

1 Introduction

1.1 General

The Whitsunday region is part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and includes the commonwealth Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and Queensland national park and marine park areas.

The area controlled encompasses the Whitsunday Passage, a number of cruise ship anchorages and numerous island passages, bays, beaches and inlets used by both recreational and commercial craft.

Within the Whitsunday Islands are several holiday resorts some of which share boundaries with national parks under the direction of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

Marine activity in the region is generally busy throughout the year but does experience periods of higher activity associated with annual holiday peaks. Regular ferry services interconnect the islands and the mainland and recreational boating is becoming increasingly popular as facilities are provided to cater for them.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) oversees designated zones in which all activities are controlled depending on the sensitivity of the particular zone. Some activities require the issue of a permit. For example cruise ship anchorages and certain areas are designated as preservation zones that prohibit all activities and are 'no go' areas. The marine park has 'designated shipping areas' (DSA) where particular activities, such as shipping, are permitted. Penalties apply for operating ships outside designated shipping areas without the written permission of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland authorities regularly monitor shipping activities to ensure that local, national and international laws are followed, and to record and evaluate shipping information for future policies. Ship owners, captains and crews face heavy fines and possible prosecution if they do not follow the rules and regulations of shipping within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

As a destination for domestic and international cruise shipping the Whitsunday region generally is highly attractive because of its unique mix of environmental credentials, proximity to the Great Barrier Reef and quality tourist development.

Cruise ship patronage of the Whitsunday region has expanded markedly in the last decade. Most of the international traffic favours the southern summer months, December to April, with cruise ships engaged mostly on Pacific-rim or round-world cruises. Domestic cruise ship traffic has tended to operate year-round.

1.2 Purpose

This document defines the standard procedures to be followed in the pilotage area; it contains information and guidelines to assist ship's masters, owners, and agents of vessels arriving at and traversing the area. It provides details of the services and the regulations and procedures to be observed.

Nothing in this publication is intended to relieve any vessel, owner, operator, charterer, master, or person directing the movement of a vessel from the consequences of any failure

to comply with any applicable law or regulation or of any neglect of precaution which may be required by the ordinary practice of seamanship, or by the special circumstances of the case.

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Information on external agencies (customs, quarantine, port authority rules, and REEFREP and so on) is provided as an example only. Readers are strongly recommended to consult their respective websites for current information.

The latest version of this publication is available on the [Maritime Safety Queensland \(MSQ\)](#) website.

Any significant updates to the content of these procedures will be promulgated on this site.

Should errors or omissions in this publication be noted, it would be appreciated if advice of these could be forwarded to:

The Regional Harbour Master (Mackay)

PO Box 58, Mackay, Queensland 4740

Phone: +61 7 4944 3700

Email: mackaymarine@msq.qld.gov.au

1.3 Datum

All water depths refer to the 'lowest astronomical tide' height (LAT). All positions in this manual are in WGS84.

All directions are referenced to True North.

1.4 Authorities

The [Transport Operations \(Marine Safety\) Act 1994](#) (section 88) — 'A harbour master may direct the master of a ship to navigate or otherwise operate the ship in a specified way.'

MSQ, through the authority of the harbour master, has jurisdiction over the safe movement of all shipping within the pilotage area.

The [Transport Operations \(Marine Pollution\) Act 1995](#) (section 68) — 'Authorised officers have the following functions — a) to investigate discharges prohibited by this act, b) to monitor compliance with this act, c) to monitor transfer operations, d) to examine ships using coastal waters to minimise discharges, e) to take action to remove a pollutant discharged into coastal waters or to mitigate its effect on Queensland marine and coastal environment.'

The [Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975](#) is the primary act in respect of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. It includes provisions which:

- establish the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park
- establish the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), a commonwealth authority responsible for the management of the marine park

- provide a framework for planning and management of the marine park, including through zoning plans, plans of management and permits
- prohibit operations for the recovery of minerals (which includes prospecting or exploration for minerals) in the marine park (unless approved by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for research)
- require compulsory pilotage for certain ships in prescribed areas of the Great Barrier Reef Region
- provide for regulations, collection of environmental management charges, enforcement and so on.

The [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999](#) (the EPBC act) is the Australian government's central piece of environmental legislation. It provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places — defined in the act as matters of national environmental significance.

