

## **BRIAN 'BRONCO' O'NEILL**

**08/02/1938 - 02/01/2026**

### **Revered Australian Seaman, Unionist, Socialist and Internationalist**

Brian 'Bronco' O'Neill was born and raised in Port Adelaide and the Lefevre Peninsula, shaped by the area's strong working-class culture and longstanding labour traditions. From an early age he absorbed the values of solidarity, fairness and collective responsibility that defined life around the port. In January 1954, at fifteen years of age, he went to sea for the first time aboard the *Moonta* from Port Adelaide, commencing a seafaring career that would span almost five decades and remain closely tied to his home port.

Throughout his working life Brian consistently sailed from and returned to Port Adelaide, serving on vessels including the *Macedon*, the *Troubridge*, the *Island Seaway* and the *Tasman*. Port Adelaide was more than where he lived and worked; it was the centre of his political and industrial life. He was active on the wharf, at stop-work meetings, in union halls and in community campaigns, firmly embedding his unionism within the daily life of the port.

A proud and lifelong member of the Seamen's Union of Australia and later the Maritime Union of Australia, Brian devoted his adult life to the labour movement. He was respected for combining skilled seamanship with an unwavering commitment to his fellow workers, consistently placing collective interests ahead of personal advancement. Onboard vessels and ashore he acted as an educator and organiser, encouraging younger members to attend meetings, develop confidence and participate fully in union democracy. He willingly stepped aside from opportunities for personal recognition to allow emerging leaders to gain experience.

A committed rank and file socialist and internationalist, Brian drew on Port Adelaide's militant labour tradition while recognising the shared interests of workers beyond Australia. His experience on internationally trading ships strengthened his belief in strong unions and international solidarity. Retirement from sea did not diminish his commitment, and through ongoing union and veterans' work he continued to advocate for Australian seafarers, maritime jobs and the enduring principles of organised labour.

The Port Adelaide Workers Memorial proudly honours individuals like Brian whose influence was profound and whose contribution to workers' rights in the Port Adelaide community should not be forgotten.