Australian Government
Australian Maritime Safety Authority

National Compliance Plan

2026-27

Contents

Introduction

The National Compliance Plan outlines the key compliance activities to be prioritised from 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027 (2026/27), providing regulated communities and compliance partners with clear visibility of AMSA's regulatory focus. By setting these priorities in advance, the Plan supports industry to review and align operations with applicable legislative requirements.

AMSA applies a consistent, intelligence led and risk-based approach to compliance, informed by safety data, environmental insights and emerging trends. This approach supports strong collaboration across industry and government, encourages voluntary compliance, and promotes continuous improvement to strengthen safety and environmental protection outcomes.

AMSA is committed to transparency and accountability. Regulatory performance will be regularly reported and where compliance priorities change, the reasons will be clearly explained in the National Compliance Plan.

The focus areas in the Plan are informed by analysis of inspections, marine incidents, investigations, search and rescue activities, audits, subject matter expert input, and ongoing compliance monitoring. Focus risk areas are primarily drawn from the following 2025 annual reports:

- Annual Inspections Report
- Maritime Labour Convention Annual Report
- Marine Incidents Annual Report

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) is the national Commonwealth Government agency responsible for maritime safety, protection of the marine environment, and search and rescue.

Contact us if you have an enquiry about this document.

Our regulatory approach

In delivering our statutory functions, we will ensure that compliance activities are risk-based, streamlined, and proportionate to the level of risk being managed.

We adopt a systems-based approach to understanding and addressing safety and environmental protection issues, recognising that marine incidents often result from a combination of factors. This includes onboard conditions, environmental influences, organisational pressures, and other contributory factors.

By applying a data-driven approach, we will ensure greater consistency in the collection, categorisation, and analysis of data. This, combined with the level of risk AMSA is willing to accept as outlined in our risk appetite statement in the Corporate Plan, will support the development of more effective, integrated regulatory and prevention activities to address contributory factors, prioritising safety and environmental protection issues.

This approach includes:

- Undertaking compliance assessments informed by relevant data, information, and intelligence analysis
- Identifying current and emerging compliance risks across the maritime sector
- Developing innovative and targeted strategies to address identified safety, environmental and compliance priorities
- Implementing these strategies through a planned, outcomes-focused approach using the full range of regulatory tools available

AMSA is committed to continuous improvement as a core principle of best practice regulation. The National Compliance Plan is regularly reviewed to ensure its ongoing efficiency and effectiveness. Furthermore, it plays a key role in fostering continuous improvement in maritime safety and environmental protection.

Our compliance approach is underpinned by the principles in AMSA's Compliance Strategy 2023-2027 | Australian Maritime Safety Authority, and the Statement of regulatory approach | Australian Maritime Safety Authority

Compliance overview

AMSA monitors compliance through a range of activities designed to help us better understand compliance behaviour, encourage and support voluntary compliance, deter deliberate non-compliance, and inform initiatives to support our compliance partners.

This helps AMSA decide on its regulatory approach, possible actions, and the compliance tools that may be most appropriate.

Compliance activities that will be applied as part of this plan include:

- **Education:** This may include a range of activities, including the development and dissemination of guidance material through various communication and engagement channels.
- **Inspections:** These include both scheduled and unscheduled inspections of vessels carried out by marine inspectors to ensure compliance with maritime legislation. Vessel inspections also seek to detect systemic performance issues within the accredited surveyor scheme and other associated entities.
- **Safety compliance:** This includes a combination of education, focused inspections and audits. We will generally commence with an education campaign followed by focused inspections to identify and measure the level of compliance. This will help identify what further compliance activities are necessary.
- **Compliance checks:** Compliance checks and monitoring activities are combined with education programs. We have compliance partner arrangements with State and Territory agencies, across Australia. Monitoring activities can be undertaken with our compliance partners.

Focus areas for 2026-27

Focus areas for 2026-27 Plan seek to improve compliance, seafarer welfare, safety and pollution prevention by analysing 2025 data sets[1] and input from subject matter experts to identify risk areas of concern. We will prioritise our compliance initiatives and allocate resources in the most efficient and effective way to achieve the best safety and environmental protection outcomes.

While these areas are our primary focus, we may direct our efforts to other areas in response to new data and emerging trends.

The trends, data analysis and supporting research in each of the identified focus risk areas inform the risks and the actions we will take to improve safety outcomes.

