

3. Movement notification and traffic procedures

3.1 General

Maritime Safety Queensland, through the authority of the Regional Harbour Master, has jurisdiction over the safe movement of all shipping within the pilotage area.

The scheduling of ship movements is initiated by the agent or representative submitting movement details for a vessel to Cairns VTS via the QSHIPS ship planning program in accordance with this section.

All vessels, whether commercial or recreational, are to maintain a listening watch on VHF16 and if equipped on VHF12, whilst within the Cairns Pilotage Area.

All vessels within the Cairns Pilotage Area are to listen out on VHF16 for announcements made by the Cairns Vessel Traffic Service, call sign Cairns VTS regarding movements within the port. These announcements will be advised on VHF16 and full details are given on VHF12.

3.2 Vessel Traffic Service (VTS)

Vessel Traffic Services is the principal tool by which the Regional Harbour Master manages the safe and efficient movement of vessel traffic approaching, departing, and operating within the Cairns VTS area.

The Cairns VTS centre operates 24 hours, seven days a week on a rotating roster and operates within the declared Cairns VTS area. The VTS centre will operate under the callsign "Cairns VTS" in accordance with IMO Resolution 1158(32).

The VTS centre in Cairns is manned by trained and qualified vessel traffic service operators, under the management of the Manager (Vessel Traffic Services) and the Regional Harbour Master (Cairns).

The purpose of VTS is to contribute to safety of life at sea, safety and efficiency of navigation and the protection of the environment within the VTS area by mitigating the development of unsafe situations through:

- Providing timely and relevant information on factors that may influence the ship's movements and assist on-board decision making.

Cairns VTS will, transmit essential and timely information to assist in the on-board decision-making process, which may include, position, identity and intentions of other traffic, hazards and other factors which may affect a vessels transit.

- Monitoring and managing ship traffic to ensure the safety and efficiency of ship movements.

Cairns VTS will plan vessel movements to prevent congestion and provide for safe and efficient movement of traffic. The VTS will identify and manage potentially dangerous traffic situations and provide essential and timely information to assist the on-board decision-making process and may advise, instruct, or exercise the authority to direct movements.

- Responding to developing unsafe situations

Cairns VTS will provide navigational support to an individual vessel, at the request of the vessel or when deemed necessary by the VTS. Navigational support relating to a specific vessel may include information, warning, advice, and instruction when responding to developing unsafe situations. There may be occasions where Cairns VTS will be unable to provide navigational support and the requesting vessel will be advised of this information.

The provision of navigational support does not absolve the master from the responsibility for the safety of the vessel and, specifically, the responsibility for collision avoidance.

Note: that in the event of the VTS centre being disabled, all functions of the VTS centre will be temporarily transferred to a remote standby location. VTS will advise all parties of the new communication numbers at such a time.

3.2.1 Cairns VTS area

The Cairns VTS area is bounded as follows:

- East from Taylors Point to Latitude 16° 45.895' S Longitude 145° 44.648' E,
- Then East to Latitude 16° 46.100' S Longitude 145° 50.488' E,
- Then Southwest to Latitude 16° 47.045'' S Longitude 145° 53.874' E,
- Then South to Latitude 16° 48.734' S Longitude 145° 54.696' E,
- Then South to Latitude 16° 49.875' S 145° 54.954' E,
- Then South to Cape Grafton,
- To Latitude 16° 56.852' S in Smiths Creek, and
- To Latitude 16° 56.689' S in the Trinity Inlet.

VTS coverage is afforded to the following areas:

- Cairns Compulsory Pilotage Area,
- External anchorages CPS1, CPS2, CA1, CA2, CA3, CA4, CA5,
- The pilot board grounds A, B, C and D
- Approaches to the main channel,
- Main channel from C1 – C20,
- The area extending upstream of C20 following the main line of the channel to the extent of the small ships anchorage, and
- Smiths Creek entrance to the Duck Pond Barge Ramp.

Cairns VTS will interact with inbound shipping two hours prior to arrival at the external anchorages.

