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國際運輸勞連

International Transport Workers' Federation
Federación Internacional de los Trabajadores del Transporte
Fédération internationale des ouvriers du transport
Internationella Transportarbetarefederationen
Internationale Transportarbeiter-Föderation
Международная федерация транспортников
التنظيم عالمياً، النضال من أجل حقوقنا

3 April 2020

The Hon Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister,

I write to you as the President of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), the international labour federation that covers seafarers in the international shipping industry including the cruise ship industry.

I would like to open this submission with our agreement with your clearly articulated statements that the Covid-19 pandemic is having a profound and probably permanent effect in all areas of society both nationally and internationally.

Globally the cruise ship industry is under enormous duress, a casualty of Covid-19 pandemic, and is a priority area of risk to that extent because of the nature of the tourism industry, the confinement to the uniquely shared space of these ships for thousands of people, and the lack of governance and regulation by the flag states that have responsibility for these cruise liners. That responsibility most particularly applies to their workforces that are mostly sourced from developing countries who are also badly equipped to protect the interests of their residents in this international occupation.

Most countries who are able to are taking measures to avoid exposure of the virus, to the worlds cruise ship industry in general, and to those workers in particular.

In Australia, it is no different and the plight of up to 15,000 international workers off our coast engaged in this industry requires an urgent national response.

Prime Minister, the ITF, and our maritime affiliates in Australia and internationally, believe that immediate and holistic national leadership is required to avert this emerging humanitarian crisis, particularly in a country that has relied so heavily on that industry to supplement our own national tourism and related services.

We all share a duty of care in addressing this humanitarian crisis. Along with other national governments interfacing with this industry, we urge the Federal Government to draw together the various state and other stakeholders to direct actions going forward on all of these vessels so that they all are able to come alongside in Australian ports, where the crew can be assessed and triaged, with the ultimate objective to repatriate them back to their families.

We have learned through discussions, including with ITF affiliates in the United States and with the US government, that two coronavirus-impacted cruise ships, the Rotterdam and the Zaandam, were cleared yesterday to dock in Florida after weeks at sea. All guests will be screened and cleared for entry by US Customs and Border Protection, people in a critical condition will be transferred for medical treatment, and repatriations will commence.

131 Australians are reportedly onboard the ships. Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne has said publicly that Australian passengers would be repatriated within 24 to 48 hours.

On 29 March 2020, you said during your press conference that humanity for cruise ship passengers is the “right thing” to do, where you said, “It is important that Australia does the right thing about those who have fallen into our care to ensure that I can say with great moral authority that Australians are doing the right thing, and we would ask you to do the right thing,”

The working men and women stranded on the cruise ships drifting off our coast are reliant on the same humanity as the passengers on board these vessels, and the same humanity that the US Government has offered Australians returning from the Rotterdam and Zaandam.

We have called for and continue to strongly insist that all medical and transport costs be met by the cruise industry itself who have enjoyed access to the global tourist trade through our ports, and not at the expense of Australian taxpayers.

The pandemic has exposed the failed business model of these companies, that avoids taxation accountabilities while not preparing a robust risk management framework for emergencies including like the current Covid-19 scenario. Our leadership in this country over the longer term will be pivotal to correcting that business model in our collective national interest.

We look forward to your response and offer our assistance and willingness to meet with you in resolving this humanitarian crisis including using ITF networks and resources internationally to establish as comprehensive response as possible.

Yours sincerely,



**President, International Transport Workers' Federation
National Secretary, Maritime Union of Australia**

CC: Hon. Anthony Albanese MP
Sally McManus, Secretary, Australian Council of Trade Unions
Stephen Cotton, General Secretary, International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)
Dean Summers, ITF Coordinator Australia