

8. Pilotage

8.1 Vessels that require a pilot

The *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994* specifies that, unless a current pilotage exemption certificate (PEC) is held by the master of a ship, pilotage is compulsory for:

- A ship that is 50 metres or more;
- A vessel towing another vessel where the combined length of the vessels is 50 metres or more;
- A ship whose owner or master asks for the services of a pilot; and
- A ship whose master is directed by the Harbour Master to use the services of a pilot.

8.1.1 Request for pilot

The requirements of the *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Regulation 2016* shall be observed for all bookings. Far North Queensland Ports Corporation provides a pilotage service for ship arrivals, departures and removals. Pilot transfers are carried out by pilot launch. Requests for Pilot services are to be made via the QSHIPS programme to Cairns VTS.

8.1.2 Notice required

Ships requiring the services of a pilot in the port of Mourilyan are required to submit arrival, removal & departure notices no less than the indicated number of hours prior to the desired movement:

- Arrivals – 48 hours
- Removals – 24 hours
- Departures – 48 hours

Initial notification should be made via the QSHIPS website.

8.1.3 Pilotage transit times

In general, the following pilotage transit times apply for vessels arriving in Mourilyan

Pilot boarding place to berth (Portside too) – allow 2 hours

Vessel arrivals - Pilot will board the vessel 45 minutes prior to predicted high or low slack water or as agreed where the tidal range is equal to 1.2 metres or less.

Vessel departures – Pilot will board the vessel up to 1 hour before intended departure time.

Note: Times shown above may vary due to environmental factors, specific ship requirements and ships speed.

8.1.4 Personal Pilot Unit (PPU)

It is mandatory for pilots to use a PPU on all vessels in excess of 120m LOA.

8.2 Pilotage area

See [4.2](#) Pilotage area

8.2.1 Pilot boarding place

The pilot boarding place is marked in approximate position 17° 35.55' S, 146° 10' E, which is approximately two miles from the entrance on the line of the leads.

8.2.2 Pilot boarding arrangements

Pilot transfer instructions will be advised to the ship prior to the pilot boarding by VTS. The instructions will include:

- Pilot boarding time;
- Restrictions/requirements;
- Boarding position; and
- Pilot boarding/disembarkation sequence.

Ships are to be at the pilot boarding ground at the notified time of pilot boarding, with all preparations for boarding completed in accordance with the instructions in this section.

8.2.3 Pilot /Personnel Transfer Safety

It is essential to ensure the safe transfer of pilots and other personnel at sea. Responsibility for safe practices for personnel transfers rests with each person involved in the activity including the ship owners, operators, master and crew, pilotage providers, pilots and pilot boat crew as well as the person being transferred. All parties should observe both the spirit and intent of the regulations, to ensure safety is not compromised.

The pilot ladder is to be rigged two metres above the water, with two manropes and a heaving line standing by. At night, a forward-facing light is required to illuminate the ladder in accordance with IMO requirements and IMPA recommendations.

Refer: Pilot Boarding Ladder Arrangement and Pilot transfer arrangements – Marine Notice 04/2023. (Pilotage - boarding ladder arrangements).

Where a Pilot suspects that the pilot transfer arrangement provided are unsafe, they should refuse to board the vessel until the matter is resolved and is made safe by the master and crew. If the issue cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the pilot then the movement will be aborted until such time that the Pilot boarding arrangement is made to safe.

Additionally, the matter must be reported immediately to AMSA, Cairns VTS and the pilot's employer.

8.2.4 Passage planning

A passage plan is a basic indication of preferred intention and both pilot and master should be prepared to depart from it when circumstances so dictate.

A passage plan for this port can be found on the MSQ website.

8.2.5 Pilotage delays and cancellations

A cancellation for Pilotage without the required notice of three hours will attract a penalty of the relevant Pilotage fee or fees.

A fee is payable in the following instances:

- If the programmed ship movement is delayed for more than 30 minutes but not more than one hour for the first hour;
- If the ship is delayed for more than one hour but not more than two hours; and
- A delay in excess of two hours constitutes a cancellation.

These charges can be found in Schedule 6 Part 2 Division 3 of the [Transport Operations \(Marine Safety\) Regulation 2016](#).

8.2.6 Alcohol management

The Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 section 79 requires that persons in charge of ships have a zero blood alcohol reading. The Queensland water police periodically conduct random breath tests of masters and pilots on ships arriving at Mourilyan, or about to depart. Severe penalties apply to infringements.

8.3 Pilot licences, pilotage area endorsements and exemption from pilotage licences

The master of a vessel with a LOA greater than 50m may be exempt from pilotage once they have obtained a pilotage exemption area endorsement.

8.3.1 Examination for pilotage exemption area endorsement

The examination will consist of written and oral components and will include an assessment to determine the candidate's ability to safely conduct the navigation of a ship without a pilot while within the pilotage area. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of port procedures and the ability to navigate a ship through the pilotage area and port without the aid of navigational charts.

8.3.2 Cancellation of licences

A licence may be cancelled or suspended when major port changes or developments are taking place. It may also occur where masters fail to comply with port procedures.

8.4 Pilotage requirements for Torres Strait and Great Barrier Reef (GBR)

All merchant vessels 70 m in length and over and all oil, gas and chemical tankers irrespective of size are required to take a licensed marine pilot when transiting the Torres Strait and Great North East Channel. Pilotage is also required for these vessels transiting the Inner Route from Cape York to Cairns Roads and for transit of Hydrographers Passage. Significant penalties apply for non-compliance.

Full details can be found in [Marine Notice 06/2022](#). Maximum draft for transit is 12.2 m; vessels with a draft greater than 10 m will be advised of the required tidal window by the pilotage company.

Refer to [Reef VTS publication](#) for further information.