

AMSA Aboard

SPECIAL EDITION



2010 IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea

Mr James Fanifau was presented with the 2010 International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea in London on 24 November.

This was a truly international rescue and highlights the global nature of life at sea - a Fijian national risking his life to save an American citizen in Australia's search and rescue zone.

Mr Fanifau was nominated by the Australian Government for his selfless act of bravery in climbing over the side of the Fijian vessel MV Scarlett Lucy and saving the life of 71-year-old American, Dr Jerome Morgan, by holding him to the cargo net. This act of bravery is made even more remarkable by the fact that Mr Fanifau did not have time to secure a safety harness and the ship was rolling heavily in gale force conditions.

The search and rescue operation was coordinated by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority's Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) – Australia. RCC officers recommended Mr Fanifau for the nomination noting it was one of the most courageous rescues they had witnessed in recent years.

IMO Secretary-General, Admiral Efthimios Mitropoulos, in his presentation speech said he hoped that Mr Fanifau's act of bravery would inspire others who find themselves in similar situations and specifically and generously thanked Australia for its resource-intensive search and rescue operations.

"Let him become a role model for young people: for his decisiveness, his gallantry, his sense of self-sacrifice, his professionalism and his modesty.

"And let those who aspire to make a career at sea be motivated by James' example when honouring one of the highest and noblest traditions at sea: to risk your life so that others may live," Secretary-General Mitropoulos said.

In accepting the award, Mr Fanifau thanked the IMO, the Australian Government for its nomination, and Dr Morgan and his sons for being present.

"I cannot find the words to adequately express how much it means to be recognised for the IMO Bravery Award, especially in the presence of this most distinguished audience. I had no idea it would come to this when I climbed down the side of our ship to give Dr Jerome a helping hand.

"I just acted instinctively, like anyone else, and would do the same all over again if I had the chance," Mr Fanifau said.

Recalling his experience at being rescued Dr Morgan said, "I grabbed the rope, I was getting pretty weak at this point, getting exhausted and hypothermic, shaking, so they tried pulling me up with great effort, very slowly and probably halfway up this net ladder appeared this yellow-suited man. He grabbed me around the chest and his legs wrapped around me quickly - he was holding me so tight.

"Thanks to all the heroes, in particular James, the crewman that came down and grabbed me, above and beyond the call of duty," said Dr Morgan.

The IMO established this annual award to provide international recognition for those who, at the risk of losing their own life, perform acts of exceptional bravery, displaying outstanding courage in attempting to save life at sea or in attempting to prevent or mitigate damage to the marine environment.

Australia's High Commissioner to London, His Excellency Mr John Dauth, who was also present at the award ceremony commented, "The audience was visibly touched by the ceremony, particularly the reunion of rescuer and rescuee on stage".

In 2010, IMO considered 31 international candidates for this award with Mr Fanifau's actions being recognised by an eminent panel of judges and supported by the governing council of the IMO.

To view a video excerpt of the rescue [click here](#).



IMO Secretary-General presenting the award to Mr James Fanifau.



IMO Secretary-General, Admiral Efthimos Mitropoulos.



Rescued: Dr Jerome Morgan.



Mr James Fanifau making his acceptance speech.



Mr Fanifau displays his award alongside Dr Morgan.



(L to R): H.E. Mr John Dauth, Australian High Commissioner to London, H.E. Mr Pio Bosco Tikoisuva, Fijian High Commissioner to London, Mr James Fanifau, Dr Jerome Morgan, and Admiral Efthimos Mitropoulos.



Sean and Scott Morgan (sons of the rescued), Dr Jerome Morgan, Mr James Fanifau, Rebecca Mae (Mr Fanifau's aunt), and Secretary-General Mitropoulos.



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