[1] These are drawn from the 2025 Annual Inspection and Marine Incidents Annual Reports

Focus area 1: Foreign Flagged and Regulated Australian Vessels Inspections

Risk Area 1.1: Risk based inspections targeting

Inspection data indicates that risk-based targeting remains critical to effectively managing safety, environmental and seafarer welfare risks posed by foreign flagged vessels (FFVs) operating in Australian waters and regulated Australian vessels (RAVs) wherever they may be operating. In 2025, AMSA conducted 2,768 initial Port State Control (PSC) inspections of FFVs and 80 initial inspections of RAVs, reflecting a focused, intelligence led approach to inspection activity.

AMSA continues to apply risk-based inspection targeting to ensure inspection activities remain proportionate, adaptive and evidence led. This approach strengthens maritime safety outcomes, supports efficient use of inspection resources, and provides transparency to industry regarding compliance expectations and risk priorities.

Actions

AMSA will continue to apply enhanced risk-based targeting across Flag State Control (FSC) and PSC inspection programs. Inspection history, deficiency trends, detention data and emerging risk indicators will be used to prioritise inspection activity and inform compliance responses, international engagement, and the ongoing refinement of national and regional inspection priorities throughout 2026-27.

For 2026-27, AMSA will conduct a minimum of 2,400 PSC inspections prioritised through its risk-based targeting model.

Group	Activity	Target inspection rate
Foreign flagged vessels eligible for PSC inspection, including 70% being in the two highest risk categories	Inspection	Minimum of 2,400 inspections
Regulated Australian vessels eligible for FSC inspection	Inspection	80% of eligible vessels

Risk Area 1.2: Occupational Health and Safety (Marine Industry) Act (OHSMI)

AMSA exercises its role under the *Occupational Health and Safety (Marine Industry) Act 1993* (OHSMI Act) as the inspectorate responsible for monitoring and enforcing compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements. The Act primarily applies to Regulated Australian Vessels (RAVs) and certain foreign-flagged vessels that meet the definition of a prescribed ship and applicable voyage requirements.

In 2025, a total of 46 serious crew injuries were reported across RAVs and foreign-flagged vessels. While this represents a decrease compared to 2024, the continued occurrence of serious injuries highlights the ongoing risk to seafarer health and safety in Australian waters. Targeted OHS inspection activities provide an effective mechanism to verify that appropriate risk controls are in place and are being implemented to manage occupational health and safety risks on board vessels.

AMSA will continue to prioritise the health and safety of seafarers through a dedicated inspection program under the OHSMI Act, focusing on verifying compliance and promoting effective safety management practices on eligible vessels.

Actions

AMSA will conduct targeted OHSMI inspections on RAVs and applicable foreign-flagged vessels to assess compliance with workplace health and safety requirements. AMSA will verify that appropriate systems, controls, and practices are in place to effectively manage occupational health and safety risks to seafarers.

Group	Activity	Timeframe	Target
Dedicated OHSMI inspections on eligible vessels	OHSMI Inspections	Ongoing	15 OHSMI inspections

Risk Area 1.3: ISM audits – Regulated Australian Vessels

Recent investigation findings and compliance data indicate recurring safety and organisational issues on RAVs, particularly passenger vessels. These issues include shortcomings in shipboard operational practices, inadequate risk assessment processes, and limited awareness or ineffective implementation of International Safety Management (ISM) safety management system requirements at both ship and company levels.

AMSA has also observed an increase in overseas detentions and Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) related complaints involving RAVs, indicating systemic deficiencies in safety culture, company oversight, maintenance planning, crewing, fatigue management and emergency preparedness. Findings from Australian Transport Safety Bureau investigations further reinforce that failures in ISM implementation contribute to degraded risk controls and poor organisational safety outcomes.

Passenger vessels present a heightened safety and public risk due to the number of persons onboard and the complexity of their operations. Targeted ISM Document of Compliance (DoC) audits provide a mechanism to assess the effectiveness of company level safety management arrangements, verify that risks are being appropriately identified and managed, and ensure that ISM requirements are being implemented and sustained in practice. The inclusion of ISM DoC audits in the 2026-27 National Compliance Plan reflects the need to strengthen oversight of passenger vessel operators and address safety issues at their source.

Actions

AMSA will undertake targeted ISM DoC observation audits on RAV selected operators to assess the effectiveness of company level safety management arrangements. This will include observing a limited number of Recognised Organisation led DoC audits, with a focus on passenger ship operators, and integrating ISM considerations into FSC inspections, including observation of drills where relevant. This activity will strengthen engagement with industry, and address safety and organisational issues identified through investigations, detentions and complaints.

