

PARLIAMENTARY JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON NORTHERN AUSTRALIA SUBMISSION



Thank you for the invitation to make a submission to address the terms of reference for Northern Australia relating to our Industry.

AMOU

The Australian Maritime Officers Union is the oldest union continuously registered under the Fair Work Act 2009 and represents the professional and workplace interests of Ship's Masters (Captains) and Deck (Navigating) Officers in the maritime 'blue water', offshore oil and gas, ferry, dredging and tourism sectors, Marine Pilots, Coastal Pilots, tug Masters, bunker (refuelling) tankers, Stevedoring Supervisors, Port Services officers, vessel traffic services (VTS)/harbour control officers and professional/ administration/ supervisory/technical staff of port corporations and maritime authorities

AIMPE

The Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers is the registered organisation which represents qualified Marine Engineers and Electro Technical Officers throughout Australia. AIMPE came together as a national body in 1881 after several years during which local organisations were formed in the various colonies of Australia and New Zealand. AIMPE members operate, maintain and repair marine vessels of all sorts including commercial cargo ships of all types and sizes as well as vessels dedicated to the offshore oil and gas sector, tugboats, dredges, ferries, defence support vessels, research vessels and Border Force vessels.

Our Unions represent our members and the maritime industry throughout all States, and have offices in Western Australia, Sydney, Brisbane and now more recently the new AMOU Cairns Office, which services the Northern Territory and North Queensland. Some areas of need in North Queensland have been highlighted repetitively though Industrial Officer Visits and even representation in the Fair Work Commission. These locations highlight major safety concerns or are opportunities for growth in Northern Australia.



CAIRNS SHIPYARDS

BACKGROUND

Cairns has a strong specialisation in maritime sustainment services and shipbuilding, supporting 42% of QLD's jobs in this industry. Cairns' Marine Precinct services 15% of all Australian registered vessels and 80% of all North Queensland registered vessels, longer than 15 metres. Reference CRC Marine Defence Industry profile 22/23

The Marine Precinct is currently responsible for employing more than 1,400 people.

Reference CRC Marine Defence Industry profile 22/23

Employers and Training

- Sea Swift
- Great Barrier Reef International Marine College
- Ports North
- Norship
- Austal
- Tropical Reef Shipyard
- The Big Boat Shed

The region currently can current service vessels up to 3,000 tonnes for ship and boat building, and repair services however is often at its capacity and cannot meet the demand:

The following shipyards provide a range of capabilities for ship refitting in Cairns.

Company	DWT	Dry Dock	Floating
• Norship	Up to 400 tonnes	75m	80m
• Austal	Up to 1,120 tonnes	60m	80m
• Tropical Reef Shipyard	Up to 3,000 tonnes	135m	110M



