

13 April 2011

Catherine Taylor
Director
Maritime NZ
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Dear Catherine

MNZ Certification Process

One of our members had recently been employed by a company in the Australian offshore and was working a regular 5 week cycle. He submitted his revalidation document for his certificate of competency to Maritime NZ during his time off, but had to wait 31 working days to have it revalidated. MNZ also sent the hard copy of the certificate to the wrong address, adding a further delay. As a direct consequence of this delay, he was not able to return to his employer and is now unemployed. During that nearly 2 month actual delay, he fully supported his family from savings. He has now been supplied with an employer contact list so that he can try to secure work again.

Another member finished his cadetship on a New Zealand vessel and went to maritime school to complete his 2nd mate foreign going certificate. He then had to wait 25 working days to get complete certification from Maritime NZ, and during this period was forced to turn down a job offer to work on a bulk carrier in Australia. When he finally did receive his certificate, Maritime NZ had forgotten to include his tanker endorsement, forcing him to wait a further few days. .

A third case we have heard of (anecdotally only) concerns a 2nd mate candidate who, less than a week away from his final exams, was informed by Maritime NZ that his 'Fit and Proper Person' declaration had expired, and that he would have to submit a new one before sitting the exams. It seems that Maritime NZ had been sitting on his document for more than a year. The NZ Maritime College could confirm or otherwise the details of this case.

A fourth case involved one member's attempts to renew two separate certificates. He advised us that renewal process for both certificates took several months.

We can illustrate a fifth case with an entire narrative of our member's experience:

"I applied for a revalidation of the same (MNZ Cert. of Recognition) in January 2011. My original Master (Class 1) issued in UK, as well as my Australian (AMSA) Certificates of Recognition - Master, are both revalidated (incidentally, within a week) till 26th January 2015.

When I applied for a revalidation with Maritime New Zealand, I was initially informed it will take about 20 working days. However at the end of that period there was no sign of my certificate, nor any communication to that effect from MNZ.

When I called MNZ in early March, I was AGAIN given a time frame of 20 working days. Even that has elapsed without me receiving either my certificate or any communication from MNZ.

Each time I have called Maritime New Zealand, I am given the standard reply of 20 working days and incidentally the period re-starts from the time of my call. I am told that the person concerned is not in the office (each time I have called since January) and my query will be

forwarded to the 'concerned person'. This so called 'concerned person' has not had the courtesy to get in touch with me and advise the status when he/she has been in the office.

*We are now in the middle of April 2011, and after repeated phone calls and emails to MNZ I was informed on the 4th of April, that my Seafarers Medical Certificate has expired **(it was valid at the time of application & deduction of the fees, naturally it will expire if there has been no action or progress from MNZ for 3 months).***

*Hence I immediately sent a copy of my current valid AMSA Medical Certificate, certifying me **FIT** for sea service. However Maritime NZ noted a remark on my certificate pertaining to reading glasses, and asked me to do another eyesight test with a MNZ designated Optometrist. I brought to the notice of MNZ that I have been declared FIT, and the remark only pertains to wearing of reading glasses.*

Anyway, to expedite matters, as soon as I returned to New Zealand on the 8th of April, I went to an MNZ designated optometrist the same day and forwarded the report to MNZ immediately. Note that the MNZ designated optometrist Mr. Troy Cassidy also opined that there was no need or requirement for this test.

As is evident by the chain of emails below, from January 2011, I am still waiting for my revalidated certificate. In the interim I have lost many job opportunities in New Zealand as I am unable to submit my job applications in NZ without a revalidated NZ certificate.

It seems that by the time I receive my revalidated certificate from MNZ, it will be time for me to retire. I just cannot understand this unacceptable prolonged delaying tactics on the part of MNZ."

Our members have asked me to write to you to point out these instances that we know of above, and explain that such delays are extremely serious in that they are affecting job opportunities and the livelihood of our members. It appears that there is something seriously wrong with Maritime NZ's processes.

Seafarers cannot work without valid certificates. We do not understand how Maritime NZ is able to enact very fast rule changes and emergency exemptions for ship owners wanting to break the rules, but is not able to ensure that seafarers do not lose their livelihood while waiting for *their* maritime documents to be processed.

We are asking you to investigate this situation urgently.

Yours sincerely

Helen McAra
GENERAL SECRETARY