



Marine Notice 4/2016
Supersedes 17/2013

Emergency Towing Capability

Purpose

The purpose of this Marine Notice is to remind owners, masters and agents of ships of their responsibilities in regard to reporting and resolving maritime incidents. It also serves as a reminder to owners, masters and agents that costs incurred by AMSA in the event of an intervention in a maritime incident may be recovered from the vessel's owners.

Maritime Emergency Response Commander

The MERCOM is an AMSA officer responsible for coordinating and managing serious maritime incidents who is vested with powers under the *Protection of the Sea (Powers of Intervention) Act 1981* (the Powers of Intervention Act).

Powers of Intervention

The Powers of Intervention Act gives the MERCOM powers to intervene in a maritime casualty on the high seas in order to protect Australia's coastline from a grave and imminent danger of pollution, and more general, within waters landward of the outer boundary of Australia's exclusive economic zone when pollution has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.

In each situation the MERCOM can take measures necessary to prevent or reduce the extent of pollution or other damage, including the issue of Directions. Intervention Directions can be given to all ships including recreational, fishing and trading vessels.

The Powers of Intervention Act also enables the MERCOM to designate a place or facility as a place of refuge.

Emergency Towing

[National Plan for Maritime Environmental Emergencies](#) provides for a minimum level of emergency towing capability around Australia aimed at protecting the marine environment.

The Australian Government has implemented a three-tiered approach to the provision of emergency towing:

Level 1 – a dedicated 82 tonne bollard pull emergency towing and response vessel, *Coral Knight*, provides emergency towing and first response capability in the northern Great Barrier Reef (north of Mourilyan) and Torres Strait (see the ETC regions map).

Level 2 – suitable harbour towing vessels have been contracted by AMSA to be available in the event of a shipping incident in other regions of coast (see the ETC regions map).

Level 3 – suitable 'vessels of opportunity' in the vicinity of a casualty (in port or at sea), which can be directed by the MERCOM to provide assistance.

The Level 2 emergency towing capability is available for use by the shipping industry and other parties under ordinary commercial arrangements, consistent with current practice for commercial provision of emergency towing services based on port or other industry availability.

Owner and Master Responsibilities

Owners and masters of ships are encouraged to resolve shipping incidents on a commercial basis with a salvage or towage provider. Intervention Directions will be issued by the MERCOM where owners and masters of ships involved in maritime incidents are not taking timely actions consistent with Australia's national interest.

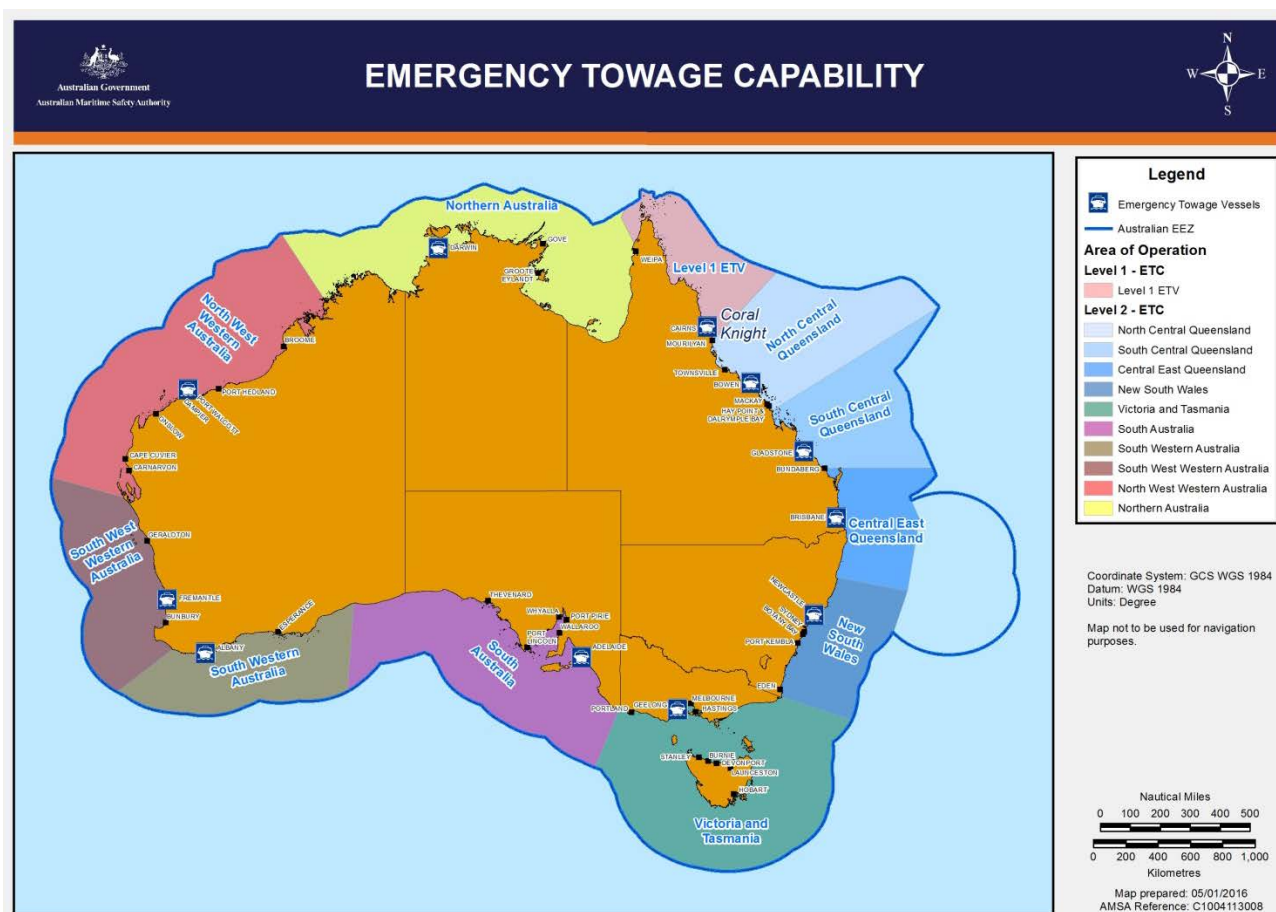
Reporting Requirements

Owners and masters of ships are reminded of their obligation to report maritime incidents and accidents to AMSA at the earliest opportunity to ensure action can be considered and taken to prevent a potential casualty.

In accordance with IMO Resolution A.950(23) 2003 Australia has implemented a maritime assistance service. The nominated Australian point of contact is [AMSA's Rescue Coordination Centre \(JRCC Australia\)](http://www.amsa.gov.au)

Should the shipowner delay taking action, including mobilising an emergency towage vessel when required, the MERCOM may direct emergency towage vessels to provide actual assistance or to 'stand-by' when there is a sufficiently high risk of damage. The costs of such actions will be recovered from the shipowner.

Further information on the National Plan for Maritime Environmental Emergencies is available on the AMSA website at: <http://www.amsa.gov.au/environment/index.asp>



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