

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 submitting movement details for a vessel to Townsville VTS Centre via the QSHIPS ship planning programme in accordance with this section.

All vessels, whether commercial or recreational, are to maintain a listening watch on VHF12 and 16 and whilst within the Townsville VTS and pilotage Area

3.2 Vessel traffic service (VTS)

Vessel Traffic Service 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 Townsville VTS area.

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

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

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.

Townsville 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.

Townsville 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

Townsville 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 Townsville 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 of 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 Townsville VTS Area

The Townsville VTS area is described as the area of:

- (a) the waters bounded by a line commencing at:
- the coastline at the north-western extremity of Cape Cleveland at approximate Latitude 19° 10.9' South, Longitude 146° 00.80' East on the mainland
 - then north to Latitude 19° 02.500' South, Longitude 147° 00.800' East,
 - then west to Latitude 19° 02.500' South, Longitude 146° 54.000' East,
 - then south-westerly to Latitude 19° 05.000' South, Longitude 146° 45.000' East,
 - then south to the coastline at approximate Latitude 19° 10.864' South, Longitude 146° 45.000' East on the mainland,
 - then generally east along the coastline to the starting point at the north-western extremity of Cape Cleveland, and,
- (b) the navigable waters of rivers and creeks flowing, directly or indirectly, into the waters referred to in paragraph (a), but excluding the waters upstream of Rooney's Bridge in Ross River and excluding the waters upstream of the George Roberts Bridge in Ross Creek.

3.2.2 VTS role

The role of the Townsville VTS is to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of shipping within the VTS area and to ensure that a continual program of shipping movements can be affected to the advantage of all commercial shipping in an impartial manner.

Townsville VTS will:

- Forward plan the movement of vessels to prevent congestion and provide for safe and efficient movement of traffic.
- Wherever possible interact with vessel traffic by maritime VHF radio.
- Interact with port services in Townsville
- Provide essential and timely information to assist the on-board decision-making process and may inform, advise or instruct shipping in the VTS area.
- Where necessary communicate the directions of the Regional Harbour Master (Townsville) or delegate
- Monitor compliance with the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994 and Regulation 2016
- Record the details of shipping movements in the QSHIPS programme in real time
- Maintain a situational awareness of traffic in the VTS area to the extent of the available information
- Participate in emergency procedures.

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.

3.3 VHF communications

Ships intending to navigate within the pilotage area must establish two-way communications with Townsville VTS on marine VHF channel 12 or VHF channel 16.

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

VHF channel	Call sign	Service
VHF channel 16	Townsville VTS	Distress and initial calling
VHF channel 12	Townsville VTS	Mandatory reporting, vessel traffic management, port working
VHF channel 6	User	Pilot and tugs
VHF channel 8	User	Pilot and tugs
VHF channel 13	User	Pilot and tugs
VHF channel 67	User	Supplementary Emergency Channel

Table 3 – Port VHF communications

The VTS centre has telephone services for administrative and emergency purposes. Any marine incident, for example a collision, grounding or fire, occurring within the port should be reported immediately to 'Townsville VTS' on VHF channel 12 or 16.

3.3.1 Language

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

3.3.2 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.

3.3.3 Distress and emergency

Townsville 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 and 67 when VMR is not operational for emergency and distress calls only. A distress call should, in the ordinary course of events, be referred to Townsville Coastguard.

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

VHF radio: channel 12 or 16

Phone: 1300 721 263

3.4 Harbour contact details

Organisation	Telephone	Email
Townsville VTS	1300 721 263	vtstownsville@msq.qld.gov.au
Regional Harbour Master	+61 7 4421 8100	RHMTownsville@msq.qld.gov.au
Manager (Pilotage Services)	+61 7 4781 1562	pilotmanager@townsville-port.com.au
Port of Townsville	+61 7 4781 1500	info@townsvilleport.com.au

Table 4 – Harbour contact details

3.5 Prior notification of movements

The [Transport Operations \(Marine Safety\) Regulation 2016](#) require that all ship movements for vessels 35 metres in length or more are reported according to the following table:

Action	Minimum notice	Approved form
Prior notification of movement in pilotage area	48 hours prior to entry	Notification via QSHIPS see section 2.2 –QSHIPS
	24 hours prior to removal or departure	
Transport of dangerous goods in pilotage area	48 hours prior to entry	Dangerous cargo report Dangerous cargo/bulk liquid list
	Three hours prior to departure	
Loading, removal or handling of dangerous cargo alongside (includes bunkering)	24 hours prior to handling	Dangerous cargo report Dangerous cargo/bulk liquid list
Ship-to-ship transfer of dangerous cargo	24 hours prior to cargo transfer	Dangerous cargo report Dangerous cargo/bulk liquid list
Gas-free status (bulk liquid cargo ships)	48 hours prior to entry, departure or removal	Declaration by master if vessel is gas-free for movement purposes

Table 5 – Prior notification of movements

3.6 Pilotage delays

A delay fee is payable if the confirmed ship movement is delayed by 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 then for each of the first two hours; 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](#).

3.7 Tug and tow requirements

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

- The length of tow – is the combined length of the vessels (prime mover and towed vessels).
- Splitting a multi-unit tow – is when a tow consisting of two or more vessels and/or barges are separated to form single units
- Towing operations requiring a pilot will be permitted only during daylight hours.

3.7.1 Notification

When a tug and tow is bound for, due to depart from or conduct a removal within the port, the master, owner or agent is required to book the tug and tow in with the Regional Harbour Master via the QSHIPS program using the same arrangements as defined for other vessels. A visit for the towing vessel will need to be created in QSHIPS and then the details of the tow added by using the add convoy tab.

3.7.2 Operational conditions

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

- All Tug and tow combinations within the Compulsory pilotage area will be conducted during daylight hours only
- All tugs and tows with combined length of 50 metres will be required to engage a licensed pilot as per section 8 – [Pilotage](#).
- The Harbour Master may require tug and tow with combined length less than 50 metres to engage a licensed pilot.
- All tows are to be shortened up prior to arrival at the pilot boarding place.
- A multi-unit tow will require to be split and towed independently from the Pilot station into the harbour or Ross River or Ross Creek.
- A multi-unit tow will require to split and towed independently from the harbour or Ross River or Ross Creek to the pilot station, where they may be connected up for a multi tow transit to another port.
- All tug and tows must have a power driven vessel of suitable power (assist vessel) to assist with berthing or unberthing. The assist vessel shall meet the combination as required by the Pilot or Pilot Exempt Master.
- All tug and tows transiting to or from Townsville Marine Precinct must have a power driven vessel of suitable power (assist vessel) to assist with berthing and unberthing and transit through the entrance. The assist vessel shall meet the combination as required by the Pilot or Pilot Exempt Master.

Any tow that is in a damaged condition will not be granted entry into the 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 designed to have a tug (prime mover) secured astern as a composite unit shall not be deemed a tug and tow if operated in this manner, however, this combination may require tugs to be allocated (in addition to the prime mover) as per the port procedures, see [section 9](#). The LOA of a composite unit is defined under section 3.9 “The length of tow”.

3.8 Scheduling of ship movements

The Regional Harbour Master will ensure the integrity of the prioritisation process by monitoring the planning and movement of shipping and will arbitrate on matters relating to the scheduling of ship movements.

It is important that the master and agent nominate realistic movement times and keep authorities informed of any changes. Ships failing to make their estimated time of arrival or estimated time of departure will be accommodated as soon as is practicable thereafter. Ships maintaining their estimated time of arrival or estimated time of departure will normally conduct the movement as scheduled.

Ships Masters failing to provide timely updates to a movement may result in delays and/or cancellation charges and in unnecessary inconvenience.

The distance from boarding ground alpha to the swing basin is 9.8 nautical miles with a transit time of about one hour. Swinging and securing ships can also take up to one hour depending on the circumstances. Allowing for a 30 minute delay time prior to the commencement of the movement extends the notional time for a deep draft arrival to a minimum of 2.5 hours.

Weather, tidal conditions or special circumstances may require a departure from the above guidelines. Variations will always be made with the whole of port requirements in mind.