1.5 Definitions

1.5.1 Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)

[The Australian Maritime Safety Authority](#) is the commonwealth authority charged with enhancing efficiency in the delivery of safety and other services to the Australian maritime industry.

1.5.2 MASTREP — Modernised Australian Ship Tracking and Reporting System

MASTREP is a Ship Reporting System designed to contribute to safety of life at sea and is operated by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) through the Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) Australia in Canberra.

1.5.3 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRPMA)

A Commonwealth authority responsible for the management of the marine park within the Great Barrier Reef.

1.5.4 Highest astronomical tide (HAT)/Lowest astronomical tide (LAT)

These are the highest and lowest levels that can be predicted to occur under average meteorological conditions and any combination of astronomical conditions. These levels may not be reached every year. HAT or LAT are not the extreme levels that can be reached, as storm surges can cause considerably higher or lower levels to occur.

LAT is the datum to which all soundings are referred to.

1.5.5 International Maritime Organisation (IMO)

The world organisation charged with enhancing efficiency in the delivery of safety to the whole maritime industry.

1.5.6 Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ)

The state government agency responsible for marine safety, the protection of the marine environment from ship-sourced pollution, Vessel Traffic Services and the administration of all aspects of vessel registration and qualifications of mariners in the state of Queensland.

1.5.7 Overall length (LOA)

The LOA is the extreme length of a vessel.

1.5.8 REEFREP

REEFREP is the mandatory ship reporting system established by IMO Resolution MSC.52 (66), as amended by Resolution MSC.161 (78), and specified in Marine Orders Part 63 (Reef VTS) Issue 2.

1.5.9 Reef VTS

The Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait Vessel Traffic Service (ReefVTS) established by Australia as a means of enhancing navigational safety and environmental protection in Torres Strait and the Great Barrier Reef.

1.5.10 Regional Harbour Master (RHM)

The person authorised to give direction under the relevant provisions of the Transport Operations (Marine Safety Act 1994).

1.5.11 Whitsundays Plan of Management (WPOM)

The Whitsundays Plan of Management (WPOM) was released by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to protect and conserve the values of the Whitsundays area.

1.6 Contact information

1.6.1 The Regional Harbour Master

For operational maritime questions, marine incidents, pollution, buoy moorings and navigation aids, please contact the Regional Harbour Master's office located at:

Level 3, 44 Nelson Street, Mackay

Postal address:

PO Box 58, Mackay, Queensland 4740

Phone: +61 7 4944 3700,

Email:..... mackaymarine@msq.qld.gov.au

1.6.2 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

Sustainable Development and Policy Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority

2-68 Flinders Street (PO Box 1379), Townsville Queensland 4810

Phone: (07) 4750 0705

Fax:..... (07) 4750 0760

1.6.3 Hamilton Island Marina

Marina manager

Phone: +61 7 4946 8352

Fax:..... +61 7 4946 8743

Mobile: +61 7 411 708 162

Email:..... marina@hamiltonisland.com.au

1.6.4 Reef VTS

Phone: +61 1300 721 293

Fax:..... +61 7 4721 0633

Email:..... ReefVTSNorth@msq.qld.gov.au

ReefVTSSouth@msq.qld.gov.au

(depending on location within the Reef VTS Area. See Chartlet 1 in the [ReefVTS User Guide](#))

VHF Channel: 11, 14

1.6.5 Marine authorities

Organisation	Telephone	Facsimile	Email
Hay Point VTS	1300 645 022		VTSHayPoint@msq.qld.gov.au
Regional Harbour Master (Mackay)	07 4944 3700		mackaymarine@msq.qld.gov.au
Maritime Safety Queensland Airlie Beach	07 48414500		airliebeach.maritime@msq.qld.gov.au
Volunteer Marine Rescue	07 4946 7207	07 4946 5200	Whitsunday@vmraq.org.au
Water Police	07 4967 7222	07 4948 8855	waterpolice@police.qld.gov.au
Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol	07 4946 7003	07 4946 5186	
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority	1800 990 177	07 4772 6093	info@gbmpa.gov.au

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service QPWS (Airlie Beach)	07 4967 7351		
Department of Agriculture (Quarantine)	07 49559600	07 4955 9699	0427 861 911 or mackay@daff.gov.au
Australian Border Force	07 4965 7100	07 4965 7199	shipmac@customs.gov.au

Table 1 – Marine authorities