

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:

- All Australian registered ships 50 metres overall length and over unless a current pilotage exemption certificate is held. Foreign flag vessels of 35 metres and over will be individually assessed, all foreign flag vessels of 50 metres and over are required to take a licensed pilot.
- 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.

8.1.1 Night pilotage

The port of Karumba is open for pilotage and exempt ship movements 24 hours per day, excluding livestock vessels. Any foreign flagged vessel greater than 35 metres overall length entering Karumba for the first time will be assessed during a daylight transit of the channel.

8.1.2 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. All pilot transfers are carried out by pilot launch.

Requests for pilotage services are described in QSHIPS booking procedures.

8.1.3 Notice required

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

Arrivals 72 hours

Removals 72 hours

Departures 72 hours

Initial notification should be made via the QSHIPS website.

8.1.4 Personal Pilot Unit (PPU)

It is mandatory for pilots to use a PPU on all vessels.

8.2 Pilotage area

See [4.2 – Pilotage area](#)

8.2.1 Pilot boarding place

Two Pilot Boarding positions are utilised for the Port of Karumba.

Table 7 – Pilot boarding places

Pilot Boarding Place	Lat/Long	Description
Alpha	17° 22·3' S; 140° 40·4' E	4.20nm bearing 320° from the entrance beacons. PBG Alpha is to be used by all vessels wishing to embark/disembark a pilot.
Bravo	17° 24·9'S; 140° 42·6'E	approximately one nautical mile north-west of the Entrance Channel (beacon number 2). Vessels wishing to use PBG Bravo to embark/disembark a pilot can do so only at the allocated pilot's discretion if adverse weather is being experienced, which will endanger the safety of pilot boarding operations. Approval is to be sought from the Regional Harbour Master (Cairns).

8.2.2 Pilot boarding arrangements

Pilot transfer instructions will be advised to the ship prior to the pilot boarding by Karumba Harbour.

The instructions may include:

- pilot boarding time
- restrictions/requirements (by the Regional Harbour Master)
- boarding position.

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.

Ships should be underway,

- proceeding at six knots and
- providing a good lee.

The pilot ladder is to be rigged on the lee side

- 1.5 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 see [Pilot Boarding Ladder Arrangement](#) and [Pilot transfer arrangements – Marine Notice 04/2023](#).
- If the ship has freeboard of 9 metres or greater, a combination ladder must be rigged.

8.2.3 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](#).

8.2.4 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
- 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](#).

8.2.5 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 Cairns 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 reporting requirements for Torres Strait and Great Barrier Reef (GBR)

All merchant vessels 70m 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 Northeast 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 12.2m; vessels with a draft greater than 10m will be advised of the required tidal window by the pilotage company.

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