

5 General information

5.1 Charts and books

For navigation in pilotage areas, masters should refer to the nautical charts produced by the Australian Hydrographic Office and *Admiralty Sailing Directions NP15 (Australian Pilot Volume III / V)*. Charts of the area include:

- AUS 252 Whitsunday Group
- AUS 253 Whitsunday Passage
- AUS 254 Plans in Whitsundays
- AUS 825 Whitsunday Island to Bowen
- AUS 826 Bowen to Cape Bowling Green
- AUS 4620 Percy Isles to Booby Island including Gulf of Papua

5.2 Shipping announcements

Maritime Safety Information includes navigational warnings, meteorological warnings — and other important safety related messages required by ships at sea. The 'Rescue Co-ordination Centre' (RCC) Australia is responsible for issuing safety messages relating to the Whitsunday region as follows:

- **Coastal navigation warnings** — these are issued as 'AUSCOAST' warnings and are numbered consecutively and are broadcast for as long as they remain active or are included in other available information — Notices to Mariners AUSCOAST warnings are broadcast on Inmarsat EGC or can be viewed on [AMSA's website](#).
- **Safety messages (SSM Series)** — normally broadcast for a defined period as they relate to short term problems such as floating objects likely to cause damage to vessels.
- **Notices to Mariners** — issued as an annual document and is available from the Australian Hydrographic Office or other recognised distributors. A free service called 'e Notices' is also available from the [Australian hydrographic office](#).
- Maritime Safety Queensland produces Queensland [Notices to Mariners](#) on a daily basis. These can be accessed through the Regional Harbour Master's office and on the Maritime Safety Queensland website at www.msq.qld.gov.au/Notices-to-Mariners/Ntm-whitsundays.aspx.

5.3 Differential global positioning system (DGPS) Service

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority provides a network of *DGPS radio beacons* that improve the accuracy and integrity of the 'Global Positioning System' (GPS) in critical areas of Australia's coastline. These areas include the Great Barrier Reef, Torres Strait and Brisbane.

A network of 16 stations are remotely controlled and monitored 24 hours a day. There is a DGPS station in Mackay. Details of this station can be found on the AMSA website at www.amsa.gov.au/navigation/services/dgps/.

5.4 Volunteer Marine Rescue (VMR) Whitsunday and Mackay

The regional Volunteer Marine Rescue group is based in Cannonvale, close to Airlie Beach. The volunteers man an operations base on weekends and some public holidays from 0700 to 1700. There are three radio sites each with a monitoring radio setup listening on VHF channel 16 (Airlie Beach only) and repeater channel 67, 80, 81 and 22, 2182 H/F and channel 88 on 27 MHz. Refer section 1.5.4 for contact details.

VMR (Mackay) is manned from 0800-1800 (seven days) and monitors VHF frequencies 16, 67, 80 and 21, H/F frequencies 4215 and 6215 and channel 88 on 27 MHz.

Phone/Fax: +61 7 4955 5448

Email: mackay@vmraq.org.au

VMR services are transferred to Hay Point VTS outside of the above hours.

A Queensland Water Police Service is located at Shingley Drive, Airlie Beach

Refer to section 1.5.4 for contact details.

All emergency services can be contacted by phoning 000.

5.5 Speed restrictions

Under section 81 of the [*Transport Operations \(Marine Safety\) Regulation 2016*](#) the following speed restrictions are in force:

Vessels other than personal watercraft (PWC's) must not exceed six knots within 30 metres of:

- a person in the water
- a vessel at anchor, moored or made fast to the shore or aground
- a jetty, wharf, boat ramp or pontoon in or on the waters.
- Speed limit for personal watercraft must not exceed six knots within 60 metres of:
 - a person in the water
 - a ship at anchor, moored or made fast to the shore or aground
 - a jetty, wharf, boat ramp or pontoon in or on the waters
 - the boundary of a bathing reserve
 - the shore.

A personal watercraft driver is to maintain a distance of 30 meters from other moving vessels when travelling at more than 10 knots, unless the personal watercraft is involved in an approved aquatic event.