3.8.1 Schedule changes

Maritime Safety Queensland may make changes to the approved schedule of ship movements up to three 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 must be made via QSHIPS as soon as practicable after learning of such change. The agent is required to communicate such changes to Townsville Marine Services. Changes within 24 hours of the scheduled start time must be made by phone to Townsville VTS on (1300 721 263).

Changes requested within three hours will incur delay or cancellation fees in accordance with [Transport Operations \(Marine Safety\) Regulations 2016](#).

Estimated time of departure (ETD) cannot be brought ahead between 2200 hours and 0600 hours. Final notification to all port services, including VTS are to be made by 2130 hours daily.

Changes to schedule between 2200 hours and 0600 hours.

- Change for shipping for the period 2200 hours to 0600 hours must be communicated to VTS by 2130 hours (by telephone).
- Departures between 2200 hours & 0600 hours departure may not be brought forward. Vessels scheduled to sail later in the day may be brought forward to 0800 hours.
- Departure – Ships may be pushed back once between 2200 and 0600
- Arrivals - Between 2200 hours & 0800 hours arrivals cannot be brought forward.
- Changeover (Vessel scheduled to berth after a vessel occupying the berth has departed) – the schedule will be adjusted in line with scheduling guidelines and agent notified.
- Exception: The port reserves the right to ask a delayed vessel to sail once it has completed cargo operations between 2200 hours & 0600 hours. Should this be required, the agent will be notified of the amended time and schedule amended accordingly.

- Notwithstanding any of the above, the normal priority rules of the port and the legislated 3 hour notice will apply.

3.8.2 Prioritising of ship movements

Subject to existing Priority Berthing Contracts, the Port of Townsville in general utilises a berth booking system. The principle of first berth application correctly lodged has priority to berth (where arriving on schedule) for all ships wishing to enter the Port of Townsville. Movements (arrivals, removals and/or departures) lodged into QSHIPS first will usually be given preference over late or modified movement bookings.

As far as is practicable the VTS centre will ensure that the movements of all vessels are in accordance with the standard shipping priority guidelines below. Any conflict of vessel bookings will be referred to the Regional Harbour Master (Townsville) for resolution. The standard shipping priority guidelines, in order of precedence, for the movement of vessels in the Townsville pilotage area are:

- Deep draft or Tidal window dependent vessels - ship whose movement is governed by under keel clearance to the extent that the movement may be safely conducted within its tidal window.
- Any ship movement governed by navigational constraints (example: daylight only)
- Passenger ships operate to fixed schedules that are booked months in advance. Where possible, their schedules will be adhered to; subject to operational requirements.
- Loaded livestock vessels ready for departure
- Ships with labour waiting.

Vessels with emergencies – RHM will determine if there is a need to prioritise based on the nature of the emergency, safety of the port infrastructure and navigational safety.

3.9 Movement information and Permission to Proceed

All ships with LOA greater than 35 metres and all tug and tow combinations require Permission to proceed issued by the port VTS to enter, depart or move within the pilotage area or a Port VTS area.

It is the responsibility of the master or pilot to contact the VTS centre to obtain the necessary permission and information prior to the movement.

Permissions are valid for uninterrupted passage to a specified location or until the voyage is interrupted or completed (for example, by anchoring, berthing or due to a breakdown) or cancelled by the Regional Harbour Master (or the delegate).

Ships will require to request a new permission:

- for any subsequent movement; or
- Vessel arriving at a VTS area; if the vessel has not entered the VTS area – **at the declared time + 30 minutes.**
- All other movements, if the movement has not commenced within **30 minutes of permission being granted.**

3.9.1 Arrivals – Permission to proceed

Arriving at the VTS area.

The master is to contact Townsville VTS to obtain permission to proceed into the VTS area and for arrival information, two hours before the estimated time of arrival at the Pilot boarding Place or Anchorage area (see section [8.4 – Pilot boarding position](#)).

The arrival permission to proceed into the VTS area is valid for uninterrupted passage to the pilot boarding place or anchorage area, unless specified otherwise.

Arriving into the Pilotage area.

