AUSTRALASIAN
MARINE PILOTS INSTITUTE

# POSITION STATEMENT

**Title:** Alternative Training Pathways for Marine Pilotage

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# PS-01 Alternative Training Pathways for Marine Pilotage

## 1. Preamble

1.1. As a professional institute, the Australasian Marine Pilot Institute (AMPI) has a legitimate interest in ensuring that appropriate standards in marine pilotage exist throughout Australia.

1.2. Presently, pilot licensing in Australia is inconsistent between jurisdictions, with Commonwealth and State regulators and in some cases individual port authorities requiring differing standards, qualifications and experience levels.

1.3. Marine Pilotage licenses are issued in accordance with state legislation, where the current prerequisites of a STCW II/2 Master Unlimited Certificate of Competency or equivalent are a requirement in all states.

1.4. AMPI members have observed a reduction in appropriately qualified Australian applicants for Trainee Marine Pilot vacancies. This observation has been confirmed through statistics provided by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority which show a continuous decline in the issue of STCW II/2 Master Unlimited Certificates of Competency (CoC). [1]

1.5. There is an existing pool of Australian mariners with extensive sea time and experience who do not hold a STCW II/2 Master Unlimited CoC who have the potential to become successful marine pilot trainees. For example, RAN navigators, Master 3000GT CoC holders & Chief Mate Unlimited CoC holders. Given sufficient supplementary training and experience, these mariners could become a valuable source of trainee pilots in port and coastal pilotage jurisdictions.

1.6. In November 2008 the National Marine Safety Committee published "Guidelines for Marine Pilotage Standards in Australia"[2]. In November 2010 the Australian Transport Council published "National Standard; Competencies for Trainee Marine Pilots". AMPI proposes a review of this document. In June 2016 Ports Australia commissioned a report by Thompson Clarke titled "Pilot Training Discussion Paper"[3].

1.7. AMPI established the Pilot Training Advisory Board (PTAB) on 15 November 2005 to engage regulators, industry stakeholders and pilotage service providers for a national approach to marine pilot training and licensing.

[1] AMSA Manager Seafarer Certification and Coastal Pilotage, PTAB Meeting 25th November 2023

[2] Editon 2 - 2008

[3] Thompson Clarke & Ports Australia, June 2016

1.8. Singapore, the United Kingdom and Germany have adopted successful alternative pilot training programs. Ports in Queensland and Western Australia have already successfully implemented Alternative Pathways for particular individuals by bridging the knowledge and experience gaps through targeted training.

## 2. Aim

2.1. AMPI is seeking a consistent and unified approach to pilotage standards nationally, that encourages regulators and pilotage service providers to uphold acceptable safety standards, independent of commercial pressures that may have the potential to compromise the pre-eminence of shipping safety in decision-making.

## 3. Position

3.1. Marine Pilots perform both a statutory and critical leadership role onboard a ship, equivalent to that of the Master. AMPI therefore maintains that it is reasonable to expect that the Marine Pilot has, as a minimum, competencies equivalent to attaining a license to operate the largest ship that they would be expected to pilot.

3.2. State regulators and industry stakeholders would ideally collaborate to develop an Alternative Pathway training program for Marine Pilotage that enables experienced mariners with qualifications other than STCW II/2 Master Unlimited to be trained to an equivalent standard.

3.3. The alternative pilot training program offers recognition of prior learning acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning.

3.4. The academic training should be based on the existing qualification framework for the established STCW Officer of the Watch (OOW), Chief Officer and Master Unlimited programmes.

3.5. It is acknowledged that there are a wide variety of vocational skills involved in achieving a Master Unlimited CoC including leadership, shipboard knowledge, seamanship and ship-handling that contribute to a well-rounded trainee marine pilot applicant. The training programme would need to identify skill and experience gaps and provide training deemed necessary, which may need to include additional focused sea time on ocean-going merchant vessels as part of the syllabus. Industry partnerships would be needed to facilitate this.

3.6. The Australian Qualifications Framework identifies the Master Unlimited qualification as an AQF Level 6. This identifies that *"Graduates at this level will have broad knowledge and*

*skills for paraprofessional/highly skilled work and/or further learning. Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and defined responsibility; in contexts that are subject to change and within broad parameters to provide specialist advice and functions"*[4]. It is to be expected that qualification mapping will result in equivalence to AQF Level 6. There should also be due regard to the variances between AQF and STCW qualifications and training.

3.7. Recommended entry routes may include STCW Master 3000gt, STCW Officer of the Watch and Chief Officer Unlimited and equivalent Royal Australian Navy qualifications. Alternative large vessel domestic licenses may be considered where an appropriate training program can be applied, with due regard to the large academic and practical training gaps that may need to be bridged. It should be noted that mapping small domestic licences into suitable equivalence for entry into a Marine Pilot Traineeship would result in a protracted and financially burdensome training program.

3.8. There should be a strong focus on the training and assessment of non-technical skills including Human Factors through established Bridge Resource Management and similar training.

3.9. Despite screening and psychological testing in Marine Pilot recruitment, there continues to be a failure rate during initial licensing. The program should provide exit points for qualifications in Port Operations and Management roles including Harbour Master qualifications. This approach has been adopted in the UK training program.

3.10. The Australasian Marine Pilots Institute opposes ab initio training into Trainee Marine Pilot roles. Marine Pilotage is a complex profession that requires extensive pre-existing maritime industry experience.

## 4. Conclusion

4.1. Whilst the Australasian Marine Pilots Institute maintains STCW II/2 Master Unlimited Certificate of Competency as the preferred entry route into Marine Pilotage, it supports the development of an alternative training program for Marine Pilotage candidates who demonstrate sufficient and appropriate maritime industry experience.

[4] https://www.aqf.edu.au/framework/aqf-levels

## 5. Further Information

5.1. The Pilot Training Advisory Board (PTAB), representing industry stakeholders, has advanced its thinking on the details of the Alternative Pathway and will keep the industry informed of its progress.

5.2. We welcome industry stakeholders and regulators to submit an expression of interest to join the PTAB by emailing admin@ampi.org.au