



Invalid extensions of Statutory Certification

Marine Notice 2026/01

This Marine Notice draws attention to the extension of statutory certificates which contradict Convention requirements.

Guidance for

- Regulated Australian Vessel (RAV) owner/operators
- International operators
- International seafarers
- Flag States
- Maritime authorities
- Recognised organisations

Purpose

This Notice clarifies Australia's position on when statutory certification may be extended under international conventions including but not limited to the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention. It describes what we're finding and our actions to uphold international standards for the extension of certificates.

Extension decision-making

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has provided recommendations to administrations for extending the validity of certificates in MSC-MEPC.5-Circ.1.

The Survey Guidelines under the Harmonised System of Survey and Certification (HSSC), IMO Resolution A.1207(34) (the IMO Guidance), Annex, General, section 5.9.1, provides a framework for extending a certificate when it is 'proper and reasonable to do so'. Under that framework, extension decisions should consider whether the ship will sail directly to a named final agreed cargo discharge port and then directly to a named agreed port to complete the survey and/or dry-docking.

For Australian-flagged ships an extension will only be granted if **all** the following conditions are met:

- the extension is granted under a regulation in a convention, an annex to a convention, an article of a convention or within a code;
- it is for the purpose of allowing a ship to complete its voyage to a final cargo discharge port, then directly to the port in which it is to be surveyed; and



- it appears proper and reasonable to do so. (The IMO guidance, in full (at paragraph 5.9.2), provides the basis for determining what is proper and reasonable).

What we find

Australian port State control officers are finding that ships have had their statutory certificates extended under SOLAS Chapter I, Reg 14(e) or (f) but continue to trade commercially and do not proceed directly to the port of survey.

We see ships that have been issued three-month extensions, and these ships continue to trade, or intend to trade, commercially for that period.

These ships:

- are not undertaking a direct voyage to their named cargo discharge and/or survey port
- have extensions for more than the minimum amount of time needed to complete the survey
- often require dry docking as part of their survey.

Australia acknowledges that during the COVID-19 pandemic, relaxations were afforded by the IMO (Circular Letter No.4204/Add.19) due to restrictions put in place by governments internationally. However, reliance on these temporary relaxations have been withdrawn as normal statutory survey and certification procedures have been reinstated.

Our actions

Where a ship has been found to have its statutory certificates extended contrary to a convention or code requirements, the ship may be detained as part of a port State control inspection. Where a flag State's appointed Recognised Organisation (RO) has issued the extension, the RO may be held responsible for such detention.

The ship may be allowed to sail under detention to the port of survey in accordance with the IMO's Procedures for Port State Control 2025, as amended.

References

- Safety of Life at Sea Convention, Chapter I
- Survey Guidelines under the Harmonised System of Survey and Certification (HSSC), IMO Resolution A.1207(34)
- IMO Circular MSC-MEPC.5-Circ.1
- Resolution A.1206(34) Procedures for Port State Control, 2025