

MSQ Reef VTS Direction 06/2020

COVID-19 Threat – vessels transiting Reef and Torres Straits

Issued 05 March 2020

Background

In light of Australia's escalated response to the current threat of the COVID-19, I have directed that Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) adopt a proactive stance in managing the risks associated with incoming shipping to Queensland's ports.

Direction

Effective immediately, Queensland's Reef Vessel Traffic Services (REEFVTS) will require all foreign trading ships that are inbound to the Torres Strait, Hydrographers Passage, Whitsundays Pilotage areas are to provide the following information until further notice:

- 1) **Report whether the vessel has visited mainland China or South Korea in the past 14 days.**
- 2) **Report if any Crew Member or passenger has visited Mainland China or South Korea in the past 14 days.**
- 3) **Report if any Crew Member or passenger is showing any of the Novel Coronavirus symptoms that include fever, flu-like symptoms cough, sore throat, headache or difficulty breathing.**

If answers to all the above questions is **NO**, the Vessel will be free to proceed under pilotage. There is no need to advise the pilotage company, however confirmation can be given if requested to the pilot launch or helicopter prior to pilot boarding.

If the answer is **YES** to Question 1 and/or 2, VTS is to advise the pilotage company immediately.

If the answer is **YES** Question 3 VTS is to advise the RHM who will make the appropriate notifications to State and Federal agencies for further advice. Any such vessels may be directed to remain outside of the Compulsory Pilotage Area until assessed and cleared by appropriate government qualified personnel.

In the case of vessels entering the reporting area via Swain and Sandy Cape, Reef VTS may either communicate with the ship via Inmarsat C or wait until VHF comms are satisfactory. If there is no response from a vessel entering IVO Swain Is then this will form part of the vessel handover/takeover procedure with Gladstone VTS.

If in the event of a ship being non-compliant by

- a) not providing a Pre entry report, or
- b) not providing answers to the questions

the vessel is to be directed to remain outside the Pilotage area until such time as the above questions have been answered.

If in the situation arises where Reef VTS are unable to contact the vessel prior to pilot boarding, Reef VTS will notify the pilotage company advising that Reef VTS has attempted to contact the vessel but were unsuccessful and requesting the pilot company to communicate directly with the vessel.

VTS is to record the number of vessels vetted with identifying the result of the questioning. A report from each VTS centre is to be provided to Townsville VTS centre every 12 hours at 0400 and 1600 daily. Townsville VTS is to submit collated reports to the General Manager MSQ by 0430 and 1630 daily.

If in the event a member of the public or boating community contact VTS regarding any response from a vessel they are to respond *with "MSQ will make the appropriate notifications to State and Federal agencies for further advice"*.

These precautionary measures are consistent with Queensland Health's posture on the need to minimise risk across the state. Queensland's Regional Harbour Masters can be contacted for further advice or information as required.

This direction is subject to change based on advice provided by the Australian Department of Health
This direction will remain in effect until further notice.