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The Port Services Regulatory Review Team

By email: tsp@stategrowth.tas.gov.au

Port Services Review - Consultation Survey AIMPE and AMOU Joint Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Port Services Regulatory Review (Ports Review), being conducted by the Department of State Growth.

The AIMPE and AMOU are key stakeholders in this process as together we represent Pilots, Tug Masters, Tug Engineers and

To that end the AIMPE and AMOU request the opportunity for a high-level briefing from the Department to gain a better insight into the proposals being considered and their impact on employees to enable further input into the process. We don't consider a survey to be the best way for stakeholder input to the wide-ranging reforms being contemplated by the Review.

However, we provide the following feedback to questions posed in the survey:

4. Harbour Master and Vessel Traffic Services (VTS)

It is proposed that Harbour Master and VTS functions be exercised directly by MAST. This would ensure independent regulatory decision-making and consistent safety standards across ports, while operational delivery arrangements may continue where appropriate.

Does the proposed transfer of the Harbour Master role and VTS authority to MAST create any risks or issues that need to be considered in the implementation process?

The Australian Maritime Officers Union supports in principle the transfer of Harbour Master and VTS regulatory functions to MAST to achieve independent regulatory oversight separated from commercial port operations, but this support is conditional on comprehensive employment protections and proper workforce transition



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arrangements. The transfer affects VTS Officers, Shipping Coordinators, employed by TasPorts under the TasPorts Enterprise Agreement 2023. One risk in this implementation is inadequate protection of employee conditions, rights and entitlements during the transfer of business from TasPorts to MAST. Critical employment issues requiring resolution include: full protection of existing pay rates, allowances, shift arrangements, rostering patterns, leave entitlements and all other conditions under the TasPorts EA. Enterprise agreement coverage clarity (will employees remain under TasPorts EA, transfer to MAST agreement, or negotiate new agreement?, will they be made redundant?); superannuation protection maintaining current rates; service recognition for all leave and entitlement calculations; job security guarantees with ongoing not fixed-term employment; maintenance of classifications and career pathways; no forced relocation or work location changes; and critically, a genuine voluntary redundancy option for employees who do not wish to transfer to MAST. Employees uncertain about the transfer, concerned about cultural fit with a regulatory agency, nearing retirement, or simply preferring not to change employers must have an attractive voluntary redundancy package with enhanced entitlements (minimum 4 weeks per year of TasPorts service, uncapped) recognizing the involuntary nature of this restructure and enabling them to exit with financial security and dignity.

AMOU's support for the Harbour Master and VTS transfer to MAST believe the following requirements being met before any transfer occurs: comprehensive workforce consultation with affected employees and AMOU well in advance; detailed transfer plan published including timelines, employment protections, voluntary redundancy terms, EA arrangements and operational continuity measures; generous voluntary redundancy package (minimum 4 weeks per year of service, uncapped) for employees who choose not to transfer; enterprise agreement certainty with AMOU involvement; operational transition plan ensuring 24/7 VTS operations are uninterrupted. Retention bonuses for key staff during transition; an independent review mechanism for employees who believe conditions have been adversely affected; a right of return provision if MAST transfer proves unworkable within a defined period; and no disadvantage guarantee that employees will be demonstrably no worse off in any respect post-transfer. Without these protections, particularly the voluntary redundancy option and legislative guarantee of conditions, AMOU cannot support the transfer proceeding. The workforce affected did not choose to change employers - this restructure is being imposed by government policy - and they deserve comprehensive protection, genuine choice through voluntary redundancy, and absolute certainty their conditions will be maintained. This requires detailed face-to-face consultation with AMOU and affected employees, not an online survey.



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8. Towage

Towage supports both routine vessel movements and emergency response. Under the proposed model, licensed port operators would be responsible for ensuring adequate commercial and emergency towage, with flexibility to choose market arrangements suited to each port.

Does the proposed towage model provide the right balance between reliability and flexibility? Why or why not?

Risks and Concerns Associated with Non-Government Owned Towage Operations

The proposed shift to non-government operated towage across Tasmanian ports presents a range of serious operational, safety, regulatory, and commercial risks that warrant careful consideration.

Service Continuity and Viability

There is an inherent risk of service disruption through operator default, and — critically — a real possibility that no viable tenderers emerge for one or more ports. By mainland standards, Tasmanian ports are low volume, and some may simply not be commercially attractive to private operators. The lessons from Searoad's withdrawal from King Island services are instructive here: what was initially offered to the private sector attracted no takers without substantial subsidy, ultimately requiring Tasports to hastily assemble a shipping line within six weeks. The same dynamic could easily arise with towage at marginal ports, leaving Government in a reactive rather than planned position.

There is also a risk that towage providers would not commit to high-quality, modern tonnage to service low-volume ports given the return on investment calculus. Tasmania could become the destination for older, bottom-tier vessels. Older tonnage brings reduced reliability and creates commercial pressure on crews to make do with temporary repairs, with direct implications for vessel, port, and environmental safety.