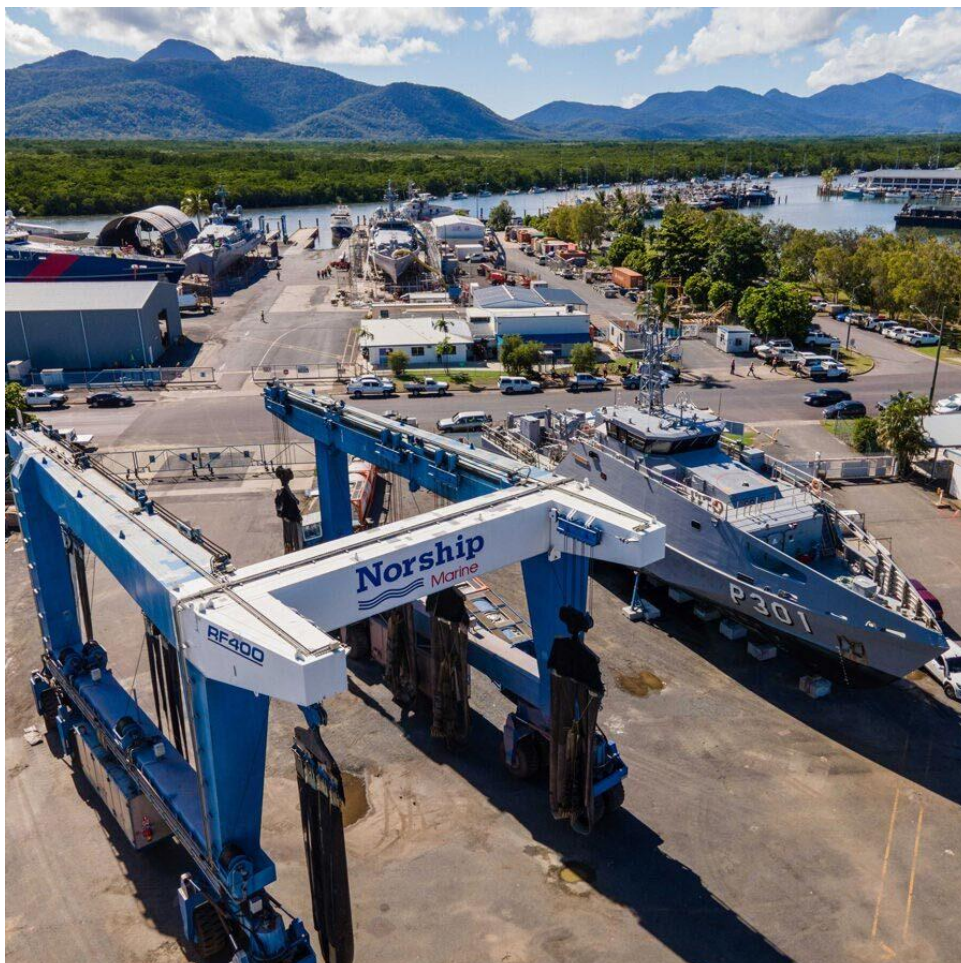
CAIRNS SHIPYARDS

ISSUE

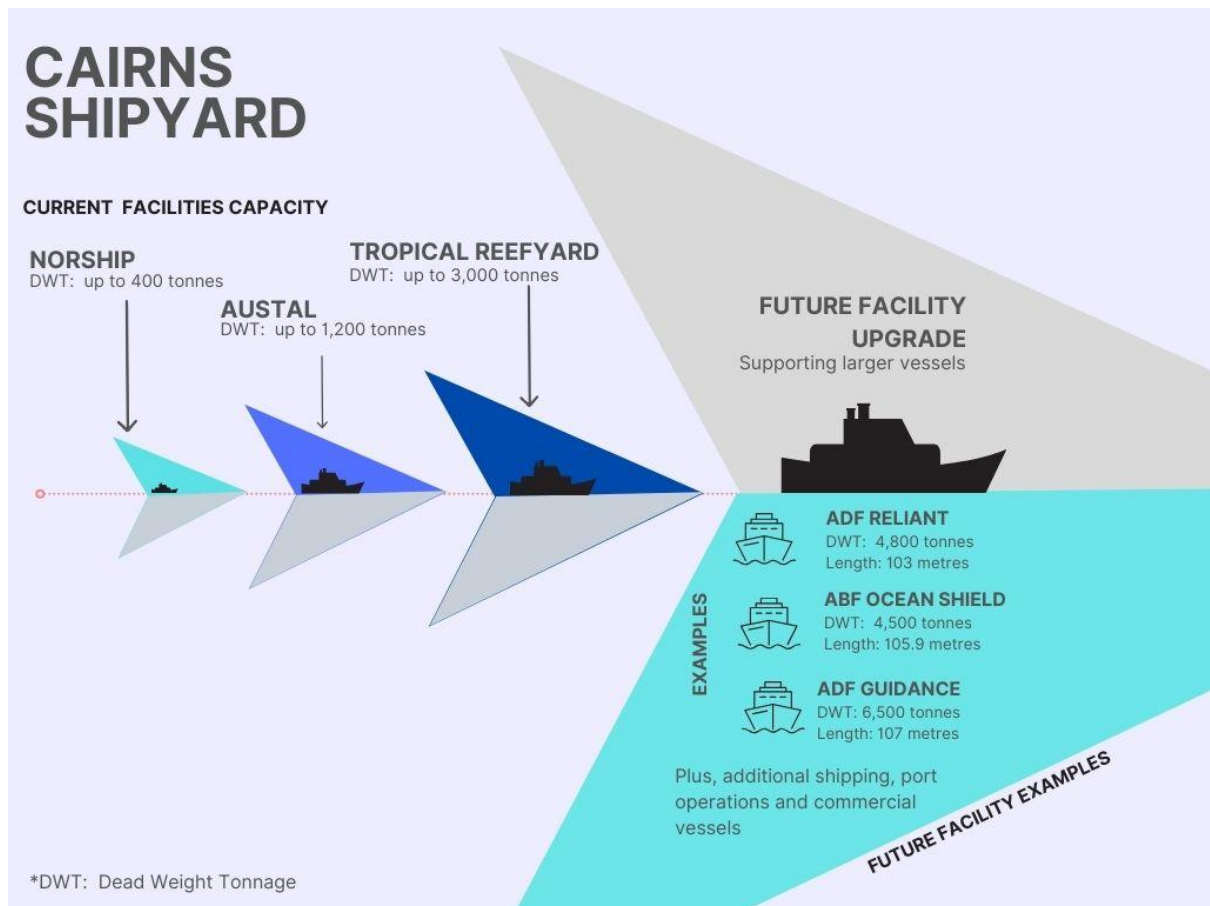
These three key businesses have maximum capacity in what they can service, build or refit: Norship – up to 400 tonnes, Austal – up to 1120 tonnes, Tropical Reef Shipyard up to 3,000 tonnes. Having a maximum vessel service available in North QLD of just 3,000 tonnes means that the region is restricted to servicing and building smaller vessels. To contextualise, smaller classed vessels (handy size) range between 10,000 and 30,000 tonnes, and medium sized vessels (handy max) range from 30,0001 and 60,000 tonnes. A capacity of 3,000 tonnes means our shipyards fall short in servicing mid to high range offshore support vessels and the handy sized vessels.