Other restrictions for personal watercraft when operating:

A personal watercraft licence holder is to wear the "kill switch" safety lanyard when the personal watercraft is being driven by a learner driver.

A learner personal watercraft driver cannot carry passengers other than the supervising personal watercraft licence holder.

A person must not while operating a personal watercraft freestyle, surf or wave jump within 200 metres of the shore if:

- the personal watercraft is being operated in coastal waters; and
- one or more dwellings are within 100 metres of the shore and are visible from, and in the vicinity of, where the personal watercraft is being operated.

Coastal waters mean the coastal waters of the state, and include other waters within the limits of the state that are subject to the ebb and flow of the tide.

A person must not operate a ship at a speed at which the ship's wash is reasonably capable of causing:

- a marine incident; or
- damage to the shoreline.

In addition, under section 206A of the [Transport Operations \(Marine Safety\) Act 1994](#) the general manager has the authority to restrict speed as indicated by a sign.

5.6 Navigation information

The Whitsunday region is a busy traffic area in which both commercial and recreational vessels operate. There is a range of skill levels from novice to professional amongst the crews and a variety of vessel types from dinghies to large commercial ships, including cruise liners. The following procedures and guidance are to be followed by all vessels navigating in the Whitsunday region.

5.6.1 Vessels underway

All vessels are to comply with the collision regulations:

- restrictions and directions indicated by navigation marks and aids to navigation are to be complied with
- mariners should bear in mind that some vessels may be operated by persons with limited experience and knowledge so it is prudent to expect the unexpected
- fast sailing craft operate in the region so mariners should be aware of their closing speed with particular reference to 'Right of Way' under the collision regulations
- a proper lookout is to be kept at all times; consideration should be given to approaching 'blind' areas at speed and restricted visibility caused by sudden tropical rain squalls
- care should be exercised when navigating in the vicinity of fringing reefs as their extent may be greater than that shown on the chart.

5.6.2 Under keel clearance

There are many shallow areas within the controlled area of the Whitsunday region and mariners must be aware that the extent of these shallows can change due to shifting seabeds caused by weather, tides, and coral growth.

Although the passages between many of the islands have relatively deep water there are many patches that create a danger to deep draft vessels so care must be taken when navigating these areas.

The Whitsunday Passage is occasionally used by large vessels as an alternative to the outside route. The passage is approximately two miles wide at its narrowest point between Dent Island and Pine Island and has a depth of 35 to 60 metres at chart datum.

The cruise ship anchorage at Funnel Bay is draft restricted to vessels drawing no more than about eight metres except in the NE corner of the anchorage where such vessels can remain outside the 10 metre contour.

The northern entrance to the Fitzalan cruise ship anchorage has a 9.9 metre patch, that in normal circumstances, should not present a problem to vessels transiting this passage. (See section 4.3).

5.6.3 Specific problem areas

5.6.3.1 Pioneer Rocks (20° 13'S 148° 45'E)

The development of marinas at Abel Point and Muddy Bay has increased traffic levels significantly in the area between Pioneer Rocks and Pioneer Point. Care must be exercised when navigating in this confined area with vessels allowing sufficient sea room for safe passing.

Local traffic should be aware that large cruise vessels occasionally anchor in Funnel Bay and tender their passengers to Abel Point Marina. Passenger tenders are to be given a wide berth.

5.6.3.2 Unsafe Passage

Unsafe Passage lies between North Molle Island and Mid Molle Island. The passage is approximately one cable wide and is only suitable for small vessels. The passage is regularly used by the inter-island ferries and caution is necessary to avoid a passing situation in the passage due to its narrowness. A set of leading beacons/lights on NE Daydream Island marks the centre of the passage on a bearing of 240.5° (T).

5.6.3.3 Plum Pudding Island

South and east of Henning Island lies Plum Pudding Island. The island is surrounded by a reef and there is no passage between the two islands due to extensive shoal water. There are no navigation marks to rely on so care should be taken when passing through this area when making a northerly approach into Dent Passage.

