



Australian biofouling management requirements for non-commercial vessels

Version 1



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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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Introduction

The Australian biofouling management requirements for non-commercial vessels set out vessel operator obligations for the management of biofouling when operating non-commercial vessels under biosecurity control within Australian territorial seas. These requirements apply to all operators of non-commercial vessels subject to biosecurity control and provide guidance for non-commercial vessel operators on best practice biofouling management. Vessel operators are eligible for a more streamlined inspection for biofouling if they meet at least one of three available proactive biofouling management options.

The department's powers to manage biosecurity risk associated with biofouling are contained in the [Biosecurity Act 2015](#) (the Biosecurity Act) and associated legislation.

Biosecurity risk of vessels is managed through pre-arrival reporting, on-arrival assessment and inspection of vessels subject to biosecurity control. Under the Biosecurity Act, vessels become subject to biosecurity control upon entering Australian territorial seas.

Biofouling occurs when organisms attach and grow on the submerged parts of a vessel. Vessel biofouling is a major pathway for the introduction of marine pests into Australian waters. Once introduced they can spread, threaten marine habitats, and have adverse economic and health effects, including to Australia's fisheries. Visit [Biofouling in Australia](#) for an overview of biofouling and the importance of proactive biofouling management.

Some Australian state and territory legislation relates to the management of biofouling. Please check the relevant state and territory requirements to ensure compliance.

1 Mandatory pre-arrival reporting requirements

All non-commercial vessel operators must provide information about biofouling management in a [pre-arrival report \(PAR\)](#) prior to arrival in Australian waters.

Vessel operators must report if they can demonstrate compliance with any of the following three proactive biofouling management options:

- 1) biofouling management plan
- 2) cleaned all biofouling prior to arrival in Australian territory, or
- 3) alternative biofouling management method that has been approved by the department.

Vessel operators are eligible for less intervention for biofouling if they meet one of the 3 proactive biofouling management options.

Vessel operators are also required to report if they intend to in-water clean in Australian waters and to update their pre-arrival report if that intention changes. Note: In-water cleaning requirements may apply.

Proactive biofouling management options

A vessel operator that reports they have implemented a proactive biofouling management option must be able to satisfy the required documentary evidence in this section.

Option 1: Biofouling management plan

If you report that the vessel has implemented an effective biofouling management plan, the following documents must be available on request:

- Biofouling management plan (BFMP) that meets the minimum standards set out in [Appendix A](#).
- Biofouling record book (BFRB) that meets the minimum standards set out in [Appendix A](#).

The BFMP and BFRB must meet the departments minimum standards to satisfy the requirements of option 1.

Option 2: Cleaning prior to arrival in Australian Territory

If you report that the vessel has been cleaned of all biofouling (including niche areas) within an approved timeframe:

- within 30 days prior to entering Australia, or
- not been stationary within 12nm of land for a cumulative period of 15 or more days since cleaning occurred); then

the following documents must be available on request:

- cleaning report including supporting photographs and/or video that meets the minimum standard set out in [Appendix B](#).

A cleaning report and supporting evidence must meet the department's minimum standards to satisfy the requirements of proactive biofouling management option 2.

Option 3: Alternative biofouling management method approved by the department

If you report that the vessel has an alternative biofouling management method that has been approved by the department, the following documents must be available on request:

- department issued written approval, specific to the vessel and voyage
- any required documents as specified in the department issued approval.

Approval of the alternative biofouling management method must be obtained from the department prior to arrival to meet the requirements of proactive biofouling management option 3.

Obtaining approval

The department will consider applications for an alternative biofouling management method if the vessel operator can provide:

- a proposed alternative method that appropriately manages the biosecurity risk associated with the vessel's biofouling
- sufficient evidence to substantiate the proposal.

Applications for an alternative biofouling management method must include:

- a completed and signed application form
- the most recent in-water inspection and cleaning reports
- evidence to support your application.

The application must be submitted to marinepests@aff.gov.au no later than 30 days prior to arrival in Australian territorial seas. The department may request further information to process the application. Email marinepests@aff.gov.au to obtain an application form.

Vessel operators unable to demonstrate proactive management

A vessel operator that cannot demonstrate proactive biofouling management practices using one of the 3 accepted management options will be subject to additional questions during inspection to help identify potential biosecurity risks.

In-water cleaning in Australian waters

The approval process to conduct in-water cleaning or treatment in Australia is complex. The application process varies between jurisdictions and can involve multiple government agencies and port authorities who consider the biosecurity risks and impacts the activity will have on the environment.

To request permission to clean your vessel in Australian state or territory waters, contact the relevant authorities. It is important you give authorities sufficient time to consider your request before your proposed cleaning activity. Some Australian state and territory governments have separate legislation relating to the in-water removal and disposal of biofouling. Ensure you check with the relevant state and territories. See [Biofouling in Australia](#) for contacts or more information.

Commercial vessels

For information relating to biofouling management for commercial vessels arriving in Australia see the [Australian biofouling management requirements for commercial vessels](#).