Steps	Activity	Timeframe	Target
ISM Document of Compliance observation audits, focused on RAV passenger vessels	Observation of verification audits	Ongoing	5 observation audits

Risk Area 1.4: Concentrated inspection campaign – Tokyo and Indian Ocean Memorandums of Understanding – foreign flagged vessels

Container losses at sea, navigation hazards, pollution incidents and serious injuries continue to pose significant safety and environmental risks to ships operating in Australian waters. Analysis of international and regional PSC outcomes, together with AMSA inspection experience, indicates that deficiencies relating to cargo securing, stowage practices and navigational safety remain recurrent contributors to these events. Containers lost overboard present an immediate danger to navigation, increase the risk of collision or grounding, and may result in pollution and harm to seafarers during subsequent recovery or emergency response activities.

Both the Tokyo Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the Indian Ocean MoU use Concentrated Inspection Campaigns (CICs) as a targeted, risk-based compliance tool to address issues of regional and global concern. CICs are designed to assess compliance with specific safety and environmental protection requirements where trends in deficiencies, incidents or emerging risks indicate heightened concern. The planned CIC theme covering container losses, navigational hazards, pollution and injuries aligns with identified deficiencies in cargo securing, operational procedures and crew awareness, and supports consistent application of international standards across member Administrations.

AMSA has included participation in CICs under both the Tokyo and Indian Ocean MoUs in the National Compliance Plan 2026-27 to address these shared risks in a coordinated and internationally consistent manner. Participation supports Australia's obligations as a port State, contributes to regional safety outcomes, and helps drive improvements in shipboard practices that reduce the likelihood and consequences of container losses, navigational incidents, pollution events and seafarer injuries.

Actions

AMSA will participate in the Tokyo and Indian Ocean MoU Concentrated Inspection Campaigns by integrating CIC checks into routine PSC inspections during the campaign period 1 September until 30 November 2026. Inspections will focus on cargo securing and stowage practices, navigational safety, pollution prevention measures and related crew awareness. Inspection outcomes will be analysed and shared with MoU partners to support regional risk assessment, inform future compliance activity, and reinforce industry awareness of regulatory expectations and safe operating practices.

Steps	Activity	Timeframe	Target
PSC including the CIC for eligible vessels	Inspection	Quarters 1 and 2	80

Risk Area 1.5: Exhaust gas cleaning systems – foreign flagged vessels

The operation and management of Exhaust Gas Cleaning Systems (EGCS) remain an environmental risk. EGCS are increasingly used as an alternative means of compliance with MARPOL Annex VI sulphur limits, and concerns persist regarding washwater discharges, recordkeeping, system operation and maintenance practices. Reports received in several Australian ports have highlighted instances of significant discharges and poor management of EGCS residues, raising potential environmental and community concerns.

Subject matter experts indicate inconsistent awareness and understanding among crew regarding EGCS operating modes, discharge criteria and documentation requirements. Deficiencies have been identified relating to monitoring equipment, recordkeeping, and confirmation that residues from closed loop systems are being appropriately retained on board. These issues highlight the need for consistent national oversight and improved assurance that EGCS are being operated in accordance with regulatory requirements and environmental protection objectives.

AMSA has included EGCS as a focus area in the National Compliance Plan 2026-27 to better understand the environmental risks associated with their operation, strengthen regulatory oversight, and build confidence in compliance controls. This focus also supports broader decarbonisation objectives by applying regulatory insights from EGCS operations to emerging technologies, such as onboard carbon capture systems, that present comparable operational and environmental risks.

Actions

AMSA will conduct risk-based inspections and targeted data collection on vessels fitted with EGCS, integrated into routine PSC activity. Inspections will verify compliance with MARPOL Annex VI requirements, including washwater discharge criteria, system operation, recordkeeping and management of EGCS residues. Data collected will support national consistency, inform future regulatory settings, address stakeholder and community concerns, and strengthen AMSA's preparedness to oversee emerging emission-reduction technologies.

