Ballast water management for international vessels

On 8 September 2017, the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships’ Ballast Water and Sediments (the Convention) will enter into force internationally.

From this date, all vessels are required to manage their ballast water and sediments in accordance with the Convention and Biosecurity Act 2015.


New requirements

Management plans and certification

From 8 September 2017, all internationally operating vessels entering Australia will require an:

• approved Ballast Water Management Plan
• International Ballast Water Management Certificate.

These documents must be in the form prescribed by the Convention.

Case by case exemptions from the requirement to obtain certification, or meet the D-2 discharge standard apply in some circumstances. See agriculture.gov.au/ballast for more information.

Management of Australian-sourced ballast water

Approved methods of ballast water management

From 8 September 2017, Australian-sourced ballast water must be managed by an approved method prior to discharge in a subsequent Australian port. Approved methods include:

• ballast water exchange
• use of an International Maritime Organization type approved ballast water treatment system
• discharge to a ballast water reception facility
• on-board conversion of sea water to potable water for use as ballast
• retention (sometime known as tank-to-tank transfers).

Exceptions to ballast water management

Vessels do not need to use an approved method of ballast water management if all ballast water in a tank is:

• taken up on high seas
• taken up and discharged in the same place (within port limits)
• taken up and discharged within a declared same risk area
• covered by a low risk exemption (this applies to international vessels managing Australian-sourced ballast water between specific ports where ballast transfer is determined to be low risk).

Vessel operators can apply for low risk exemptions using the Australian Sourced Ballast Application, or by updating their existing ballast water report, in the Maritime Arrival Reporting System (MARS).

Register your vessel, and learn more about MARS from August 2017 at agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/avm/vessel/mars

**Ballast water reporting**

There is no change to the way an international vessel provides a pre-arrival report on their ballast water (through the ballast water report application in MARS).

Ballast water reports should:
• be submitted no later than 12 hours before a vessel intends to discharge ballast water
• contain a forward itinerary of subsequent Australian ports where known.

Where the vessel continues their voyage to a subsequent port within Australia, the vessel’s operator may report any Australian-sourced ballast water operations through the ballast water report in MARS.

**Ballast water exchange**

Vessel masters who cannot comply with the following requirements should phone the Maritime National Coordination Centre on 1300 004 605 for advice. Failure to do so before discharging ballast water may result in civil penalties for the operator of the vessel.

**Where to exchange international water**

Vessels carrying internationally sourced ballast water must conduct ballast water exchanges as far as possible from the nearest land, which is:
• at least 12 nautical miles from the nearest land, and in water greater than 50 metres deep
• where possible, more than 200 nautical miles from the nearest land and in water greater than 200 metres deep.

**Where to exchange Australian-sourced ballast water**

Vessels carrying Australian-sourced ballast water must conduct ballast water exchanges:
• at least 12 nautical miles from the nearest land, and in water greater than 50 metres deep.

**Ballast water must not be discharged or exchanged in:**
• Ningaloo Marine Reserve, Western Australia
• Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Queensland

Please see the Australian Ballast Water Management Requirements Version 7 (agriculture.gov.au/ballast) for exchange requirements when operating between ports in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park area.

**Ensuring compliance**

Biosecurity officers will conduct inspections to ensure compliance with Australian domestic ballast water regulations.