2 Inspection on arrival

Biosecurity officers will conduct an inspection of your vessel to assess and manage potential biosecurity risks. As part of the inspection, a biosecurity officer will verify that the proactive biofouling management options recorded in the pre-arrival report have been implemented. Biosecurity officers may ask questions and inspect documents to confirm the effectiveness of the management practices. If the biosecurity officer determines that the vessel's biofouling has not been managed in accordance with these requirements, they may ask additional questions about the vessel's biofouling management during the inspection. This will require vessel operators to provide information on biofouling management actions for biosecurity officers to assess the biofouling related biosecurity risk the vessel presents. See [Fees and charges](#) for information about inspection fees which apply.

In some cases, the department may also conduct inspections of vessels' submerged hull and niche areas to inform assessments of whether the vessel presents an unacceptable biosecurity risk associated with biofouling and may take necessary actions to address these risks.

Appendix A: Minimum standards for BFMP

To satisfy the requirements for proactive biofouling management [option 1](#), an effective biofouling management plan must meet the department's minimum standards.

The minimum standards define the necessary information to be included in the biofouling management plan to ensure the vessel operator can demonstrate proactive management of biofouling for its whole in-service period (i.e. period of time between successive haul-outs). It is recommended that the biofouling management plan is tailored for your vessel, including additional information as required.

Visit [Biofouling in Australia](#) for more information.

Biofouling management plan – minimum standards

Vessel particulars

The biofouling management plan must be vessel specific. The vessel particulars must include, but are not limited to:

- name of vessel
- date of construction
- vessel type
- beam or vessel's breadth
- length overall (m).

Operating profile

The vessel's operating profile is the basis for the selection of the vessel's anti-fouling systems (AFS) and operational practices. The operating profile must include the following for the vessel's entire planned in-service period:

- Typical pattern of use (i.e. time spent stationary compared to active)
- Duration of planned in-service period (i.e. periods between haul-out)
- Typical operating areas, including climate zones where the vessel will operate.

Description of the anti-fouling systems (AFS)

The selected AFS that are applied, re-applied, installed or renewed on the vessel must be described. When more than one type of anti-fouling coating (AFC) or marine growth prevention system (MGPS) are applied, re-applied, installed or renewed, each AFS must be described individually and in accordance with each manufacturer's instructions. The BFMP must include:

Anti-fouling coatings

- Product(s) name

- Location on the vessel where each AFC is applied
- Dates AFC applied
- Intended coating service life

Marine growth prevention systems (if applicable)

- Manufacturers
- Model
- Type
- Service life of MGPS
- MGPS operating manual.

Inspection schedule

Planned inspections of all hull and niche areas carried out according to a schedule or triggers must be described. An inspection can be undertaken by crew and it is not limited to professionals. The BFMP must contain:

- hull and niche area to be inspected (e.g. submerged hull, areas with no AFC, bow thruster)
- inspection schedule or triggers (e.g. inspection every 3 months or after remaining stationary for >14 days, prior to departure to a different country)
- management actions to address inspection results (e.g. clean before leaving region, inspect more frequently).

Cleaning schedule

Planned cleaning of the hull and niche areas carried out according to a schedule or triggers must be described. Cleaning can be undertaken by crew, and it is not limited to professionals. The BFMP must contain:

- areas of the vessel where cleaning methods will be applied
- cleaning methods (taking into account AFC manufacturer's recommendations)
- cleaning schedules.

Note: Niche areas are at a high-risk of accumulating biofouling and should be a particular focus for any inspection or cleaning activities. Inspection and cleaning activities may occur at the same time. Cleaning of vessels must be carried out in accordance with relevant local regulations.

Biofouling record book – minimum standards

A biofouling record book (BFRB) must be used in conjunction with the biofouling management plan. The biofouling record book can be incorporated into the management plan or can be a standalone document. The BFRB must be maintained for the duration the BFMP is in use. The BFRB may be electronic or hard copy and must be made available for inspection on request.

The biofouling record book must demonstrate that the BFMP has been implemented through records of relevant planned biofouling activities; such as inspections or cleaning.

Entries in the BFRB must be signed and dated by the vessel owner or crew member in charge of the activity.

Items that must be recorded in the BFRB include, but are not limited to:

- Cleaning:
 - date and location of cleaning activities
 - general observations with regard to biofouling, if any, before and after cleaning (i.e. estimates of percentage cover and level and type of biofouling (e.g. micro/macrofouling, slime, algae, mussels, barnacles and tubeworms), including areas that were not cleaned.
 - records of permits required to undertake in-water cleaning, if applicable
 - details of the hull and niche areas cleaned
 - reference to any supporting evidence/reports of the cleaning (e.g. receipts and/or report from supplier (if professionally undertaken), dated photographs/videos)
 - method of the cleaning method used, if not given in the BFMP
 - name, position (e.g. cleaning provider, owner or crew member) and signature of the person in charge of the activity.
- Inspection:
 - date and location of inspections
 - methods used for inspections (diver, remotely operated vehicle, camera pole, or other inspection tools/devices)
 - areas of the vessel inspected
 - general observations with regard to biofouling (i.e. estimates of percentage cover and level and type of biofouling (e.g. micro/macrofouling, slime, algae, mussels, barnacles and tubeworms))
 - observations with regard to anti-fouling system (AFS) condition
 - reference to any supporting evidence/reports of the cleaning (e.g. receipts and/or report from supplier (if professionally undertaken), dated photographs/videos)
 - name, position (e.g. owner or crew member) and signature of the person in charge of the activity.

