

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 121
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Agency
Programme: Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)
Topic: Mandatory pilotage
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Question Type: Spoken

Senator Rice asked:

Senator RICE: So you are not currently doing any work as to whether the area should be expanded? Looking at the statistics, there seem to be two areas where significant groundings have occurred over the last 15 years, both outside the mandatory pilotage areas: Gladstone and Mourilyan. I am interested in whether you are currently doing work on looking at those areas outside the current mandatory pilotage areas.

Dr Reichelt: I am not aware of anything right at the minute. As I say, I understood it was fully reviewed about 12 months ago, but I should check that I am correct in that, I think.

Senator RICE: Okay, get back to us as to whether you are doing any work looking at the necessity to expand the areas.

Dr Reichelt: Yes, or what other parts of government are doing that. The pilotage is legislated under the marine park act but policed principally by AMSA and the vessel traffic service. It is a joint arrangement.

Answer:

As part of the assessment work to inform the development of the North-East Shipping Management Plan (2014), the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) engaged the company Det Norske Veritas Australia Pty Ltd (DNV) to estimate the risk of shipping incidents, mainly due to collisions and groundings, in the Great Barrier Reef, Torres Strait and Coral Sea region.

The risk assessment concluded that while the incidence of large commercial vessel groundings is very low, current risk mitigation measures in the region reduce incident risk by around 38 per cent. On the basis of the risk modelling results, DNV added that of the possible options to further reduce risk as traffic levels increase, the extension of the pilotage geographical area and/or measures to improve the effectiveness of pilotage, such as fatigue management, would be one of the most effective.

To improve protective measures for navigation safety, the North-East Shipping Management Plan makes two recommendations that are directly related to pilotage areas:

1. Taking into account predictions of traffic density, existing aids to navigation and risk, AMSA and MSQ to investigate the benefits of mandatory pilotage for the areas of the upper middle Inner Route of the Great Barrier Reef by 2020.
2. AMSA to work with pilotage providers to consider the implications of voluntary pilotage in the southern area of the Great Barrier Reef.

AMSA is currently progressing recommendations of the North-East Shipping Management Plan and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority will be consulted through relevant working groups.