



AMPI Conference: innovation, the human element and future safety pathways

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AMPI President Josephine Clark addresses conference attendees. Image: Australasian Marine Pilots Institute.

Modernising pilotage, and balancing technology adoption with operational judgement, were the key themes marking the start of day two of the Australasian Marine Pilots Institute conference in Adelaide.

Sessions examined digital navigation and pilotage decision-support, with presenters discussing bridge technology, distraction, alarm strategy and the ongoing refinement of portable pilot unit (PPU) competency.

A highlight of the session was a presentation by Captain Riley Oxenbridge, a Newcastle marine pilot who recently attended a CIRM (Comité International Radio-Maritime) conference in Lisbon, Portugal, to discuss ways to progress bridge alarm management. Chris Jones of CIRM followed with a discussion on the organisation's role, and Captain Peter Dann explored bridge distractions from a human factors perspective.

The message was clear: while digital tools continue to enhance situational awareness, pilots remain the final safeguard, managing technology in support of, not in place of, professional judgement.

Emerging frameworks for future-ready pilotage

Mid-morning turned to future-facing operational models and regulatory interfaces, including data-enabled safety insights, structured digital route exchange and globally informed pilotage methodologies. Attention was paid to how ports, regulators and pilotage organisations are shaping interoperability and information symmetry between bridge teams and pilots.

Session highlights included a live display of transit analyst technology by Captain Warren Wood, the development of route-exchange methodologies using the S-421 framework, and an exploration of resilience versus compliance and high reliability organisation principles by Captains Marco Blanco and Craig Eastaugh.

A standout theme was resilience over compliance - a shift from strict rule-following toward learning and adaptive capacity in high-stakes environments.

Transfer safety and the aviation-marine interface

The afternoon moved to evolving standards in pilot transfer safety, including helicopter operations and trauma-informed first-aid preparedness.

Session highlights included a presentation by Wendy Sullivan of Maritime Medical Solutions, who discussed raising the standard of care offshore through specialised, tailored training for marine pilots and boat crews. Speakers shared real-world lessons and clear calls to lift standards across equipment, training and decision-making in pilot transfers.

Weather intelligence and operational decision-making

The final technical session focused on dynamic weather risk, decision-support systems and predictive models to support safer and more efficient pilotage in complex environments.

Session highlights included an in-depth review of present and future weather patterns in the Australasian region by Felix Levesque of DTN APAC, and an exhibition of weather predictive technology developed by Dr Scott Beatty of Marine Labs in Canada.

AMPI president Captain Josephine Clark closed the day with reflections on this year's conference and an introduction to next year's event, to be held in Darwin in June 2026. The day concluded with the AMPI Gala Dinner, recognising excellence, strengthening industry connections, and celebrating pilotage's contribution to safe maritime trade.

Day three: practical learning and professional development

The final day shifted from plenary sessions to practical engagement, training and industry networking. Delegates participated in port tours, gaining insight into the operational

realities and infrastructure supporting South Australian trade.

Parallel training programs ran throughout the day, including:

- peer support and wellbeing training;
- ATSB transport safety investigation fundamentals; and
- first-aid and trauma-specific competency sessions.

These sessions emphasised that excellence in pilotage is not only about technical skill, but also capability in investigation, human performance and peer-supported resilience.

Industry leadership and inclusion

WISTA Australia hosted a breakfast discussion in celebration of the opening of its South Australian chapter, highlighting diversity, future workforce pathways and leadership in maritime.

The day reinforced a conference-long message: pilotage is evolving through digital capability, human performance and collaboration across disciplines.

A sector embracing innovation

Across three days, the AMPI Adelaide Conference showcased a sector embracing innovation while staying firmly grounded in professional expertise and shared learning.

Every session returned to the same anchor: pilots, ports and regulators working together to keep Australia's maritime network strong, smart and safe for the future.

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