currently providing all training in house in order to effectively interact with ships that have been identified as a risk. This includes the hygiene, the use of PPE, disinfection strategies and protocols for boarding/disembarking ships.<sup>xxxviii</sup>
- Any Ports roles such as Marine Pilots, or Stevedores which engage with vessels have had to undergo advanced biosecurity training. This training has been provided internally to all Ports and other companies dealing with overseas vessels via Australian Border Force personnel.<sup>xxxix</sup>
- The Federal Governments recently announced JobTrainer package will assist industries to develop their workforce by providing retraining and upskilling opportunities for people to enter industries currently surging as well as helping skilled and/or displaced workers to enter alternative industries.<sup>xi</sup>
- There continues to be difficulties accessing skilled personnel such as Harbour Masters, Marine Pilots and Surveyors. Marine Pilots are in shortage globally with many other alternative career opportunities available to the existing labour pool providing competition for WA companies, particularly regional operators. The DTWD is working closely with the Ports to further identify these workforce challenges. As a long-term response to the impact of COVID, some Ports are working with South Metro TAFE to investigate the potential for developing a training pathway to create a cadetship pipeline, with some Port operators currently progressing marine cadets going through the program.<sup>xii</sup>
- Private RTOs have transitioned to offering online training modalities over face to face training, with many now making this switch permanent. The online training modalities have allowed some operators to continue to meet their compliance targets during COVID restrictions (particularly for shift workers). This has also provided regional operators with greater flexibility in choice of, and access to training providers.<sup>xlii</sup>

### Jobs in Demand and Training Required

- Industry looks favourably at individuals with the following: high risk work licences, Forklift licence, IT skills, general stevedore experience, skid steer, excavator, front end loader skills, general marine mooring training.<sup>xliii</sup>
- As in other industries, employers noted a gap in skills for mature aged workers and technology and other computer literacy skills. It is important this cohort is not left behind in developing these skills.<sup>xliiv</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Industry Consultation 2020; and The Department of Transport, source: <https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/Freight-Ports/ports-governance-review.asp> [last accessed 2 August 2018]

<sup>ii</sup> Department of Transport, Port Authorities

<sup>iii</sup> Industry consultation 2020

<sup>iv</sup> Industry consultation 2020

<sup>v</sup> Media Statement, (2019) Dredging underway to grow Broome's Cruise Shipping Industry. <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2019/08/Dredging-underway-to-grow-Broome-s-cruise-shipping-industry.aspx>

<sup>vi</sup> Media Statement, (2019) Final hurdle cleared for direct maritime freight services into Pilbara. <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2019/11/Final-hurdle-cleared-for-direct-maritime-freight-services-into-Pilbara.aspx>

<sup>vii</sup> Industry consultation 2020

<sup>viii</sup> Industry consultation 2020

<sup>ix</sup> Industry consultation 2020

<sup>x</sup> Industry consultation 2020

<sup>xi</sup> Industry consultation 2020

<sup>xii</sup> Industry consultation 2020

<sup>xiii</sup> Industry consultation 2020; SPOL 2020

<sup>xiv</sup> Industry consultation 2020; SPOL 2020

<sup>xv</sup> Industry consultation 2020; SPOL 2020

<sup>xvi</sup> Industry consultation 2020

<sup>xvii</sup> Industry consultation 2020

<sup>xviii</sup> Media Release, (31 July 2020), Regional Port Investment Drives Economic Recovery

<sup>xix</sup> Industry consultation 2020

<sup>xx</sup> Industry consultation 2020

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