The area covered by the VTS is shown in [16.12 Cairns Vessel Traffic Service Area](#)

3.2.2 VTS Role

The role of the Cairns VTS ('call sign: Cairns VTS') is to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of shipping within the VTS area, to ensure that a continual program of shipping movements can be affected to the advantage of all commercial shipping in an impartial manner.

Cairns VTS is situated at the Regional Harbour Master's office. For ship traffic scheduling, pollution and marine incidents and reporting defective navigation aids, direct initial enquiries to Cairns VTS.

The service is provided by Maritime Safety Queensland and provides a 24 hour, seven days a week marine operations service to the port community.

In the event of an emergency, the VTS centre is the key notification and communications facility that will activate the appropriate response agencies. Ship traffic movements may be accessed on the [QSHIPS](#) website.

3.2.3 VTS Communications

Ships are not to move within the pilotage area unless satisfactory two-way communications are maintained with Cairns VTS.

Cairns VTS maintains a continuous listening watch. Contact can also be made with the Regional Harbour Master's office and pilot station through Cairns VTS via VHF radio, telephone, facsimile, and email.

Ships are required to establish two-way radio communications with the VTS centre on VHF channel 12.

Channel	Call sign	Service
VHF 6	User	Tug operations
VHF 8	User	Auxiliary channel tug operations
VHF 10	User	Marina fuel berth operations
VHF 12	Cairns VTS	VTS calling/port operations
VHF 13	User	Port authority operations office
VHF 14	User	Auxiliary port operations
VHF 16	User	Distress and initial calling
VHF 20	User	Auriga working
VHF 67	User	Weather
VHF 74	User	All other requirements
VHF 79	User	Torres Strait pilot working
VHF 81	User	Long range working

Table 3 VTS communications

3.2.4 Language

The English language is to be used in all communication. IMO's Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) 2001 will be used.

3.2.5 Voice recordings

All voice communications with the VTS centre and all radio communications on the channels monitored, are recorded against a date and time stamp.

3.3 Distress and emergency

Cairns VTS is not a coast radio station; Maritime Safety Queensland, Volunteer Marine Rescue (VMR) and the Australian Coastguard have an agreement that the VTS will monitor channels 16 when VMR is not operational for emergency and distress calls only. A distress call should, in the ordinary course of events, be referred to Cairns Coastguard.

Any marine incident, for example a collision, grounding, or fire, occurring within the port should be immediately reported to Cairns VTS on:

VHF radio: channel 12 or 16

Phone: +61 7 4033 3670

Fax: +61 7 4052 7460

3.4 QSHIPS (Queensland Shipping Information Planning System)

The movement of all vessels of LOA 35 m or more arriving at Cairns is recorded in an internet based program known as [QSHIPS](#).

The program is operated from the VTS centre; shipping agents submit booking information online in accordance with the reporting requirements and record their requisitions for tugs, pilot, and linesmen. The ancillary services respond online to acknowledge the booking and allocate their resources; the movement then assumes the confirmed status. [Work Permits](#) (section 10) requests should be submitted online and to the respective agencies if required. QSHIPS will indicate when the approval has been granted and the agent is then able to print the permit for the vessel.

Since the program is live, port service providers, agents, government agencies and the general community are able to view scheduled movements in any Queensland port in real time.

3.5 Booking a vessel movement

When an agent is advised by their principals that a ship is bound for Cairns then that agent shall book-in the ship via the QSHIPS programme no later than 48 hours prior to the movement as required under Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Regulations 2016 section.168. Request for the supply of a pilot, tugs and linesmen should also be made via QSHIPS.

The use of the QSHIPS programme is mandatory for notification of the impending arrival and subsequent movements of a vessel unless exceptional circumstances preclude this. If an agent is unable to submit a booking by QSHIPS the Arrival / Departure Report must be faxed or emailed to the VTS centre.

Details of any removal movement and departure information must be entered into QSHIPS at least 24 hours prior to the start time in a similar manner to the above.

Arrival advice should be confirmed to the VTS centre 24 hours prior to the start of the movement.