Appendix B: Cleaning report

To satisfy the requirements for proactive biofouling management option 2, a report setting out the results of the inspection or cleaning operation that meets the department's minimum standards must be available. The report must contain the details of the biofouling management actions undertaken on the vessel. Cleaning can be undertaken by crew, and it is not limited to professionals.

Digital tools may be used in the reporting and assessment of results.

Cleaning report – minimum standards

To satisfy the conditions of proactive management option 2, a cleaning report must be provided on request and include at a minimum:

- Vessel particulars:
 - name of vessel
 - date of construction
 - vessel type
 - beam or vessel's breadth
 - length overall (m).
- Location, time and date the cleaning took place
- details of the company that performed the cleaning activity (if performed by a company)
- specified sections of the hull and niche areas that were cleaned (e.g. sides, rudder, bow thruster tunnel, anodes, all niche areas etc.)
- methods of cleaning or treatment
- manufacturer and model of cleaning method used (if applicable)
- general observations regarding biofouling before and after cleaning (i.e. estimates of percentage cover and level and type of biofouling (e.g. micro/macrofouling, slime, algae, mussels, barnacles and tubeworms), including those areas that were not cleaned
- supporting photographs and/or videos after cleaning must:
 - be date and time stamped (in metadata or superimposed on images)
 - be clear and in focus
 - be high quality (not pixelated)
 - include written description of the image, including the location on the vessel
 - be stable and smooth video recordings
 - be a representative sample of the vessel's hull and niche areas.
- If cleaning hasn't occurred within 30 days, evidence of the vessel's movement demonstrating that the vessel has not been stationary within 12nm of land for a cumulative period of 15 or more days since cleaning was carried out. Note: this can be demonstrated using the vessel's log, charts or other relevant documentation.
- Name, position and signature of the person in charge of the activity.

Glossary

Term	Definition
anti-fouling coating (AFC)	A surface coating or paint designed to prevent, repel or facilitate the detachment of biofouling from the hull and niche areas that are typically or occasionally submerged.
anti-fouling system (AFS)	A coating, paint, surface treatment, surface, or device that is used on a vessel to control or prevent attachment of organisms.
Australian territorial seas	The waters (including the internal waters of Australia) within the outer limits of the territorial sea of Australia (including every external territory). The territorial sea is a belt of water not exceeding 12 nautical miles in width measured from the territorial sea baseline.
biofouling	The accumulation of aquatic organisms such as microorganisms, plants and animals on surfaces and structures immersed in or exposed to the aquatic environment. Biofouling can include pathogens.
biosecurity	The exclusion, eradication or effective management of pests and diseases that threaten the economy, environment, human health, or social and cultural values.
intended coating service life	The period for which the anti-fouling coating is specified for and expected to be effective based on a range of vessel-related and environmental parameters.
invasive aquatic species	Non-native species to a particular ecosystem which may pose threats to human, animal and plant life, economic and cultural activities and the aquatic environment.
in-water cleaning	The removal of biofouling from a vessel's hull and niche areas while the vessel is in the water.
macrofouling	Biofouling caused by the attachment and subsequent growth of visible plants and animals on structures and vessels exposed to water. Macrofouling is large, distinct multicellular individual or colonial organisms visible to the human eye such as barnacles, tubeworms, mussels, fronds/filaments of algae, bryozoans, sea squirts and other large attached, encrusting or mobile organisms.
marine growth prevention system (MGPS)	An anti-fouling system used for the prevention of biofouling accumulation in niche areas or other surface areas but may also include methods which apply surface treatments.
niche areas	Submerged surface areas on a vessel that may be more susceptible to biofouling than the main hull due to structural complexity, different or variable hydrodynamic forces, susceptibility to AFC wear or damage, inadequate or no protection by AFS. They include, but are not limited to, waterline, sea chests, bow thrusters, propeller shafts, inlet gratings, jack-up legs, moon pools, bollards, braces, and dry-docking support strips.
non-commercial vessel	A vessel that used, or it intended to be used, wholly for recreational purposes (whether or not crew are employed on the vessel).
vessel	Any kind of vessel used in navigation by water, however propelled or moved, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a barge, lighter or other floating craft • an air-cushion vehicle, or other similar craft, used wholly or primarily in navigation by water • an installation • any floating structure.

Version history

The Australian biofouling management requirements are updated periodically. You can check that this version is still current at [Biofouling in Australia](#).

Version	Date	Reason for issue
1	20 Feb 2026	Created document.