The **Pilot** or master must contact Townsville VTS to request permission to proceed

- into the Townsville Pilotage area, and
 - for information to support a safe pilotage,
- on completion of Pilot/Bridge Team exchange.

The arrival permission to proceed is valid for uninterrupted passage from the pilot boarding place to the berth, unless specified otherwise.

3.9.2 Removals – Permission to proceed

The **Pilot** or Master (Person having the conduct of the vessel) must contact Townsville VTS to request permission to proceed:

- from one berth (or place) within the pilotage area to another berth (or Place) within the Pilotage area, and
 - for information to support a safe pilotage,
- on completion of Pilot/Bridge Team exchange.

The permission to proceed is valid for uninterrupted passage of the removal, unless specified otherwise.

3.9.3 Departures – Permission to proceed

Masters of all vessels are to call Townsville VTS, 3 hours prior to the scheduled departure to confirm readiness to depart and advise final sailing drafts.

The ship should be ready for departure, with all documentation completed not less than 30 minutes prior to the confirmed departure time

The Pilot or Master (Person having the con of the vessel) must contact Townsville VTS to request permission to proceed:

- Depart from a berth (or place) within the pilotage area to sea or an anchorage outside the pilotage area, and
 - for information to support a safe pilotage,
- on completion of Pilot/Bridge Team exchange.

The permission to proceed is valid for uninterrupted passage of the removal, unless specified otherwise.

Ships that have departed a Townsville berth and proceeded to anchorage, must obtain Permission to proceed from VTS prior to weighing anchor and proceeding to sea.

3.9.4 Ross River – Townsville Port Access Road Bridge

Ships intending to proceed upstream of the Townsville Port Access Road Bridge are advised the following restrictions apply

Maximum beam – 8 metres

Maximum air draft – 6 metres

Vessels exceeding these dimensions must make application to the Regional Harbour Master (through Townsville VTS) at least 96 hours prior to the intended transit.

The application must include:

- vessel specifications;
- assisting vessels if any; and
- a risk assessment for the transit.

Each application will be assessed and applicant notified of conditions for transit if approved.

Mariners should refer to the latest Notice to Mariners for additional information regarding Ross River.

3.10 Anchoring

There is good holding ground in Cleveland Bay.

Vessels arriving to the Port of Townsville and requiring to anchor will be assigned an anchorage by Vessel Traffic Services.

There are 12 designated anchorage positions outside port limits for use of vessels waiting to berth.

There is 1 designated anchorage position within the compulsory pilotage area of Port of Townsville, generally for use of vessels requiring to conduct passenger or personal transfers.

Masters of vessels intending to carry out passenger transfer at anchor must submit a request to anchor within the compulsory pilotage area of Cleveland Bay to the Regional Harbour Master (RHMTownsville@msq.qld.gov.au) cc VTS: (vtstownsville@msq.qld.gov.au) advising estimated arrival and departure times and draft in metres.

Ships must report the time of anchoring to Townsville VTS and maintain a continuous listening watch on VHF channel 16 and 12. All ships at anchor must maintain a continuous anchor watch and report if vessel is observed to be dragging anchor.

Ships are not permitted to immobilise engines at anchor without the written approval of the Regional Harbour Master (refer Section 10 Work Permits). Any such request must be entered into QShips by the agent at least two standard working days prior to the intended works.

3.11 Arrival reporting requirements

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

	Report	Information to report
1	Ship master to 'Townsville VTS' Two hours prior to entry into the pilotage area	Ship's name, position, ship's fore and aft draft, changes to ship details, defects, estimated time of arrival to pilot boarding place, Request permission to proceed.

