



30 March 2022

Australian Maritime Safety Authority
GPO Box 2181
Canberra ACT 2601

Subject: Independent Review of Domestic Commercial Vessel Safety Legislation

Dear Sir/Madam,

This submission is a response to the public consultation process associated with the review of domestic commercial vessel safety legislation by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

SeSAFE provides online safety training that commercial fishers can complete prior to or during a fishing trip. This training comprises 48 modules (videos) in Emergency Response, Personal safety, Operational safety, Risk assessment, and for some fisheries, fishery-specific safety training. A full module list is available at www.sesafe.com.au. Each module culminates in three or four brief questions designed to evaluate comprehension of material covered. The SeSAFE initiative is funded by the Fisheries Research Development Corporation, the commercial fishing industry, and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

SeSAFE has now trained approximately 250 commercial fishers from around the country; some have even received training multiple times. Commercial fishers are able to access and complete SeSAFE modules online using a computer, tablet, or mobile phone. They can complete modules all at once or over multiple sessions, and their responses to questions are recorded by the module software, providing a record of completion. Fishers can also download modules on to a tablet or phone and complete them at a later date when Wi-Fi is unavailable. When they return to port their results are automatically uploaded and retained by the software. Access to SeSAFE modules can be provided to fishers in 30 minutes or less. There is currently no cost for access to these modules.

It is now required practice that all fishing crew receive an onboard safety induction upon joining the vessel followed by periodic safety drills. Evidence of these activities is required to be documented as part of a vessel's safety management system. The reality, however, is that these crew do not always receive a safety induction immediately upon boarding a vessel for the very first time, and sometimes not until hours later when the vessel has left port and is steaming to the fishing grounds. In effect, this means crew have stepped into the workplace (onboard) and commenced working prior to receiving a safety induction, a practice now eliminated in construction and other industries. This appears to be a shortcoming in the current safety legislation, that not only places these crew in jeopardy but potentially all onboard the vessel.

It is also known that the quality of safety inductions and safety drill training is highly variable. Such training relies on the knowledge of the skipper (who may not have received safety training for years or decades) and their enthusiasm and interest in delivering such training. Subsequently, the quality

of this training can vary between boats of similar design, size, and fishing operation. It can also vary between consecutive inductions on the same vessel, particularly if the skipper is distracted or having a 'bad' day when the induction exercise is held. A common refrain in the fishing industry is that such training is little more than a 'tick and flick' exercise.

Based on these shortcomings in safety training, AMSA should consider the findings of a recent study commissioned by SeSAFE and explore avenues for improvement. In 2021/22, SeSAFE commissioned Ridge Partners Consultants and Advisors to:

- Investigate and describe revenue models used in Australian primary industries for the purpose of delivering safety and/or other training to employees, including user-pays options
- Evaluate the risks and benefits of applying these models in the Australian commercial seafood industry
- Evaluate the risks and benefits of the introduction of a certificate of achievement in the commercial seafood industry, similar to a white card in the construction industry.
- Identify structure and systems needed for SeSAFE to establish a bespoke revenue model to fund safety training in the commercial seafood industry
- Evaluate the appetite of the commercial seafood industry to pay for SeSAFE training, particularly small, independent boat owners and their crew, and investigate options to incentivise their adoption of this approach to safety training

In summary, study findings pertinent to AMSA's independent review include the following:

- The safety performance of the fishing industry was rated 5.5 out of 10, based on the average scores provided by a sample of 33 fishers and industry body representatives
- The content and delivery of onboard safety inductions and training was rated 4.4 out of 10, based on average scores provided by the same sample of fishers and industry body representatives
- 70% of these respondents think the white Card concept is useful for the commercial fishing industry
- 63% of fishers in the sample think the white Card concept should be mandatory in the commercial fishing industry
- 44% of industry body representatives think the white Card concept should be mandatory in the commercial fishing industry
- Mandatory pre-sea safety training is not without precedent, with some overseas countries including Norway and the UK having introduced some form of mandatory pre-sea training

Based on these findings, members of the fishing industry feel there is room for improvement in safety performance, particularly the content and delivery of inductions and training. There is also a clear appetite to introduce a mandatory white card equivalent in this industry. A copy of the final study report is available by emailing myself at seayrs@sesafe.com.au.

In conclusion, AMSA should consider these findings as part of their deliberations and review. Given the risks associated with crew stepping into the workplace *before* receiving any safety training, and variation in the quality of such training, mandating pre-sea training that can be delivered with consistent content from an independent source is a worthy consideration. Noting that crew are often hired at short notice, online training such as SeSAFE has the additional benefit of being delivered to crew within minutes of request and in advance of their departure. The inclusion of a

white card equivalent, which is a mandatory requirement of the construction, mining, farming, and other primary industries for employees to attain before entering a worksite, should also be given serious consideration. There is clearly a level of support in the fishing industry for these initiatives.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this review.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Eayrs', written in a cursive style.

Steve Eayrs
SeSAFE Principal Investigator