Steps	Activity	Timeframe
Data collection during routine PSC inspections	Data collection	Quarters 3 and 4

Focus area 2: Maritime Labour Convention

Risk Area 2.1: Crewing and fatigue

Inspection and compliance data continue to identify crewing levels and fatigue as persistent safety risks on FFVs operating in Australian waters. Deficiency data for 2025 show a 44 percent increase in non-compliance with records of seafarer hours of work and rest compared to 2024. This issue is particularly evident on vessels operating to tight schedules, short voyage patterns, or under sustained commercial pressure, where approved crewing levels may not always allow for adequate rest.

Subject matter expert input and inspection observations indicate that hours of rest records do not always reflect actual working arrangements on board. Crew shortages, administrative burden, and operational demands contribute to practices where fatigue risks are normalised rather than actively managed. These factors have flow on effects for maintenance, emergency preparedness, and overall safety performance. Global work underway at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Labour Organization (ILO), including scoping discussions on fatigue, crewing, and hours of work and rest, further reinforces that fatigue risk remains a systemic international issue requiring continued regulatory attention.

Given the established link between inadequate crewing, fatigue, and serious marine incidents, AMSA has included crewing and fatigue on FFVs as a priority risk area in the National Compliance Plan 2026-27. Strengthened oversight supports improved compliance with international requirements and contributes to safer operations in Australian waters.

Actions

AMSA will apply a combination of education, targeted inspections and data collection to address crewing and fatigue risks on FFVs. Inspections will focus on compliance with hours of work and rest requirements, the adequacy of crewing arrangements, and the practical management of fatigue on board. Data collected will inform Australia's engagement in ongoing IMO and ILO work on fatigue and crewing, support evidence-based policy development, and guide future compliance and enforcement activity where non-compliance is identified.

Steps	Activity	Timeframe
PSC inspections focusing on hours of work and rest. Collection of data will occur during PSC inspections to support Australia's position as part of IMO and ILO scoping on fatigue/crewing	Inspection / data collection	Quarters 1 and 2
Publish Maritime Safety Awareness Bulletin – crewing and fatigue	Education	Quarter 3

Focus area 3: Domestic Commercial Vessels (DCV)

Risk Area 3.1: DCV inspection targeting

AMSA continues to refine its risk based targeting model to prioritise inspections and certification functions. The analysis of more comprehensive inspection data has allowed further refinement of risk profiles of operators and vessels for targeting purposes.

Actions

AMSA will conduct at least 2,300 inspections of domestic commercial vessels prioritising vessels based on risk.[2]

Group	Activity	Timeframe	Target
Domestic commercial vessels eligible for inspection	Inspection	Ongoing	Minimum of 2,300 inspections
Follow up inspections to close open deficiencies	Inspection	Ongoing	

Risk Area 3.2: Safety management system (SMS) implementation

AMSA's operational monitoring and inspection data continues to show higher levels of deficiencies in the practical implementation of safety management systems (SMS), particularly in crew inductions, drills, and system reviews.

[2] Targets are guidance based on data from the time of publication and may change. AMSA continues to refine the targeting model as more data becomes available.

Deficiency analysis from 2023-2025 shows that SMS implementation remains a systemic issue across the DCV fleet, with SMS verification, review and evaluation recorded as the third most common deficiency category. High numbers of deficiencies relating to emergency preparedness, training, inductions and drills indicate that documented SMSs are not consistently applied in day-to-day operations.

Investigation analysis supports this trend, indicating that weaknesses in SMS contribute to around 65% of serious marine incidents. These findings point to ongoing gaps in effective implementation, particularly in how SMSs are put into practice and sustained over time.

These insights point to the need for targeted interventions aimed at improving the practical application and continuous improvement of SMSs on vessels.

Actions

AMSA will conduct operational monitoring on high-risk vessels following application for a certificate of operation. Inspections will target practical implementation of the SMS, including drills, crew inductions and review systems that are in place.

Group	Activity	Timeframe	Target
Conduct operational monitoring on high-risk vessels following application for certificate of operation	Inspection	Ongoing	80% of applications

Risk Area 3.3: Watchkeeping and lookout practices

Marine incident data identifies collisions and groundings as persistent risks within the DCV fleet, with vessel control, navigation failures, and ineffective lookout practices frequently recorded as contributing factors. Investigation findings further reinforce that, in several serious incidents, vessels failed to maintain an effective lookout, particularly during high-risk operations such as night navigation and operations in congested waters.

Inspection and investigation data indicates ongoing issues with watchkeeping discipline, including overreliance on automated systems, poor operational use of bridge equipment, and inconsistent application of collision prevention principles. These trends highlight the need to strengthen practical watchkeeping behaviours and reinforce the requirement to maintain an effective lookout “by all available means.”