	Report	Information to report
	Request "Permission to proceed"	
2	Townsville VTS/pilot to ship master Confirmation of pilot transfer and instructions for the ship	Instructions will include, boarding side, course, speed, estimated time of arrival and anticipated conditions
3a	Ship master to Townsville VTS On anchoring	Ship's name, anchor position as a bearing and distance from the north cardinal mark (19°08'S 146°54'E) and time of anchoring
4b	Ship master to Townsville VTS Departing anchorage Request "Permission to proceed"	Ship's name, Requesting Permission to proceed, anchor aweigh time
5	Pilot to Townsville VTS Pilot Transfer (when the pilot transfer has been completed) and ready to proceed with pilotage Request "Permission to proceed"	Ship's name, 'pilot onboard', pilot onboard time, pilot name, Pilot/ Bridge team exchange completed, ship's fore and aft draft, Request permission to proceed into pilotage area , estimated time of arrival at entrance beacons, Abort point, changes to ship details
5	Pilot to Townsville VTS Entering Sea Channel	Time ship abeam S2 beacon
6	Pilot to Townsville VTS Passing P13 and P14 beacons	Time passing between P13 and P14
7	Pilot to Townsville VTS Vessel secure alongside	Time of first line and when secured alongside, berth and direction.

Table 6 – Inbound reporting requirements

Exempt masters should call Townsville VTS before proceeding past the pilot boarding place to obtain clearance before entering the channel, the time of first line and the time that they are secured alongside the berth.

3.12 Departure and removal reporting requirements

The master of a ship that is departing or moving within the pilotage area must report to Townsville VTS by radio according to the following table:

	Report	Information to report
1	Ship master to 'Townsville VTS' 3 hours prior to ETD	A – ship's name, Estimated departure Draft B – Readiness to depart.
2	Ship master to Townsville VTS': Unassisted removal along the berth – greater than 20m (Maximum permissible distance without pilot 60 metres) Request "Permission to proceed"	A – ship's name, request permission to proceed, time of commencement of movement B – ship's name, time of completion of movement
3	Ship master/pilot to Townsville VTS	Ships name, pilot onboard time, pilot name, fore and aft draft, changes to scheduled movements

	Report	Information to report
	Pilot onboard and ship ready to depart (not greater than 30 minutes prior to estimated time of departure) Request "Permission to proceed"	Request permission to proceed
4	Pilot to Townsville VTS Departing berth	Ships name, departure berth, time of last line, estimated time of arrival pilot boarding place
5	Ship master/pilot to Townsville VTS Entering Platypus Channel	Passing between P13 and P14
6	Ship master to Townsville VTS Pilot transfer (when the pilot transfer has been completed from outbound ship to launch)	Ships name, pilot disembarked, pilot off time
7	Ship master to Townsville VTS Departing anchorage Request "Permission to proceed"	Ships name, PER submitted, destination. Request permission to proceed anchor aweigh time.

Table 7 – Outbound and removal reporting requirements

3.13 Detained Vessels

It is the responsibility of the Master to notify the Harbour Master (through the VTS) if the ship has been detained.

Any confirmed movement bookings for detained vessels will be considered cancelled until the Harbour Master has assessed the detention report and considered:

- a) Implications of the cause(s) of the detention on safety of navigation, and
- b) Determined if AMSA has consented for the vessel to move within the port area.

Movement of any detained vessels is subject to Regional Harbour Master has approval.

3.14 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 the area 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;

Failure to report defects to VTS prior to entering or manoeuvring within the VTS area may result in the vessel being delayed or movement cancelled.

Defect to navigational and mooring equipment, steering gear, main engines, auxiliary engines, main air compressors, thrusters (bow or stern), gyro compasses, Radars, AIS, ECDIS, UMS status, VDR, Pilot ladders, Accommodation ladders, conditions of class,

outstanding port state deficiencies and so on must be reported to VTS as soon as possible by VHF or telephone.

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

In addition, 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 Report of suspected non-compliance with Navigation Act or safety/pollution Conventions –

[AMSA 18](#) – incident alert

[AMSA 19](#) – incident report

[AMSA 355](#) - Report of suspected non-compliance with Navigation Act or safety/pollution conventions

A copy of the AMSA form must be sent to the RHM and VTS Townsville.

3.15 Access to Regional Harbour Master (Townsville)

For ordinary business, and issues arising in relation to ship scheduling, agents are to contact the VTS centre. Agents continue to have full access to the Regional Harbour Master on any subject should circumstances warrant, however outside normal working hours this should be restricted to emergencies.