

Fair Work Act and Seagoing Industry Award Schedule A

A plain English guide for foreign flagged vessels engaged in Australian coastal trading

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Purpose

This short guide summarises when Australian workplace laws may apply to seafarers working on foreign flagged vessels in Australian coastal trading, and what the Seagoing Industry Award 2020 Schedule A says about minimum weekly rates, overtime, rest, leave and selected allowances.

This guide is for welfare and information purposes only. It is not legal advice. Seafarers, employers and licence holders should check the official Fair Work Ombudsman, Fair Work Commission and Department of Infrastructure material for current legal requirements.

1. When can the Fair Work Act apply?

Question	Practical answer
Is this about cabotage?	Yes. In Australia this is usually called coastal trading. It means commercial movement of cargo or passengers between Australian ports.
Can a foreign flagged ship be covered?	Yes, in some circumstances. Fair Work information states that the Fair Work Act can apply to ships engaged in coastal trading, including foreign flagged ships, if they are general licensed, emergency licensed or temporary licensed ships.
What is the key temporary licence test?	A ship is treated as a temporary licensed ship if it is used for a voyage authorised by a temporary licence and has started at least 2 other voyages authorised by a temporary licence in the 12 months before starting the present voyage.
From which voyage do Schedule A wages apply?	From the third voyage onwards. The voyages do not need to be under the same temporary licence.
For what period are Schedule A wages counted?	For the laden voyage duration only, from loading to discharge. The amount payable is generally the difference between the seafarer's usual salary and the full Schedule A entitlement.

Quick test

If the same foreign flagged vessel has already started 2 temporary licence voyages in the last 12 months, then the next temporary licence coastal trading voyage may bring the seafarers within the Fair Work Act and Seagoing Award Schedule A entitlements.

2. Schedule A conditions in brief

Area	Schedule A summary
Ordinary hours	7.6 hours per day from Monday to Friday.
Overtime	Hours above 7.6 per day Monday to Friday are overtime. All Saturday, Sunday and public holiday hours are overtime. Overtime is paid at 125% of the minimum rate.
Rest periods	At least 10 hours rest in any 24 hour period and 77 hours rest in any 7 day period. Rest may be split into no more than 2 periods, one of which must be at least 6 hours.
Leave	8 days paid leave for each completed month of service, with pro rata payment for shorter periods.
Public holidays	Public holiday entitlements apply. Where a public holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the following working day or days are observed.
Personal effects	Compensation may be payable for loss or damage to personal effects caused by fire, explosion, foundering, shipwreck, collision or stranding, up to the award limit.

3. Minimum weekly rates

The current Schedule A rates shown in the consolidated award are minimum weekly rates for full-time employees, effective from the first full pay period on or after 1 July 2025. The 2026 column applies the Fair Work Commission's Annual Wage Review 2026 decision, subject to the C13 and C14 floor adjustments, from the first full pay period on or after 1 July 2026.

Classification	Current weekly rate	From first full pay period on or after 1 Jul 2026	2026 ordinary hourly	2026 overtime 125%
Master	\$1,668.40	\$1,747.60	\$45.99	\$57.49
Chief engineer	\$1,640.90	\$1,718.80	\$45.23	\$56.54
First mate / First engineer	\$1,422.60	\$1,490.20	\$39.22	\$49.02
Second mate / Second engineer / Radio Officer / Electrical Engineer	\$1,316.80	\$1,379.30	\$36.30	\$45.37
Third mate / Third engineer	\$1,262.10	\$1,322.00	\$34.79	\$43.49
Chief integrated rating / Bosun / Chief cook / Chief steward / Carpenter / Fitter / Repairer / Donkeyman / Electrician	\$1,194.20	\$1,250.90	\$32.92	\$41.15
Integrated rating / Able seaman / Fireman / Motorman / Pumpman / Oiler greaser / Steward	\$1,088.20	\$1,139.90	\$30.00	\$37.50
OS / Wiper / Deckboy / Catering Boy / 2nd Cook / Messroom Steward, after 6 months	\$948.00	\$1,004.90	\$26.44	\$33.06
OS / Wiper / Deckboy / Catering Boy / 2nd Cook / Messroom Steward, first 6 months	\$922.70	\$978.10	\$25.74	\$32.17

Important pay note

The 2026 hourly figures above are calculated by dividing the weekly rate by 38 hours. The overtime column is calculated at 125% of the ordinary hourly figure. Always check the final Fair Work pay guide and any later variation before using these figures for a real wage claim.