3.6 Passenger ship bookings

Prior to submitting a report of arrival and departure for a passenger vessel, an email must be completed and sent to the Regional Harbour Master (Cairns) in sufficient time for an appropriate forward assessment of the proposed voyage to be conducted. Please ensure that full ships particulars are included, including propulsion type and steering configuration together with proposed maximum draft details.

The vessel movements must also be reported in accordance with 2.6.

Ships agents are to ensure anchorage bookings are confirmed to the Cairns VTS Centre no later than 96 hours prior to arrival.

3.6.1 Passenger ship assessment

Passenger ship assessment Maximum length of a passenger ship entering Cairns is 300m LOA, all ships in excess of 200m LOA are subject to special assessment and approval prior to entry. Vessels of 200m LOA may require Full Mission Bridge Simulation as part of the assessment, unless exempted from simulation by the Regional Harbour Master

3.6.2 Passenger ship tender operations

Vessels anchoring outside the pilotage area and involved in transferring passengers from vessel to shore and vice-versa, are required to provide the following information to the Regional Harbour Master - Cairns:

- Mode of transfer;
- Details of ferry vessel/s; and
- Passage plan of transfers.

3.6.3 Passenger ship pilot boarding times

Passenger ships will board their allocated pilot at least two hours prior to alongside time. This applies to both pilot boarding areas.

3.7 Reporting defects

The [Transport Operations \(Marine Safety\) Regulations 2016](#) requires the master of a ship that is:

- Underway and entering, or about to enter a pilotage area; or
- Navigating a ship from a berth or anchorage,

must report to VTS by VHF radio details of damage to, defects and deficiencies in, the ship that could affect the safety of the ship, a person or the environment.

VTS will notify the Regional Harbour Master of the damage to, defects and deficiencies.

In addition, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) requires notification of any deficiencies or suspected deficiencies on ships visiting Australian ports. Deficiencies are to be reported to AMSA using [Form 18](#) and [Form 19](#). Reports of suspected non-compliance with Navigation Act or safety/pollution Conventions –

Deficiencies are also to be reported to the Regional Harbour Master, VTS Centre.

Vessels without serviceable bridge equipment will not be allowed to enter the port until assessed and authorisation given by the Regional Harbour Master – Cairns.

3.7.1 Reporting Requirements – arrival reporting requirements

All ships greater than 24m LOA shall obtain approval from Cairns VTS before entering, leaving, or manoeuvring within the Cairns pilotage area.

All ships greater than 10m LOA and less than 24m LOA must advise Cairns VTS before entering, leaving, or manoeuvring within the Cairns pilotage area.

The master of a ship entering, or about to enter the pilotage area must report to Cairns VTS by VHF radio according to the following table.

	Report	Information to report
1	Ship master to VTS Two hours prior to entry into the pilotage area or for pilot exempt vessels two hours prior to fairway beacon (C1 and C2) Entry to VTS/Port limits	Ships name, position, fore & aft draft, changes to ship details, defects, ETA to pilot boarding ground Master advises VTS passing limits
2	VTS/pilot to ship master Pilot transfer instructions Anchoring instructions	Instructions will include boarding side, course, speed, ETA, and anticipated conditions.

	Report	Information to report
		Instructions will include anchorage allocation and latitude/longitude if required
3	Ship master to VTS Arrival at pilot boarding ground	Ships name, at pilot boarding ground, time of arrival
4a	Ship master to VTS On anchoring	Ships name, anchor position, time of anchoring.
4b	Ship master to VTS Departing anchorage	Ships name, anchor aweigh time
5	VTS/pilot to ship master Confirmation of pilot transfer and instructions for the ship	Instructions will include boarding side, course, speed, ETA, and anticipated conditions.
6	Pilot to VTS Pilot transfer (when the pilot transfer has been completed)	Ships name, pilot onboard, pilot onboard time, pilot name, ETA at entrance beacons, Ships fore and aft draft, changes to ship details
7	Pilot to VTS Entering Entrance Channel	Time ship abeam C1/C2 beacons
8	Ship master to VTS Secured alongside	Ships name, secured at (berth name), first line time, side to, all fast time

Table 4 Inbound reporting requirements

Exempt masters must call Cairns VTS before proceeding past the pilot boarding ground to obtain clearance before entering the channel and then report their movements as per the above table.

