

National Sea Passenger Facilitation Committee

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Communique NSPFC Meeting 25 September 2025

The Australian Border Force (ABF) convened the third National Sea Passenger Facilitation Committee (NSPFC) meeting of the year at ABF Head Quarters in Brindabella Park, ACT with Ms Tharanie Vithanage, First Assistant Secretary, Strategy and Border Modernisation Division and Mr Joel Katz, Managing Director - Australasia & Asia, Cruise Lines International Association, overseeing the commencement formalities and meeting administration. The minutes from the previous meeting held on 15 May 2025 were endorsed by all members.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) outlined current biosecurity cost-recovery arrangements and the application of the vessel arrival charge. Members discussed the impact of fluctuating vessel numbers and agreed that collaboration, technological solutions and efficiency measures are essential to ensure sustainable cost recovery and timely operational delivery.

DAFF and ABF provided updates on pre-arrival reporting requirements and clearance processes at first and non-first points of entry. Members reinforced the importance of accurate and timely reporting, early planning and inter-agency coordination to maintain both operational efficiency and compliance. Members were advised of the revised timeframes for on-board functions and low-risk events, with clear guidance to be made available on the ABF website.

Wilhelmsen Port Services Australia highlighted operational impacts when crew fail to return before departure. Members noted the potential value of pre-prepared deserter information packs and early data capture to reduce delays. Members recognised the need to balance facilitation with legislative obligations and the merits of collaborative development of consistent industry-agency approaches.

ABF Border Intelligence NSW presented on the Border Watch program and shared a case study highlighting its relevance to the upcoming cruise season. Members noted the critical role of cruise operators and crew in identifying and reporting suspicious activity and acknowledged the value of increased awareness and information sharing to enhance border protection.

Members discussed recent updates to the Kimberley Flexibility Framework, including expanded eligibility criteria for eligible commercial cruise and large passenger vessels. An update was provided on progress towards First Point of Entry status for Broome, with continued engagement between the Kimberley Ports Authority, Commonwealth agencies and industry to align redevelopment plans with regulatory requirements.

Members noted that, despite global growth in cruise capacity, cruise deployments and economic contribution to Australia are declining due to higher operating costs, regulatory complexity and repositioning expenses. Industry highlighted international examples of government-supported cruise growth strategies. Members recognised the importance of accurate data, streamlined regulation and cross-government collaboration to support a sustainable and thriving cruise sector.

The meeting concluded with appreciation from the Co-Chairs for members' contributions and collaboration. Members were advised that proposed 2026 meeting dates will be shared in due course. Special acknowledgement was extended to James Larsson, Carnival Australia in recognition of his contribution to the NSPFC.

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