



## **National Maritime Emergency Response Arrangement (NMERA)**

The National Maritime Emergency Response Arrangement (NMERA) has been developed to protect the marine environment from actual or potential pollution from a shipping incident.

### **Introduction**

NMERA is a coordinated and integrated approach to emergency response arrangements to enable the management of a shipping incident and reduce any impact of such an incident. It was jointly developed by the Australian Government, local and state governments and relevant maritime industries.

The NMERA includes a minimum level of emergency towage capability around the Australian coastline and the appointment of a single national decision maker to more effectively coordinate a response to a maritime casualty.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) manages the national emergency towage program and the position of the national decision maker.

### **Emergency Towage**

Emergency towage is an important part of NMERA to protect the marine environment from actual or potential ship-sourced pollution. Its focus is the initial response to assist a ship that is incapacitated and in danger of grounding, sinking, or other casualty at sea. Emergency towage vessels are used to stabilise the situation and prevent or minimise any risk of pollution from such an incident.

A number of emergency towage vessels are located in strategic Australian coastal regions (Figure 1). These emergency towage vessels provide a minimum level of emergency towage capability to deal with a significant, or potential threat to Australia's marine environment.

The emergency towage capability consists of a three-tiered approach:

#### **Level 1**

The dedicated emergency towage and response vessel, ETV *Pacific Responder* provides emergency towage and first response capability in the particularly sensitive sea area in the Torres Strait and northern Great Barrier Reef.



Operating from Cairns, the vessel spends the majority of time at sea ready for tasking by AMSA if a maritime casualty occurs. The vessel is also available to respond to other maritime incidents, such as pollution of the sea and search and rescue.

ETV *Pacific Responder* has an emergency towage bollard pull of 80 tonnes and can carry crucial oil spill response equipment at all times.

#### **Level 2**

This involves an ongoing availability of emergency towage capability around the remainder of the Australian coastline. AMSA contracts suitable towage vessels and their crew to be available in the event of a shipping incident. These operators are paid by AMSA to ensure the availability of vessels and the training of their crews for emergency towage operations.

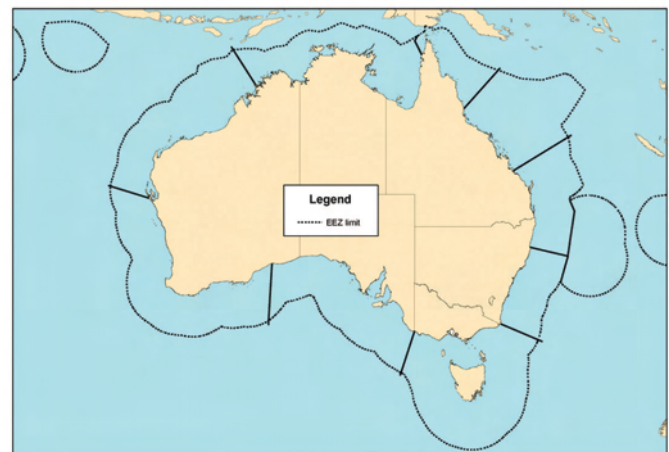


Figure 1 - Emergency towage vessel regions

## Level 3

This involves suitable vessels that are in the area at the time of the incident that are used as 'vessels of opportunity'. A range of suitable vessels around the coast, such as offshore tender vessels, could potentially be used for emergency towage work on a need basis.

## Maritime Emergency Response Commander (MERCOCM)

AMSA, as the single national decision maker under NMERA, has appointed a Maritime Emergency Response Commander (MERCOCM) to act on behalf of AMSA during a shipping casualty.

MERCOCM is responsible for the management of responses to serious shipping incidents, with intervention powers to take such measures as may be necessary to prevent, mitigate or eliminate a risk of significant pollution.

## Who pays?

Costs associated with providing ongoing maritime emergency response arrangements are met by the shipping industry through the Protection of the Sea Levy (PSL). The PSL funds pollution prevention, response, and mitigation measures.

In an actual incident where action is taken to prevent widespread pollution, the principles of 'potential polluter pays' and 'polluter pays' will continue to apply.

The costs of individual responses, including liabilities for compensation in the event of pollution or other damage, will be borne by the owner of the ship requiring assistance.

## Further information

For further information contact:

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