3.7.2 Departure and removal reporting requirements

The master of a ship that is departing, moving or about to depart or move within the pilotage area must report to Cairns VTS by radio according to the following table requirements

	Report	Information to report
1	Ship master/pilot to VTS Pilot on board and ship ready to depart (not less than 30 minutes prior to ETD)	Ships name, pilot on board time, pilot name, fore and aft drafts, changes to scheduled movements
2	Ship master/pilot to VTS Departing berth	Ships name, anchor aweigh/last line time, destination
3	Ship master /pilot VTS Exiting Entrance Channel	Time ship abeam C1/C2 Beacons
4	Ship master to VTS Pilot transfer (when the pilot transfer has been completed)	Ships name, pilot disembarked, pilot off time
5	Ship master to VTS Exiting port limits	Ships name, vessel clear of port limits

Table 5 Outbound reporting requirements

3.8 Removals (Warping)

Non-pilotage removals (Warping) from one berth to another may be conducted by the master of the ship subject to the following conditions:

The removal is along a continuous uninterrupted stretch of wharf and is restricted for a distance not exceeding 150m.

That the removal has been booked in with Cairns VTS by the ship's agent.

The master confirms the ship's ability to safely conduct the manoeuvre.

Sufficient ship's lines are ashore at all times.

The manoeuvre does not involve the use of tugs.

The terminal/wharf operator to have a procedural plan regarding the warping of vessels.

The person in charge on the wharf to discuss procedures of the removal with the master of the vessel prior to the move.

The person in charge to agree communications VHF channel and procedures with the master of the vessel.

The master advises Cairns VTS of the time of commencement of the removal and the time of when the vessel is made fast again.

Weather and tidal conditions are favourable.

The use of a lines launch is considered an operational advantage.

Any vessel that needs to shift along a berth for operational reasons such as alignment to a loading arm or hopper while still moored to the same berth will be treated as a non-pilotage removal and all listed conditions still apply.

Any removal that requires the use of a tug and/or main engines or a removal distance greater than mentioned above will require a pilot to conduct the removal.

The Regional Harbour Master, to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the port, may at any time require the removal to be conducted by a pilot with or without tug assistance.

3.8.1 Dead ship removals

Ships requiring a dead ship removal to any berth or anchorage within the port will be treated on their merits. The vessel must have a master on board in addition to the pilot. VTS will advise the agent of the requirements when all the details are known.

3.9 Tug and tow requirements

For the purposes of this section the following definitions shall apply:

- The length of tow is the total length of all items that go to make up the tow, to include tow lines, wires, bridles, vessels and/or barges, taken from the bow of the tug to the stern of the last vessel or barge making up the tow; and
- Split is when a tow consisting of two or more vessels and/or barges are separated to form single units.

3.9.1 Operational conditions

All tugs and tows, ocean going or coastal, will be handled in the port under the following conditions:

- All tugs and tows will be required to engage a licensed pilot or have a licensed exempt master on board when the combined length of the vessels is greater than 50m;
- All tows are to be shortened up prior to arrival at the pilot boarding ground; and
- Any tow greater than 250m that is a multi-unit tow, will require to be either split prior to transit or require the assistance of an accompanying harbour tug for the full passage. All tug and tow combinations of 35m or more in length entering Smiths Creek require a pilot or the master must hold a pilotage exemption certificate.

Any tow that is in a damaged condition will not be granted entry into the Cairns pilotage area until the Regional Harbour Master is satisfied that the vessel/s does not pose a threat to the marine environment or a hazard to navigation in the port.

Note: a vessel or barge pushed ahead by a tug lashed and secured alongside shall not be deemed a tug and tow, however, this combination may be required to be allocated tugs as per the port procedures.

