



Ship Type: All

Trade Area: Australia

Bulletin 192 - 06/01 - New Ballast Water Requirements - Australia

From 1st July 2001 the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) will introduce new ballast water management arrangements for all international vessels visiting Australia. These arrangements are being put in place to assist in reducing the risk of exotic pests or diseases entering Australia's marine environment.

AQIS is the Australian Government Agency for the management of ballast water issues. Guidelines published by AQIS, which apply to all ships visiting Australia from an overseas port, largely reflect the International Maritime Organization's Resolution A.868(20), November 1997, "Guidelines for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water to Minimize the Transfer of Harmful Aquatic Organisms and Pathogens".

The shipping industry and AQIS agree that ballast water compliance needs to be improved to protect Australia's marine environment, its economy, aquaculture and fisheries industries, and the health of its people from the risks posed by the introduction of harmful marine organisms and pathogens.

Under the new management arrangements risks associated with ballast water will be assessed by the Australian Ballast Water Decision Support System (DSS), a fully automated computer application. The DSS will provide a risk assessment based upon the information provided by the ship's Master, as to the likelihood of the introduction of harmful marine species into Australian waters. Access to the DSS will be via the Internet or Inmarsat-C. Under the new requirements ballast water information may be lodged with DSS at the last port of call or as early as possible prior to entry into Australian waters, the rationale being to assist ship's masters by allowing early exchange of ballast water data.

Based on the details provided by the Master, DSS will provide a 'high' or 'low' risk rating for each ballast tank. If a ballast tank is assessed as high risk, then an AQIS approved management option will be required to be carried out before the vessel's arrival in Australia. On the other hand, if a tank is assessed as low risk, then no treatment of the ballast water for that tank will be required. AQIS approved management options open to the Master include:

- Non-discharge of high risk ballast tanks in Australian ports or waters;
- Australian port or waters;
- Tank to tank transfer;
- Full ballast water exchange at sea;
- Case by case consideration of other comparable treatment methods.

For the vessels that either can not or do not wish to use the DSS system, there are intended to be provisions to perform the following:

- A full ballast water exchange at sea or comparable treatment, prior to the vessel entering Australian waters;
- Undertake not to discharge ballast water in Australian ports or waters; or
- Enter into a Ballast Water Compliance Agreement with AQIS for ships that meet the relevant criteria.

These new requirements do not replace the existing mandatory requirements under the Quarantine Act including:

Reporting – Reporting by ships' Masters on ballast water management is mandatory and verification tests will be applied to ensure accurate reporting. The AQIS Ballast Water Reporting Form must be used (section 27A Quarantine Act).

Ballast water and sediment sampling – Access to a safe on-board ballast water and/or ballast sediment sampling point is mandatory. Ships' Masters are required to advise Australian quarantine inspectors on a suitable sampling point and to provide assistance in removing ballast tank covers. Ships' Masters are to ensure ship and personnel safety in determining sampling access (section 78AA Quarantine Act).

Sediment removal – Sediment resulting from tank and/or hold cleaning must be disposed of in an AQIS approved manner on land.

Source of Information: Norton White (Sydney) through (TMS Sydney)