



## Ensuring navigation bridge visibility

### Purpose

This marine notice highlights the importance of ensuring navigation bridge visibility on all vessels sailing in Australian waters. Vessel operators, masters and navigational officers should take note of its content.

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### Regulations

In accordance with the Collision Regulations, 'every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper lookout by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing conditions to make a full appraisal of the situation and risk of collision' (Rule 5). The Collision Regulations are implemented in Australia through the *Navigation Act 2012* (s175).

Specific requirements for maintaining bridge visibility are set out in International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974 Chapter V Regulation 22, which in Australia is implemented through Marine Order 21 (*Safety and emergency arrangements*) 2016).

Bridge visibility that does not meet the requirements of SOLAS significantly impedes safe navigation, bridge watchkeeping and maintaining a proper lookout. All of which are essential in the detection of vessels (particularly small and at close range), detecting craft or persons in distress, making a full appraisal of the situation and the risk of collision, and avoiding collision and stranding.

To ensure that appropriate navigation bridge visibility exists, SOLAS requires (in part) that on any vessel over 55m in length:

- there are no blind sectors caused by cargo or other obstructions forward of the beam exceeding 10 degrees
- the view of the sea surface shall not be obscured by the lesser of two ship lengths or 500m under all conditions of draught, trim, and deck cargo.

### Australia's interpretation

Where a vessel is operated not in compliance with the minimum bridge visibility requirements specified in SOLAS, AMSA will take appropriate action in line with our compliance and enforcement policy to reduce the risk to persons, other vessels and the environment.

Some flag States may issue 'dispensations' allowing vessels to carry cargo up to the approximate level of the navigation bridge windows (see photo below). It is Australia's view that SOLAS does not provide for such dispensations and such documents are not accepted for compliance purposes in Australia.



Australia is of the view that the above vessel is not designed to carry the cargo in the manner shown in the photo, and in this case, the carriage of specialist cargo on a non-specialist vessel creates a clear danger to safe navigation as a result of impairment of bridge visibility. Accordingly, this practice creates an unacceptable risk to navigation and flag States, owners, operators and masters are encouraged to ensure proper loading and stowage

Where a vessel is carrying cargo in an unsafe manner, including instances where bridge visibility is severely impaired, Australia may consider vessel detention and require the cargo to be offloaded to ensure safe navigation.