

8. Pilotage

8.1 General

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
- a ship whose master is directed by the Regional Harbour Master to use the services of a pilot

The [Townsville pilotage area](#) (section 16.1) is described in Schedule 2 of the [Transport Operations \(Marine Safety\) Regulation 2016](#) as the area of:

- a) Waters bounded by an imaginary line:
 - starting at the highwater mark on the northern extremity of Cape Cleveland
 - then in a north-westerly direction to the position of latitude 19° 04.909'S, longitude 146° 52.07'E
 - then west to latitude 19° 04.909'S, longitude 146° 45.07'E
 - then south to the highwater mark on the mainland at longitude 146° 45.07'E
 - then by the highwater mark along the shoreline of the mainland to the starting point; and
- b) The navigable waters of rivers and creeks flowing, directly or indirectly, into the waters referred to in paragraph a).

The Townsville compulsory pilotage area (section 16.2) is described in Schedule 3 of the [Transport Operations \(Marine Safety\) Regulation 2016](#) as the area of:

- a) Waters bounded by an imaginary line:
 - starting at the high-water mark on the northern extremity of Cape Cleveland
 - then in a south-westerly direction to latitude 19° 13.599' south, longitude 146° 54.300' east
 - then west to latitude 19° 13.539' south, longitude 146° 51.450' east
 - then in a north-easterly direction to latitude 19° 11.789' south, longitude 146° 52.750' east
 - then in a north-easterly direction to latitude 19° 06.949' south, longitude 146° 55.050' east
 - then in a north-westerly direction to latitude 19° 04.909' south, longitude 146° 52.070' east
 - then west to latitude 19° 04.909' south, longitude 146° 45.070' east
 - then south to the high-water mark on the mainland at longitude 146° 45.070' east
 - then by the high-water mark along the shoreline of the mainland to the starting point; and
- b) the navigable waters of rivers and creeks flowing, directly or indirectly, into the waters referred to in paragraph a).

Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994 section 99

A person must not navigate a ship in a compulsory pilotage area unless the person uses the services of a pilot.

Maximum penalty – 200 penalty units

8.2 Night pilotage

The Port of Townsville is open for pilotage ship movements 24 hours a day.

8.3 Request for pilot

The requirements of the [Transport Operations \(Marine Safety\) Regulation 2016](#) shall be observed for all bookings. Port of Townsville provides a pilotage service for ship arrivals, departures and removals. All pilot transfers are carried out by pilot launch. Requests for pilotage services are described in [QSHIPS \(Queensland Shipping Information Planning System\)](#) booking procedures.

8.3.1 Notice required

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

Arrivals 48 hours.

Removals 24 hours.

Departures 24 hours.

Initial notification should be made via the [QSHIPS](#) website.

8.4 Pilot boarding place (Ground)

Pilots will board all ships at Pilot boarding place “Alpha”

Latitude: 19° 06·00’S longitude: 146° 54·15’E

All ships taking a pilot must proceed to a position 2 nautical miles north of pilot boarding place “Alpha” and stop and await instructions for boarding”

Tug and Tow combinations

Pilot will board Tug and barge combinations bound for Port of Townsville, Ross Creek or Townsville Marine Precinct at Pilot boarding place “TT”

Latitude: 19° 13·35’S longitude: 146° 51·93’E

All tug and tow combinations and ships approved by the Harbour Master to take a pilot at Pilot boarding Place "TT" must

- not enter the Sea or Platypus channel. Vessels must chart courses to navigate well clear (at least 0.5nm) and
- have anchors ready for deployment throughout the transit of the Pilotage area.

8.4.1 Pilot Transfers

Pilot transfer instructions will be given by Townsville VTS to the ship prior to pilot boarding.

The instructions shall include:

- Pilot boarding time

- Restrictions/Requirements (by the Regional Harbour Master)
- Boarding position (Alpha)

Pilot transfer instructions from the Pilot vessel may be given to the ship if the Pilot determines the requirement to do so and may include:

- Desired course and speed to conduct the transfer
- Stopping of Engines, etc

Ships must proceed to the appropriate pilot boarding place at the notified time of pilot boarding as instructed by Townsville VTS.

At time of pilot boarding all preparations shall be completed in accordance with the instructions in this section.

Boarding and disembarkation is generally undertaken with the ship underway

- Proceeding at a Safe speed, and
- Providing a good lee.

