



AMSA POLICY ON REGULATORY TREATMENT OF UNMANNED AND/OR AUTONOMOUS VESSELS

AIM

This policy guides the Australian Maritime Safety Authority's (AMSA) approach to the medium term regulation of unmanned and/or autonomous vessels operated in Australian waters.

SCOPE

AMSA has observed increasing interest in the use of non-conventional unmanned and/or autonomous technologies in Australia's maritime industry. AMSA expects that the use of such systems, infrastructure and technologies will continue to increase in Australia. This policy provides transparency and sets the expectation as to how AMSA intends to deal with the operation of vessels that are unmanned and/or autonomous.

POLICY STATEMENT

Statement of regulatory approach

AMSA is the Commonwealth Government agency responsible for maritime safety, protection of the marine environment, and maritime and aviation search and rescue. In undertaking this statutory role, AMSA is committed to implementing its Statement of Regulatory Approach 2018. This policy is aligned to our Statement of Regulatory Approach.

Safety and protection of the marine environment remain AMSA's primary concern

The use of unmanned and/or autonomous vessels must be as safe as conventionally manned vessels. Safety and protection of the marine environment are AMSA's primary aims. This means that when AMSA considers an application for certification as an unmanned and/or autonomous vessel, it's important to AMSA that any risks to the safety of people, other vessels, and the environment have been appropriately addressed by the owner and master.

Risk and safety outcomes focussed

AMSA will treat unmanned and/or autonomous vessels based on the operational risks they present. We will be outcomes focussed, using flexibility mechanisms¹ to ensure that vessels are designed, constructed and operated to meet the principles of relevant instruments as applicable. In specific cases, we will work with those we regulate to arrive at practical but safe regulatory outcomes that ensure safety and protection of the environment.

AMSA will seek opportunities to provide a light regulatory touch for vessels where the risk is suitably low.

Guidance

AMSA will develop guidance related to the design, construction, operation, safety management, and safety assurance of unmanned and/or autonomous vessels in Australian waters. This guidance will be flexible and non-prescriptive, focusing on the need to ensure that such vessels are suitable for the environment that they are intended for, and that they are operated safely and with due regard for the protection of the environment.

¹ Existing flexibility mechanisms include 'equivalent means of compliance' and 'exemptions'.

Safety assurance

As the national maritime safety regulator, it is important to AMSA to be assured that the systems, infrastructure and technology associated with an unmanned or autonomous vessel are safe. We leverage the expertise of third parties to determine appropriate regulatory solutions.

Develop effective regulatory treatment through collaboration

AMSA will work with the regulated community to develop safe and effective regulatory treatment for unmanned and/or autonomous vessels. We will collaborate with our stakeholders to develop effective and appropriate regulatory solutions.