This is restricted due to the lack of suitable infrastructure critical for servicing and building vessels over 3,000 tonnes such as **lifts and slipways**. This demonstrates a loss to the Cairns region from the direct economic benefit that could be injected through the millions of dollars in boat building and maintenance revenue, hotel and hospitality expenses from hosting the crews whilst maintenance is underway and creating new employment pathways and training opportunities.

In October 2022, the Federal and State Government committed to funding a new Common User Facility for \$150 million each for the \$300 million dollar expansion which would allow a 5,000-tonne ship-lift and an upgrade to service ships up to 120m long. It is understood that this has since been deemed an unsuccessful commitment, due to an unexpected budget undervaluation.



CAIRNS SHIPYARDS



In Context

The Cairns Shipyard that can currently host vessel up to **3,000 tonnes** and up to **135m**, capable of only housing smaller vessels.

Vessel Tye	Length	Approx DWT	Service in Cairns?
Cape & Evolved Cape Class	Up to 60m	300-400	✔ Yes
Emergency Towage Vessel Such as Reef Responder. Emergency towage, salvage, rescue, pollution response or navigation-aids maintenance	53-69m	840	✔ Yes
Offshore Support Vessel Such as Australia Border Force vessel - Ocean Shield at 4,500 DWT	Up to 120m	2,000-4,500	⊘ Restricted to 3,000 DWT
Anzac-class Frigate	109m	3,600	⊘ No
Hunter-class Frigate	150m	8,000	⊘ No
Handy Size Vessels Handy-sized vessels are small-to-medium bulk carriers designed for flexibility and access to ports with size restrictions. They are one of the most versatile vessel classes in global shipping.	130-180m	10,000-40,000	⊘ No

CAIRNS SHIPYARDS

RECOMMENDATIONS

Investigate opportunities to support our maritime boat building and servicing industry by:

- 1) Identify long term solutions to our boat building and maintenance issues, future proofing maritime services in Australia and the South Pacific
- 2) Identify opportunities through the federal government maritime initiatives such Defence and Border Force to support facility upgrades, such as scoping other vessels that can have their work retained in Cairns.
- 3) Ensure the majority of boat building work and maintenance for the Federal Government is retained in Australia to ensure revenue and employment remains strong and to ensure future security and safety of the vessels
- 4) Seek out ways of commercially offsetting the costs through commercial operations.
- 5) Identify National Security opportunities such as such Defence and Border Force being able to requisition dry or wet docks in case of an emergency or disaster situation.
- 6) Review the infrastructure upgrade required with options analysis
- 7) Review the costs of implementing the Cairns Marine Precinct expansion
- 8) **Secure funding to implement the Cairns Marine Precinct expansion**



CAIRNS SHIPYARDS

Addressing the Terms of Reference:

C - Supporting the development of export industries.

The Port of Cairns currently supports smaller scale exports through ship building, refit and repair services. Building suitable infrastructure to support larger vessels will in turn supports the maritime export industry. With the Strategic Fleet soon to start its pilot program the development of the Cairns Shipyard would support the maintenance of the fleet which will ultimately support export. 99% of Australia's imports and exports of goods including fuel are carried on ships. In 2022 there was just 11 registered ships working in Australia's coastal trade. The Albanese Government has already committed to building our maritime capabilities and to ensure our national security through the Strategic Fleet.

E - Supporting the defence industry.

The Cairns Navy is based in the Port of Cairns. The Port of Cairns is the closest port to support maritime operations in the South Pacific. Improved infrastructure can service our defence force vessels, border force vessels but also provide additional services to vessels in the South Pacific and aligns with supporting the future strategic fleet.