4. Selected allowances

The following selected allowances are included to help identify common issues. Some allowances are from Schedule A or the award's summary of monetary allowances. Check the full award for complete details and conditions.

Allowance	Current amount	Payable
Personal effects loss or damage on a temporary licensed vessel	\$5,439 maximum	per occasion
Tanker allowance	\$12.84	per day
Cargo handling, 7:00 am to 5:00 pm, unless outside watch	\$18.10	per hour
Cargo securing or lashing, 7:00 am to 5:00 pm, unless outside watch	\$6.34	per hour
Cargo handling at other times, outside watch, weekends, public holidays	\$23.05	per hour
Cargo securing or lashing at other times, outside watch, weekends, public holidays	\$7.42	per hour
Living away from home allowance	\$171.84	per week
Living away from home with spouse etc.	\$242.30	per week
Meal allowance, breakfast	\$27.00	per occasion
Meal allowance, lunch	\$32.58	per occasion

5. Information to collect from a seafarer

When a seafarer asks whether Schedule A may apply, it helps to collect clear voyage and pay information before contacting Fair Work or a union.

Item	What to note
Ship details	Ship name, IMO number, flag state and operator or owner, if known.
Voyage details	Australian loading port, discharge port, dates and cargo or passenger movement.
Temporary licence history	Whether the same vessel started 2 other temporary licence voyages within the previous 12 months.
Pay documents	Contract, wage slips, allotment records, hours of work and any overtime records.
Role/classification	Seafarer's rank or job title: master, engineer, mate, integrated rating, OS, wiper, steward, etc.
Rest and hours	Work and rest records, especially if the seafarer worked weekends, public holidays or more than 7.6 hours Monday to Friday.

6. Where to seek help

Contact	Use
Fair Work Ombudsman maritime mailbox	Email maritime@fwo.gov.au for information or assistance about Fair Work Act rights and obligations in the maritime industry.
Fair Work Infoline	Call 13 13 94 for Fair Work information.
Translating and Interpreting Service	Call 13 14 50 and ask for Fair Work if language help is needed.
Official pay guides	Use the Fair Work pay guides or Pay and Conditions Tool to check the latest award rates, overtime, penalties and allowances.

7. Official sources used

Source	Document	Link
Fair Work Ombudsman	Workplace laws and the maritime industry	https://www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/maritime-industry/workplace-laws-and-the-maritime-industry
Department of Infrastructure	Number 1 of 2024 - Fair Work Act 2009 Obligations and Coastal Trading	https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure-transport-vehicles/maritime/maritime-business/coastal-trading/coastal-trading-licensing-and-publications/2024-shipping-business-unit-industry-bulletins/number-1-2024-fair-work-act-2009-obligations-and-coastal-trading
Fair Work Commission	Seagoing Industry Award 2020 [MA000122], including Schedule A	https://awards.fairwork.gov.au/MA000122.html
Fair Work Commission	Annual Wage Review Decision 2026 [2026] FWCFB 3500	https://www.fwc.gov.au/documents/decisionssigned/pdf/2026fwcfb3500.pdf
Fair Work Ombudsman	Pay guides	https://www.fairwork.gov.au/pay-and-wages/minimum-wages/pay-guides

Final note

Foreign flagged vessels are not automatically covered just because they visit Australia. The key question is whether the vessel is engaged in coastal trading and, for a temporary licence ship, whether the voyage-counting test is met at the start of the relevant voyage.