3.9.2 Notification

When a tug and tow is bound for, due to depart from or to do a removal within the port, the master, owner, or agent is required to book the tug in with Cairns VTS via the QSHIPS program, using the same arrangements as defined for other vessels. Cairns VTS must then be advised via phone or email of the details of the vessel to be towed.

If an agent is unable to submit a booking by QSHIPS, the agent must complete the arrival/departure ship booking form to VTS. The information will include:

- Full details of the tug;
- Details of the vessel/s making up the tow, including dimensions and drafts;
- The length of the tow when shortened up for entry into the port; and
- Any special requirements for the handling of the tow within the port.

All tows and combined units shall be deemed to be hampered vessels and subject to varying scheduling arrangements.

Shipping service providers will have access to the details of the tug and tow via the QSHIPS program.

3.10 Movement scheduling

3.10.1 Confirmation of schedules

On receipt of a movement booking Cairns VTS will cross check tug, pilot bookings and other movements while verifying draft restricted vessels and NGF requirements when putting the schedule together.

3.10.2 Schedule changes

MSQ may make changes to the approved schedule of ship movements up to two hours prior to the commencement of the movement in order to ensure the safe and most efficient movement of shipping.

Changes requested by the master/agent to scheduled movements may be made via QSHIPS, phone or email and are to be communicated to the VTS centre and marine services as soon as practicable advising the revised schedule. Changes to the ship management database will be made as they occur. Changes within 12 hours of the scheduled start time must be made by phone.

3.10.3 Ship movements priorities

The standard shipping priority guidelines, in order of precedence, for the movement of vessels in the Cairns pilotage area are:

- Any ship that is in an emergency situation shall have priority of movement and services over all others;
- Any ship whose movement is governed by under keel clearance or other navigational conditions and requires daylight for channel transit;
- Any ship that requires daylight for berthing, departure, or channel transit;
- Any ship whose movement is governed by tidal or navigational conditions;
- Passenger ships operate to fixed schedules that are booked months in advance; where possible, their schedules will be adhered to; subject to operational requirements the same principle will apply to warships entering the port; and
- Any ship that has labour waiting.

Removals and/or departures booked first will usually be given preference over late or modified bookings.

Any conflict of vessel booking times that arises will be referred to the Regional Harbour Master for resolution.

3.11 Movement clearance notification

All ships require a clearance from the Regional Harbour Master in order to enter, depart or move within the pilotage area. It is the responsibility of the master or pilot to contact Cairns VTS to obtain the necessary clearance and information prior to the movement.

Clearances are valid for uninterrupted passage to a specified location or until the voyage is interrupted, completed (for example, by anchoring, berthing or due to a breakdown) or cancelled by the Regional Harbour Master. Ships will require a new clearance for any subsequent movement.

Refer to arrival / departure and removal reporting requirement table for applicable timings

3.11.1 Recreational vessels reporting

A recreational ship equipped with VHF radio is required to maintain a listening watch on VHF channel 16 and channel 12 prior to entering a shipping channel if the recreational ship intends to navigate within and along the shipping channel. This applies between the pilot boarding ground and the main wharves in Trinity Inlet, including Smiths Creek.

When operating in and along a shipping channel the recreational ship should navigate on the outer edge of the channel.

For reasons of safety, a recreational ship should only cross a shipping channel at recommended locations and at 90° to the channel.

A recreational ship fitted with VHF and tuned to VMR operating and information channels must switch over to VHF channel 12 when approaching a shipping channel.

3.12 Master/pilot responsibilities

Masters and owners of vessels are responsible for due compliance with the provisions of the [*Transport Operations \(Marine Safety\) Act 1994*](#) (the Act) and [*Transport Operations \(Marine Safety\) Regulation 2016*](#) (the Regulation).

When a vessel is under the direction of a pilot, the pilot is responsible for due compliance with the provisions of the Act and Regulations, however the responsibility of the pilot does not relieve the master and the owner of a vessel of their responsibility.

Arising from these responsibilities is the obligation of persons directing the navigation of vessels to comply with directions of the Regional Harbour Master. The duty Vessel Traffic Service Operator (VTSO) is delegated to exercise the relevant functions of the Regional Harbour Master.