National Security opportunities such as such Defence and Border Force being able to requisition dry or wet docks in case of a threat, emergency or disaster should be considered as part of the project.

The proposed project aligns with the:

- *2024 National Defence Strategy*
- *2023 Defence Strategy Review*

The Albanese Government has already committed to building our maritime capabilities and to ensure our national security through the Strategic Fleet. If Australia was to be involved in a war or a major pandemic, the countries fuel supplies would last 21-28 days and food supplies would last approximately one month. An upgraded facility to also service the future Strategic Fleet vessels would be future proofing Australia's security.

CAIRNS SHIPYARDS

Addressing the Terms of Reference:

F - Supporting infrastructure.

Supports infrastructure through improvement and upgrades, not just for our current situation but well into the future. Investing in infrastructure in the maritime industry is crucial because it directly supports economic growth, national security, and efficient global trade. Modern ports, shipyards, and logistical facilities enable the safe and timely movement of goods, reduce operational costs, and enhance competitiveness in international markets. Upgrading infrastructure also ensures that we can service a wider range of sized vessels, from small cape class vessels through to naval, border force and trading vessels.

Additionally, investing in maritime infrastructure fosters innovation, creates skilled employment opportunities, and strengthens a nation's ability to respond to emergencies, environmental challenges, and evolving security threats. In short, robust maritime infrastructure is the backbone of a country's trade, defence, and regional connectivity.

H - Training, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce.

Through improvements made to the Ship Building and Maintenance industry in North Queensland this will enhance the opportunities for employment and training by creating additional jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships available such as shipwright and boatbuilding and marine mechanics. This project would also support further opportunities through the Great Barrier Reef Marine College which is within the same geographic location of the shipyards.

I - Empowering and upskilling local First Nations people.

The Cairns regions host over 15% of population identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, with only 17% have achieved a certificate level III. Working alongside local businesses, opportunities exist within this industry for traineeships and apprenticeships to support our First Nations People.

Reference ABS census data 2021



CYCLONE-RATED MOORINGS

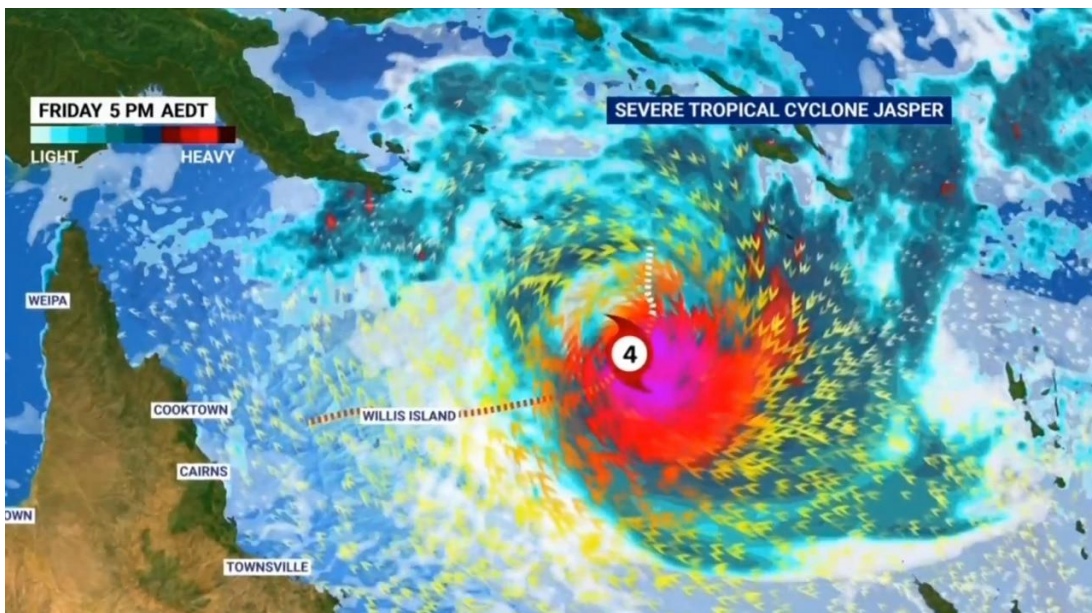
BACKGROUND

Northern Australia has had a substantial increase to adverse weather events due to increased water ocean temperatures due to global warming issues. The Far North has substantial shipping, mining, marine tourism operations as well as defence and border force operations.

All these cyclones have severely impacted the Marine Industry as without appropriate cyclone related moorings, the vessels and crew are forced to 'outrun' the cyclone which can be incredibly dangerous. If there are any delays, mechanical issues or changes in the cyclones projected path the vessel and safety of the crew are greatly impacted

Since 2021 the Far North of Australia has sustained the following cyclones.