5.6.3.4 Roma Point

When making the approach to Shute Harbour care must be taken not to use the harbour leading beacons/lights (261°/081°T) when east of Roma Point as the reef extends a long way south of this point, over the leading line.

5.6.3.5 Whitsunday Passage

A local magnetic anomaly is reported to occur near the middle of the Whitsunday Passage where compass deflections of 4° to 7° either east or west may be experienced.

5.6.3.6 Surprise Rock

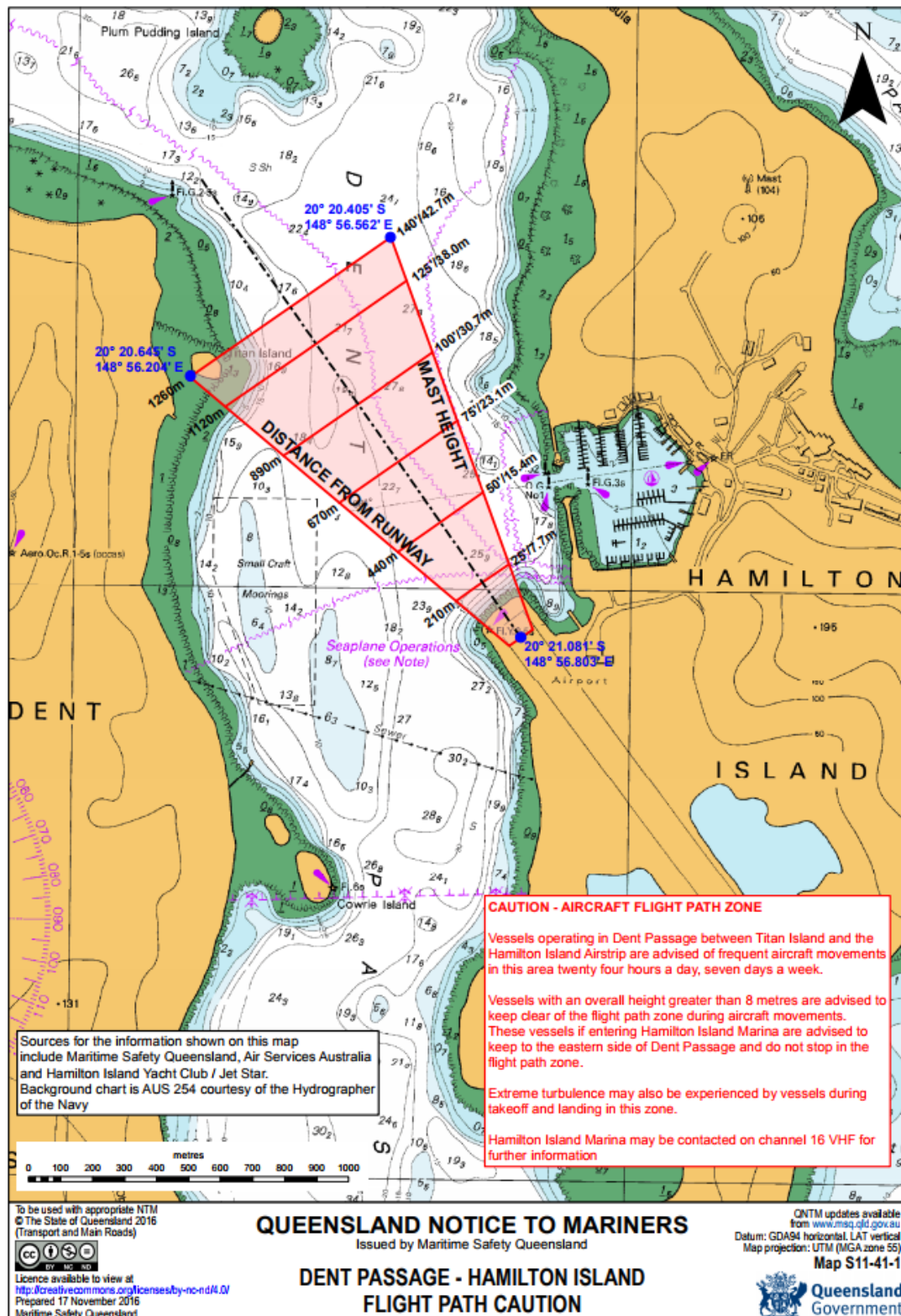
When making for Whitsunday Island from the south and east mariners should be aware of Surprise Rock in approximate position 20° 21.3'S 149° 01.6'E. The shoal is marked by an isolated danger mark showing a light flashing W 2 6 secs. Currents near the shoal can be up to two knots north or south.

