



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

MISSION TO SEAFARERS MARITIME ART PRIZE AND EXHIBITION
Thursday 19 October 2023

Acknowledgments

John Lines AM, Chair, and **Neil James**, CEO, Mission to Seafarers Victoria

The Honourable Melissa Horne MP, Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation, Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Roads and Road Safety

Bishop Genieve Blackwell, *Representing the Archbishop of Melbourne*

Commodore Greg Yorke AM CSC RAN, Senior Naval Officer for Victoria

Supporters of the Maritime Art Prize and Exhibition

Award recipients

Distinguished guests

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this building stands – the Wurundjeri People – and pay my respects to their Elders, past and present.

It is a pleasure to join you this evening to announce the 2023 winners of the Maritime Art Prize and Exhibition.

This competition's perpetual theme 'The Relationship of Humanity to the Sea' is an important reminder of our dependence upon the ocean and those who work on it.

This relationship has been the focus of artistic endeavour for many years, including Australian poet Dorothy Mackellar's poem, 'The Open Sea.'

In it, Mackeller writes of
*“...that strip of sapphire sea
Set against the sky
Far horizons means to me
And the ships go by
Framed between the empty sky
And the yellow sands
While my freed thoughts follow them
Out to other lands.”*

Ocean shipping is vital for global trade, but also – as the poem suggests – the sea also speaks to us of places.

Seafarers play a vital role in our economy that is part of our history and culture.

The nature of their work means seafarers often spend months separated from their families, working long hours, and facing the risk of piracy and shipwreck.

Indeed, Sailor Rod Ivan Puno once wrote *“As the sailor embraces the sea, he counts on lonely nights.”*

For this reason, I am delighted to be involved in an event that supports the ongoing work of The Mission to Seafarers.

Since 1917 you have performed your important work here from this heritage-listed Docklands base.

With over 230 Mission sites across the world, your organisation plays a vital role ensuring seafarers are supported and given the services they need.

The Flying Angel Club recognises that contact with loved ones, recreational activities and the opportunity to voice problems, collectively; all underpin a person’s wellbeing.

These services come at a cost which brings me to this evening's event.

Now in its 21st year, the Maritime Art Prize & Exhibition raises funds for the important welfare work of the Mission. Much like the Mission itself, the exhibition encourages international collaboration, inviting artists from around the world to submit their work and participate in the competition.

Previous winners have included powerful messages about the climate crisis, the role of the industry and the history of seafaring in Australia.

Each of them have made a contribution to how we view the relationship between humanity and the sea. They have caused us to reconsider and reevaluate our perspectives. As Mackellar says in ending her poem,

*"My blue moon of open sea
Is it little worth?
At the least it gives to me
Keys of all the earth"*

Thank you to all participating artists for your submissions.

To the sponsors who have made tonight possible.

And to the members of The Mission to Seafarers Victoria for your role in supporting an otherwise vulnerable group.