Name	Dates	Category	Region
Koji	1-11 Jan 26	Cat 2	North QLD
Hayley	28-361 Dec 25	Cat 3	Far North WA
Alfred	5-8 Mar 25	Cat 2-3	NE QLD
Zeila	8-14 Feb 25	Cat 5	WA -Pilbara & Kimberley
Courtney	26 Mar 25	Cat 1	Offshore NW WA
Sean	19 Jan 25	Cat 1	Offshore NW WA
Megan	13-21 Mar 24	Cat 3-4	NT Gulf of Carpentaria
Lincoln	14-25 Feb 24	Cat 1-2	NT Gulf of Carpentaria
Kirrily	12 Jan-5 Feb 24	Cat 3	QLD and NT
Jasper	2-18 Dec 23	Cat 5	FNQ Coast
Issa	6-15 Apr 23	Cat 5	NW NA Coast – Port Hedland
Ellie	21 Dec – 6 Jan 23	Cat 2	NT
Tiffany	8 -17 Jan 22	Cat 2	Cape York / NT
Seth	23 Dec 21-7 Jan 22	Cat 2	NT / Queensland
Niran	27 Feb – 8 Mar 21	Cat 5	Offshore FNQ



CYCLONE-RATED MOORINGS

ISSUE

Without appropriate cyclone related moorings, the vessels and crew are forced to 'outrun' the cyclone which can be incredibly dangerous. If there are any delays, mechanical issues or changes in the cyclones projected path the vessel and safety of the crew are greatly impacted.

It is at great cost to move all vessels out of harbours with fully crewed staff and the cost of fuel, which could be mitigated with appropriate cyclone moorings. Should a vessel be a shipping, mining or a government vessel, the delay to be operational again can be very costly. Those vessels are also unable to contribute to cyclone related recovery due to their new geographical locations.

An example of this was Leviathan, a Border Force vessel managed by OSM and crewed by civilians who were moored in Darwin Harbour prior to Cyclone Fina (November 25). The crew were left in a dangerous situation due to the lack of appropriate cyclone moorings, even for Government owned/ leased vessels. There was a decision made to head west however due to both a delay and the cyclone changing direction, they were directly impacted by the cyclone itself. The small vessel was impacted by cyclonic condition, and the crew were then subjected to gale force winds, violent sea sickness and unsafe conditions. The Border Force Vessel manticore was also forced to outrun the cyclone due to the lack of cyclone moorings. These are just two recent examples of the hundreds of vessels impacted by every cyclone through the Far North of Australia.



CYCLONE-RATED MOORINGS

Recommendations

To undertake an investigation into the needs of appropriate cyclone mooring for the Far North in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Far North Queensland. Particularly.

- Research and analysis of current appropriate cyclone rating moorings
- Research and analysis of future needs of cyclone rating moorings
- Exercise Government Investment appropriately



Image: Pacific Marine Group: Installation of a cyclone mooring:

CYCLONE-RATED MOORINGS

Addressing the Terms of Reference

a. Developing the Critical Minerals Industry.

The availability of cyclone-rated moorings for vessels greatly increases the safety of the vessel and its crew.

The availability of cyclone-rated mooring ensures vessels can return to operational status more quickly following a cyclone. This impacts vessels directly engaged in transporting minerals as well as for mining support vessels such as crew transfer and supply vessels.

b. Supporting the Development of Export Industries.

The availability of cyclone-rated moorings for vessels involved in export industries, increases the safety of the vessel and its crew. The availability of cyclone-rated moorings for vessels enables them to resume operations to exporting internationally quickly following a cyclone event (instead of losing days of travel to out-run cyclones)

c. Supporting the Defence Industry.

Both Australian Border Force and the Australian Defence Force require Cyclone-rated mooring for their marine operations. As mentioned in an earlier example, Australian Border Force Vessels with civilian crew were forced to 'out-run' a cyclone, leaving the crew in a dangerous and extremely uncomfortable situation. The availability of cyclone-rated mooring ensures Government vessels can return to operational status more quickly following a cyclone, especially important should Federal support be required for an disaster or matters of national security.

D. Supporting infrastructure.

Expanding the provision of cyclone-rated moorings strengthens critical maritime infrastructure by safeguarding vessels during extreme weather, minimising operational downtime, and ensuring rapid resumption of government, shipping, mining and support activities, thereby maintaining the resilience and reliability of supply chains, government maritime operations and port facilities.