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Fragmentation Across the State

A competitive tendering model could result in up to five different towage companies operating across the state. This fragmentation carries compounding risks. There would be no contingency if a tug in any single port is out of service, reduced flexibility for crewing across ports, and knowledge confined to individual port contexts with little cross-fertilisation of skills or experience. Information sharing, equipment rationalisation, and spare parts management — currently achievable under unified operations — would be severely curtailed. Private operators spread thinly across the state are also unlikely to maintain an undeployed spare asset, leaving breakdown coverage largely unresolved.

The arguments that support a single statewide licence for Pilotage apply with equal force to Towage. The possibility of four or five separate providers would present a regulatory and administrative burden that would require MAST to be significantly enlarged and upskilled at increased cost. Up to five separate Enterprise Agreements could be in operation simultaneously, creating five parallel rounds of EA negotiations and five independent points of industrial disruption risk. The safety, professional, and communications advantages of towage both operating as statewide providers should not be underestimated. Their current alignment fosters integrated knowledge, shared situational awareness, and coordinated emergency response — benefits that would be difficult to replicate under a fragmented commercial model.

Manning, Fatigue, and the Risk of a Race to the Bottom

Under current arrangements, two crews are rostered on across each of the three regions — North West, Burnie/Burnie and Hobart. These arrangements already only barely provide the 24-hour coverage required for routine commercial and emergency towage. In scenarios requiring two tugs simultaneously — entirely foreseeable during, for example, multiple vessel movements during an extreme weather event — two crews can sustain only approximately 12 hours of coverage, extendable to 14 hours, before entering fatigue and being required to stand down.

Current manning levels already routinely require compromises in the scheduling of shipping movements to manage crew fatigue, despite crews consistently demonstrating motivation and commitment to keeping their home ports efficient and viable. These arrangements are workable now precisely because of that workforce dedication — but they represent a baseline that is already stretched.



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A competitive tendering process carries a real risk of driving a race to the bottom with respect to manning levels and fatigue management. Any further reduction in crewing would directly and foreseeably compromise emergency and commercial towage coverage, as well as the safety of personnel, infrastructure, and the environment. It must be asked: what specific provisions are envisaged to prevent this outcome under the proposed model?

A Final Question on the Proposed Model

The framing of the proposed towage model in terms of "reliability and flexibility" is noted — but it is submitted that **safety** must be explicitly included in that balance. Reliability and flexibility are commercial considerations; safety is a public obligation. Any evaluation framework for the proposed model that does not place safety as a co-equal criterion risk systematically underweighting it in favour of economic outcomes.

9. Pilotage

Pilotage is a safety-critical service requiring local expertise. A single statewide licensed pilotage provider with mandated service levels is proposed to maximise resilience and workforce flexibility across ports.

What risks or benefits do you see in this model compared to port-based alternatives?

The Australian Maritime Officers Union supports TasPorts continuing as the single statewide licensed pilotage provider under the reformed regulatory framework. TasPorts already operates effectively as a statewide pilotage provider across all Tasmanian ports (bar one), and the proposed transfer of harbour master and VTS regulatory functions to MAST achieves the critical objective of separating regulatory oversight from commercial operations. MAST would become the independent regulator setting pilotage standards, licensing, competencies and service levels, while TasPorts continues as the licensed operator delivering pilotage services under this regulatory oversight. This model preserves proven operational integration between pilots, VTS, towage, linesmen and port operations that is fundamental to safety; maintains workforce stability with established employment conditions and enterprise agreement coverage; retains deep port-specific local knowledge; avoids massive implementation risks of creating an entirely new pilotage entity; and delivers financial efficiency without duplicating administrative structures. TasPorts, as the licensed statewide pilotage provider operating under independent MAST regulatory oversight, delivers all stated reform objectives - resilience, regulatory separation,



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mandated service levels, and pricing transparency - without the risks, costs and workforce disruption of fragmenting pilotage into a separate entity. Creating a separate pilotage provider or multiple providers would introduce unnecessary risks: immediate industrial uncertainty from transferring pilots to a new employer (transfer of business, protection of conditions, potential loss of experienced pilots); fragmentation of the integrated safety management system; dilution local knowledge; unclear governance and ownership; uncertain accountability; implementation complexity; and fundamentally, solving no identified problem since TasPorts currently delivers effective pilotage services.

The Australian Maritime Officers Union (AMOU), representing the marine pilots employed by TasPorts, respectfully requests a meeting with the Department of State Growth to discuss the proposed reforms in detail. Tasmania's marine pilots represent a critical element of the State's maritime capability — they are, in many respects, the sharp end of the spear when it comes to the safe and efficient movement of vessels through Tasmanian waters. Tasmania is uniquely dependent on its ports and the maritime supply chain for the movement of goods, resources and passengers, making the role of the marine pilot not just operationally significant but fundamentally important to the Tasmanian economy. Pilots hold a unique and highly specialised body of knowledge spanning local port conditions, vessel handling, safety management and emergency response, and as such, they must be meaningfully and substantively consulted as these reforms are developed and implemented, not merely as stakeholders but as subject matter experts whose operational insight is essential to getting the framework right.

Yours Sincerely,

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