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Communique NSPFC Meeting 6 February 2026

The Australian Border Force convened the first National Sea Passenger Facilitation Committee (NSPFC) meeting of 2026 at ABF Headquarters, Brindabella Park, ACT. The meeting was Co-chaired by Ms Tharani Vithanage, First Assistant Secretary, Strategy and Border Modernisation Division and Mr Joel Katz, Managing Director - Australasia & Asia, Cruise Lines International Association. Minutes from the previous meeting held on 25 September 2025 were endorsed by members.

An update was provided on the industry led working group focused on identifying technological solutions to support more streamlined cruise clearance processes. Early discussions centred on developing a shared understanding of current operational challenges and articulating a clear future vision for sea passenger processing that reflects the unique cruise environment. Members emphasised the importance of leveraging existing shipboard and agent systems, embedding ports and vessel agents in design discussions and aligning government and industry on outcomes, data flows and resourcing assumptions.

An update was provided on the industry led working group focused on Strategic Cruise Growth. Members acknowledged the broader market context, noting that while global cruise capacity continues to grow, Australia's share of deployments is declining. Members highlighted the importance of robust, coordinated data and cross government collaboration to support informed policy development and long term, sustainable growth of the cruise sector.

The group discussed operational challenges associated with the current maximum number of waypoint joiners permitted under Round Trip Cruise (RTC) arrangements. Industry outlined that the existing threshold no longer aligns with the scale and operating realities of modern cruise vessels. Members recognised the need for continued engagement to explore options that balance facilitation outcomes with compliance and risk considerations.

An update was provided on the forthcoming review of Biosecurity First Points of Entry (FPOE), including the requirement to reassess existing determinations ahead of legislative sunset. Members noted that early and transparent consultation with ports and industry will be critical to maintaining operational certainty, particularly given long term itinerary planning horizons.

Members were briefed on current biosecurity policies and procedures for arriving international cruise vessels. The discussion reinforced the importance of accurate and timely pre-arrival reporting, effective risk based processing and close coordination between government agencies, ports and cruise operators to support efficient clearance outcomes across varied port environments.

The meeting concluded with members reaffirming the value of continued collaboration, early engagement and clear information sharing between industry and government to support safe, efficient and predictable cruise operations nationally.

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