

# National Sea Passenger Facilitation Committee

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## Communique NSPFC Meeting 29 January 2025

The NSPFC convened at Australian Border Force (ABF) Headquarters with Chair, Ms Tharanie Vithanage, First Assistant Secretary Strategy and Policy Division, conducting opening formalities and meeting administration. Both industry and border agencies engaged in discussions concerning the mid-season cruise operations. Updates were provided from both, which noted the smooth operations of cruise activities at the mid-point of the season.

Superyacht Australia presented the Superyacht Industry Economic Impact Assessment, highlighting Western Australia's status as a major hub for building support vessels and noting significant industry growth in vessel builds and workforce requirements since the 1990s. Members were advised that the Superyacht fleet currently includes 26 yachts with Length Overall (LOA) of more than 100 metres, with Australia benefitting from providing skilled crew and refit services to the international superyacht market and domestic charter fleet. The Special Recreational Vessel (SRV) Act 2019 has extended the average stay of superyachts in Australia from 41 to 130.3 days, boosting jobs and spending. An annual superyacht industry conference is scheduled for 19 - 21 May 2025.

Members discussed challenges and constraints faced by the ABF regarding port infrastructure and resources in Broome and Eden. These include provision of facilities for passenger and crew changes, the need for full passenger clearance at ports including Fremantle before departing from Broome, and a funding shortfall for Kimberly Ports' terminal requirements. Members further emphasised the need for a streamlined process and clear framework to facilitate last ports of exit and entry procedures, ensuring smooth operations for future cruise itineraries. Members agreed to collaborate offline to support development of an enroute clearances decision making framework, with an update to be provided at the next meeting. Members noted that the ABF is working on amending the Migration Act 1958 to strengthen the legislation concerning Round Trip Cruises (RTCs), which relies on the definition of 'transit' in section 80 of the Act and do not require immigration clearance.

Further discussion regarding discharge of passengers at Athol Buoy instead of other points took place, with members advised that the current Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) policy remains unchanged. However, the boarding at sea policy is under discussion with operational counterparts. While there is a preference for handling these matters at designated facilities, no operational pressures from pre-booking at Athol Buoy were reported. Members agreed to work offline with DAFF on this issue.

References to COVID-19 pre-arrival reporting requirements in the Maritime and Aircraft Reporting System have been removed. DAFF and the Department of Health and Aged Care are continuing to revise other health protocols and requirements.

The First Nations Visitor Economy Partnership was established recently by Austrade to support growth of First Nations tourism businesses and provide unique experiences for domestic and international visitors, while driving more economic activity in the regions and local communities. Tourism Research Australia's December 2024 visitor economy forecasts reported international travel is still below pre-pandemic levels and trends show an uneven recovery. Modest

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global economic outlook, and paced recovery in aviation capacity with consumer preferences for short haul destinations, resulted in lower arrivals in 2024. As a result, the 2025 forecasts have been downgraded.

ABF's Australia Travel Declaration (ATD) trial has received positive feedback. Further rollout is dependent on funding availability. The ABF is actively assessing ways to streamline RTC processing including the possible use of Advanced Passenger Process (APP). Industry will be updated as this work continues.

Discussion then turned to governance matters including re-positioning the forum to consider issues from a strategic or policy perspective, with operational concerns to be managed through other existing engagement channels. Members endorsed a proposal to implement industry co-chair arrangements, with the Secretariat to develop appropriate governance procedures to support this. Clarification regarding the cadence of meetings was obtained, with members agreeing that two meetings per year would be sufficient to support the committee's objectives.

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