

TASMANIAN SEAFARERS' MEMORIAL ANNUAL SERVICE
SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
TRIABUNNA SEAFARERS' MEMORIAL, SUNDAY 15 OCTOBER 2023

Good morning, everyone. I am delighted to be here with you today. Thank you for inviting me to join you for the annual Memorial Service to honour and remember those seafarers who lost their lives in Tasmanian waters.

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community and recognise their enduring culture and connection to sea, land and waters.

It is now 25 years since the first plaques were unveiled at this Triabunna Seafarers' Memorial. This Memorial is dedicated to all Tasmanian seafarers, both civilian and members of the armed services who lost their lives at sea. It is also dedicated to all those seafarers, regardless of occupation or nationality, who lost their lives in Tasmanian waters. This Memorial also enables the commemoration of Tasmanian Naval personnel lost during peacetime as well as during times of conflict.¹

We all know that the waters around Tasmania can be particularly treacherous. This Memorial records the loss of more than 1500 people. All of them had families and were part of communities that felt their loss keenly. Many were lost at sea and this Memorial provides a place for relatives and friends to come and remember.

Fifty years ago, the MV *Blythe Star* was lost off the west coast of Tasmania and resulted in the death of three of the 10 crew. That event is commemorated by a plaque here on the Memorial. I mention this because the resting place of the *Blythe Star* was not known until this year, when a team from the CSIRO vessel the RV *Investigator* used a multi-beam sonar to image the seabed. That led to the deployment of two underwater camera systems that confirmed that the wreckage of the MV *Blythe Star* had been found. Sadly, that is not the case with all the vessels lost and crews that are commemorated here.

¹ <http://www.seafaresmemorial.org.au/> accessed 6 Oct 23

One of the reasons for the establishment of the Triabunna Seafarers' Memorial was to increase water safety awareness. That fits with the story of the loss of the *Blythe Star*.

Indeed, the establishment of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, now responsible for maritime safety, protection of the marine environment, and maritime aviation search and rescue², was largely due to the findings of an inquiry following the loss of the *Blythe Star*.

I am pleased to have been informed that there are no plaques added to the Memorial this year. Every such year is one to be celebrated. That fact does not, however, make this year's commemoration any less poignant. Every time a ship leaves port there is some risk involved. Despite many safety improvements over the years, seafaring remains a difficult and often dangerous undertaking.

We remember those who have been lost at sea. We commiserate with those left behind.

Thank you.

² <https://www.amsa.gov.au/about/who-we-are> accessed 9 Oct 23