

National Sea Passenger Facilitation Committee

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Communique

NSPFC Meeting 10 September 2024

The NSPFC convened at Australian Border Force (ABF) Headquarters with newly appointed Chair, Ms Tharanie Vithanage, First Assistant Secretary Strategy and Policy Division, conducting opening formalities and meeting administration.

In the Chair's opening remarks, members were advised of the structural realignment recently undertaken by the ABF. This will enable the ABF to effectively utilise the funding received from the 2024-25 Federal Budget, which reinforces the Government's priorities to strengthen border security, tackle illicit goods, and modernise trade and travel settings.

Discussion then focussed on challenges and opportunities for the cruise line industry, with a by Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) presentation regarding its objectives, workforce requirements post-COVID, and the industry's significant contributions to domestic and global economies. Members noted challenges faced by the Australasian region including rising costs and inconsistencies in regulations; and recognition of the need for aligned regulatory and planning frameworks, competitive cross-structures and strong collaboration between governments to support positive sustainable growth of the sector, particularly as it relates to investment within markets.

Members were briefed in relation to current aviation and maritime initiatives, including the Australia Travel Declaration (ATD) and contactless processing trial, which are being jointly progressed by ABF, border agencies and industry stakeholders. The possibility of a future ATD pilot and co-design opportunities with the cruise and maritime industry was discussed; as well as required improvements to current regulatory and reporting requirements.

Members then discussed the review of the Coastal Trading (Revitalising Australian Shipping) Act 2012, which will support the modernisation of Australia's shipping regulatory framework and ensure the long-term sustainability of an Australian Maritime Strategic Fleet.

Turning to the New and Redeveloping Ports Framework led by DITRDCA, members acknowledged and discussed the complexities and challenges presented with current requirements. It was noted that early engagement facilitates government forecasting for resourcing and preparation of appropriate funding proposals.

The Maritime Traveller Processing Committee (MTPC), in collaboration with industry, is currently conducting a 12 month 'flexibility in reporting' trial in the Kimberly region. Members were advised that the trial will be evaluated in early 2025. Further discussion occurred in relation to risk assessments of en-route clearances and First/Last Port applications; differences between international and Round Trip Cruise (RTC) requirements; and the challenges presented for government and industry engaging resources in regional/remote areas.

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An update regarding Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) biodiversity requirements was provided, with, members noting the COVID policy ownership/delivery delineation between the Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC) and DAFF. Members were advised that the Maritime Recycling Risk Assessment Trial (MRRAT) was piloted from March until June 2024 across international cruise vessels, some commercial vessels and selected Australian ports with designation as first points of entry for waste (Sydney, Brisbane and Fremantle). DAFF will now conduct risk assessments to set the acceptable level of protection for identified recyclables, with the current scope to be amended so as to engage additional participants.

Questions on notice were tabled under other business with responses to be provided out of session.

The next meeting is scheduled for 29 January 2025.

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For further information, please see www.abf.gov.au/about-us/what-we-do/trade-and-travel-industry-engagement