AMSA will aim to address this area through more education. Targeted engagement will focus on practical understanding and application of the new SMS requirements, particularly those addressing stability hazards.

Actions

AMSA will deliver targeted education to reinforce effective watchkeeping and lookout practices, focusing on practical application rather than procedural knowledge alone.

Education will emphasise maintaining an effective lookout “by all available means,” improving radar and AIS operational competence, reducing overreliance on automation, and strengthening situational awareness – particularly during night operations, in confined waters, and in areas of heavy traffic.

Steps	Activity	Timeframe
Watchkeeping and lookout practices education with a focus on practical application	Education	Quarters 1 and 2

Risk Area 3.4: Electrical safety and focused inspection campaign

Inspection and marine incident data continue to identify electrical safety as a persistent risk across the DCV fleet. Deficiency data highlights common issues including poor battery installations, exposed or unsecured wiring, missing safety documentation, and expired or absent electrical compliance records.

A significant number of vessels show no evidence of routine residual current device (RCD) testing or insulation testing, increasing the likelihood that critical protective devices may not function as intended.

Between 2023 and 2025, fires in machinery spaces and work areas were reported in multiple marine incidents, with over a quarter attributed to electrical failures, reinforcing the safety consequences of inadequate electrical controls.

Actions

AMSA will implement an education campaign to address electrical safety risks across the DCV fleet. The campaign will prioritise practical controls, including safe electrical practices, battery installation and charging arrangements, routine RCD and insulation testing, and the safe use of electrical equipment and power tools, with clear links to SMS risk assessments and maintenance plans.

A focused inspection campaign will be undertaken to verify effective implementation of these controls, with particular attention to machinery spaces, battery systems, electrical testing records, and compliance with documented SMS procedures.

Inspection outcomes will be used to reinforce regulatory expectations, identify systemic deficiencies, and guide any further compliance or enforcement action where serious or repeat non-compliance is identified.

Group	Activity	Timeframe	Target
Education to address electrical safety risks	Education	Quarter 3	N/A
Focused inspection campaign on electrical safety	Inspection	Quarter 4	200

Risk Area 3.5: Fatigue Management

Fatigue continues to be identified as a contributing factor in serious DCV marine incidents, despite recent regulatory changes and ongoing education efforts.

While fatigue is not consistently reported, some investigation outcomes continue to indicate that inadequate fatigue management remains an underlying risk, particularly where crewing levels, workload, and hours of work and rest are not effectively managed within a vessel's SMS.

Actions

AMSA will continue to support industry uptake of fatigue risk management requirements through targeted education, reinforcing the practical application of fatigue risk controls within the SMS.

Education will be complemented by data collection during inspections to better understand current levels of compliance and maturity across the fleet. This information will be used to assess the effectiveness of existing measures, inform future regulatory settings, and guide ongoing education and compliance activities.

Steps	Activity	Timeframe
Data collection during routine inspections	Data collection	Quarters 1 and 2
Education on practical application of fatigue controls	Education	Quarters 3 and 4

Risk Area 3.6: Torres Strait and Top End: Safe vessel operations

AMSA continues to observe a growing number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and operated DCVs operating in remote and regional areas of the Torres Strait and the Top End. Engagement activities in both the Torres Strait and Northern Territory during the 2025-26 financial year demonstrated the value of targeted, place-based education and support, particularly in strengthening understanding and practical implementation of the SMS and certificate of competency requirements.

Building on this work, AMSA will expand targeted engagement and education activities into Western Australia's Kimberley region, to support safe and compliant vessel operations.

Engagement will focus on practical SMS implementation, seafarer certification and regulatory obligations, supported by planned AMSA Week activities in the Torres Strait during August 2026 to reinforce safety awareness, collaboration, and sustained compliance outcomes.

Actions

AMSA will deliver targeted education and engagement activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander DCV owners, operators and crew in the Torres Strait, Northern Territory and Western Australia.

These activities will focus on practical SMS implementation, emergency preparedness, and regulatory responsibilities relevant to local operating conditions.

Planned AMSA Week activities in the Torres Strait in August 2026 will support this work by reinforcing safety awareness, strengthening relationships, and promoting ongoing compliance through direct engagement with communities and operators.

Steps	Activity	Timeframe
Education focusing on safety management systems requirements targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait operations in QLD, NT and the Kimberley Region of WA	Education	Ongoing