Ballast water management exemptions in Australia

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, the Biosecurity Act 2015 introduces new ballast water management requirements for vessels operating in Australia.

In general, vessels are required to:
- manage ballast water prior to arrival in Australian waters, and between Australian ports
- carry a ballast water management plan, ballast water management certificate and maintain ballast water records.

Vessels may also be required to install an International Maritime Organization (IMO) approved ballast water management system to meet the D-2 discharge standard of the Convention.

For more information, see the complete Australian Ballast Water Management Requirements, available from agriculture.gov.au/abwmr

Exemptions are available for some vessels

Some vessels may be eligible for exemptions from Australia’s requirements. These include general exemptions which do not require an application, and case by case exemptions for vessels operating solely in Australian waters.

General exemptions – no application necessary

Vessels exempt from meeting D-2 discharge standard, and from having a ballast water management plan or certificate
- vessels that do not use ballast water to control trim, stability or list
- vessels with sealed tanks.

Vessels that are exempt from meeting D-2 discharge standard
- vessels that use only potable water and operate solely in Australian waters
- vessels that only uptake and discharge ballast water in the same place (within port limits, or within 1 nautical mile of uptake location)
- dumb barges with no power source.

Vessels exempt from having a ballast water management plan or certificate
- recreational vessels weighing less than 400 gross tonnes.
Case by case exemptions

Case by case exemptions for some requirements are available upon application for vessels operating solely within Australian waters.

**Exemption from meeting the D-2 discharge standard**

Applications for exemptions from the D-2 discharge standard will be considered for the following vessels:

- floating platforms, Floating Storage Units and Floating Production, Storage and Offloading Units operating exclusively in Australian waters
- vessels unable to retrofit a ballast water management system based on legitimate design restrictions
- fishing vessels which use anti-healing tanks and only source ballast water outside 12 nautical miles from nearest land
- recreational or search and rescue vessels less than 50 metres in length with less than 8 cubic metres of ballast.

If the exemption is approved, the vessel will not be required to install an IMO approved ballast water management system.

An exemption will only be required from the time the vessel would have otherwise needed to meet the D-2 discharge standard under the Convention. For most vessels, this is September 2019 at the earliest.

**Exemption from carrying a ballast water management plan or certificate**

Vessels may apply for an exemption from having a ballast water management plan and/or certificate where equivalent measures for biosecurity and safety can be demonstrated. Applications will be considered for vessels that:

- weigh less than 400 gross tonnes
- only use potable water as ballast, and only discharge for the purpose of scheduled maintenance, dry-docking or emergency
- are fishing vessels that use anti-healing tanks and only source ballast water outside 12 nautical miles from nearest land
- are dumb barges with no power source
- are recreational, or search and rescue vessels, less than 50 metres in length, with less than 8 cubic metres of ballast.

**Applying for an exemption**

To apply for either of these exemptions, download the application form from agriculture.gov.au/ballast and email to pestsmarine@agriculture.gov.au

**Low risk management exemptions**

Vessels may be eligible for exemptions from managing Australian sourced ballast water between specific ports, where the ballast transfer has been determined to be low risk.

From 8 September 2017, a vessel’s operator may apply for a low risk exemption using the Australian Sourced Ballast Application in the Maritime Arrivals Reporting System (MARS).

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

You can check whether you may be eligible for a low risk exemption by using the Quick Domestic Ballast Water Risk Assessment Tool available at agriculture.gov.au/ballast

**More information**

**Companion fact sheets**

- Ballast water management for vessels travelling within Australia
- Ballast water management for international vessels

**Exemption criteria**

Email pestsmarine@agriculture.gov.au or phone the Maritime National Coordination Centre on 1300 004 605