5.6.3.7 Hamilton Harbour

Vessels operating in Dent Passage between Titan Island and the Hamilton Island airstrip are advised that there are frequent aircraft movements in this area 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Vessels with an overall height greater than eight metres are advised to

keep clear of the flight path zone during aircraft movements. These vessels if entering Hamilton Island marina are advised to keep to the eastern side of Dent passage and are not to stop in the aircraft zone (refer attached chartlet).

This restriction also applies to the southern end of the runway in Driftwood Bay.



5.7 Aids to navigation

Maritime Safety Queensland is responsible for the placement and upkeep of aids to navigation in coastal areas within the Whitsunday region. Reports of failures to aids to navigation in this area should be made to Hay Point VTS either by VHF Channel 16, or telephone 1300 645 022. AMSA has some responsibility for navigational aids that are used by SOLAS compliant vessels — DGPS network, some buoys, beacons and lights.

5.7.1 Radio and electronic aids

Position accuracy using electronic methods can exceed the accuracy of some charts so care must be taken when position fixing. Good practice dictates that more than one method of position fixing should be used.

5.7.2 GPS

GPS fixes positions relative to the earth's WGS84 datum giving an accuracy of +/- 20 metres to 30 metres for about 95% of the time. The remaining 5% could, however, give errors up to +/- 300 metres so care needs to be exercised when using GPS in the vicinity of reefs and islands.

5.7.3 DGPS

Although DGPS provides for more accuracy (+/- 10 metres) than GPS it must be remembered that DGPS is still reliant on supply of a signal so it should not be used solely for navigation when operating in amongst reefs and islands. DGPS coverage in the region comes from the Mackay DGPS station. Information for this station can be found on the [AMSA website](#).

5.7.4 ARPA

It should be remembered that the collision regulations are based on headings not course made good, so information gained from ARPA plots can be misleading with regard to headings when operating in strong currents and tidal streams, particularly at slow speeds.

5.7.5 Electronic Charts

When using some electronic charts mariners should be aware that the same source data limitations may apply as for paper charts. Only electronic navigational charts (ENC's) recognised by a national authority or equivalent meet the criteria for compulsory carriage under SOLAS and the [Navigation Act 2012](#).

5.8 Anchoring

It is an offence to damage coral within the marine park. Care must be taken when anchoring, where allowed, to minimise this damage. Anchor away from corals, allow sufficient room for swinging and be aware of wind anomalies.

When at anchor the appropriate daytime/night time shapes and/or lights are to be displayed.

5.8.1 ‘No anchoring’ areas

NPWS have established a number of prohibited anchoring areas that are controlled by statute and are marked by reef protection markers (pyramid shaped buoys with blue labels). These areas are defined as follows:

Hook Island	East and West Butterfly Bay Maureen’s Cove Luncheon Bay Pinnacle Bay North and South Stonehaven Bay False Nara Inlet Manta Ray Bay (no markers)
Hayman Island	Blue Pearl Bay
Border Island	Cateran Bay
Daydream Island	Sunlovers Bay
Langford Reef	
Bait Reef	(parts of — (no markers))

Full details of these areas should be accessed on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority [website](#).

5.9 Buoy moorings

Buoy moorings have been established throughout the area in three categories:

- public moorings
- privately owned moorings
- dedicated use moorings.

Full details are available on the [GBRMPA website](#).

Information on buoy mooring applications managed by Maritime Safety Queensland may be accessed on their [website](#).