The Pilot ladder must be rigged in accordance with International Regulations,

- 1.5 metres above the water, and
- With two Man ropes, and
- A heaving line standing by, and
- At night, a forward facing light is required to illuminate the ladder in accordance with IMO requirements and IMPA recommendations, [Pilot Ladder](#).
- If the ship has freeboard of 9 metres or greater, a combination ladder must be rigged.

8.4.2 Pilot boat

The pilot boat has the word pilots painted in black on either side of the main superstructure.

By day – a flag, the upper horizontal half of which is white and lower half red.

By night – the signals prescribed in the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea (Colregs) for a power driven pilot vessel on pilotage duties.

8.4.3 Pilot Transfer arrangements

All preparations shall be completed prior to the pilot boarding time; in accordance with the instructions in this section

Ships pilot ladders must comply with the requirements of SOLAS CH V – Regulation 23 – Pilot Transfer Arrangements Resolution A.1045(27).

Ships must complete the Pilot Ladder Checklist (see Section 16.22). The checklist must be submitted port duty officer and VTS Townsville at least 24 hours prior to arrival.

Reference should also be made to [Marine Notice 04/2023 Pilot transfer arrangements](#) and [Pilot Boarding Ladder Arrangement](#)

8.5 Passage planning – bridge resource management (BRM)

The master and pilot should exchange information regarding navigational procedures, local conditions and rules and the ship's characteristics. The proposed manoeuvres should be discussed with the master before commencing the pilotage. This information should include at least:

- the presentation of a completed standard pilot card (by ship). In addition, information should be provided on rate of turn at different speeds, turning circles, stopping distances and, if available other appropriate data;
- general agreement on [plans](#) and procedures including contingency plans for the anticipated passage;
- discussion of any special conditions such as weather, depth of water, tidal currents and marine traffic that may be expected during the passage;
- discussion of any unusual ship-handling characteristics, machinery difficulties, navigational equipment problems or crew limitations that could affect the operation, handling or safe manoeuvring of the ship;
- information on berthing arrangements; use, characteristics and numbers of tugs, mooring boats and other external facilities;
- information on mooring arrangements; and
- confirmation of the language to be used on the bridge.

Any 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.

8.6 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 regulation, 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.

8.6.1 Fatigue management

Port of Townsville provides professional pilotage services for the Port of Townsville on a 24 hour basis but is not an 'on-demand' service. A Pilot Fatigue Management Plan is followed to ensure that adequately rested pilots are assigned to ships

Safety and fatigue is managed efficiently across a number of services providers, including pilots and tugs by developing a set of guidelines for schedule changes between 2200 hours and 0600 hours.

In essence, arrival (POB berthing) and departure times cannot be brought ahead between 2200 hours and 0600 hours with final notification of changes to be made by 2130 hours daily.

VTS/Port are aware of the need to expedite vessels port stays and where able we will work with the agents to facilitate changes depending on other port movements throughout the night, however proposed guidelines are as follows.

Changes to schedule between 2200 hours and 0600 hours.

- Change for shipping for the period 2200 hrs to 0600 hrs must be communicated to VTS by 2130 hrs (by telephone).
- Departures - Between 2200 Hrs & 0600 hrs departure may not be brought forward is 0600 hrs.
- Departure – Ships may be pushed back once between 2200 and 0600
- Arrivals - Between 2200 Hrs & 0800 hrs arrivals cannot be brought forward.
- Changeover (Vessel scheduled to berth after a vessel

- Exception: The port reserves the right to ask a delayed vessel to sail once it has completed cargo operations between 2200 & 0600 hrs. 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.

8.6.2 Alcohol consumption

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 Townsville, or about to depart. Severe penalties apply for infringements.

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

A person must hold a pilot licence with a pilotage area endorsement (relevant to the pilotage area of operation) in order to have the conduct of a ship within the pilotage area for Townsville. The master of a ship may hold an exemption from pilotage licence with a pilotage area endorsement.

8.7.1 Examination for exemption from pilotage

The standards for licensing and training marine pilots have been included in state legislation. A copy of the document, Licensing and Training of Marine Pilots in Queensland, is available upon request through Maritime Safety Queensland bases.

The examination will consist of written and oral components. 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 and an assessment to determine the candidate's ability to safely conduct the navigation of a ship without a pilot whilst within the pilotage area.

8.7.2 Pre-requisites for issue of exemption from pilotage

Exemption from pilotage licenses will be issued as per Maritime Safety Queensland Guideline for Issuing Exemptions from Pilotage.

Tankers – exemption from pilotage licenses will not be issued for tankers over 185 metres overall length.

8.7.3 Cancellation of licenses

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

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

All merchant vessels 70 metres 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.