

How can we keep our waterways clean?

September 2018

Fact sheet 1: Sewage discharge restrictions for ships other than 'declared ships'

Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995

Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Regulation 2018 (the Regulation)

The information provided in this fact sheet refers to **ships other than declared ships**, and includes:

- all recreational ships
- domestic commercial vessels with a certificate of operation issued, or taken to be issued, under the *Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Act 2012* stating it is a class 2 or 3
- other Queensland regulated ships regulated under the *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994* and *Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Regulation 2016* designed to carry up to 12 passengers.

What is sewage?

Any waste from toilets or urinals, but does not include grey water from sinks or showers. Sewage is defined either as treated or untreated. There are three grades of treated sewage: A, B or C. Grading is based on the on-board treatment of waste and the system's ability to reduce the characteristics of the sewage, such as bacterial numbers.

Sewage discharged from ships can be detrimental to the marine environment and human health. It is illegal to discharge sewage into 'nil discharge' waters. As a result, ship owners and operators must modify their sewage management practices or risk facing heavy fines.

Prohibited discharge waters

'Prohibited discharge waters' form part of the larger 'nil discharge waters'. It is illegal to discharge sewage (either treated or untreated) into prohibited discharge waters (see below). Prohibited discharge waters include boat harbours, canals, marinas, and the following designated areas:

- the marine national park zone described in the *Marine Parks (Moreton Bay) Zoning Plan 2008*
- the Noosa River
- the marine national park zone, under the *Marine Parks (Great Sandy) Zoning Plan 2006*, located near Burkitt's Reef, Hoffman's Rocks or Barolin Rock, adjacent to the Woongarra Coast
- an area within the Great Barrier Reef Coast Marine Park described in schedule 6 of the *Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Regulation 2018*.

Treated sewage discharge restrictions – nil discharge waters

Treated sewage (sewage that **has** passed through a certified sewage treatment system) can be discharged beyond specified distances from sensitive areas dependent on the grade of treatment. Grade A treated sewage can be discharged anywhere except **prohibited discharge waters** (see above).

Once outside prohibited discharge waters, Grade B treated sewage can be discharged beyond 700 metres (m) and Grade C treated sewage discharged beyond 0.5 of a nautical mile (nm) (926m) from a person in the water, aquaculture fisheries resources (for example, an oyster lease), or a reef.

Untreated sewage discharge restrictions – nil discharge waters

Untreated sewage (sewage that has not passed through a certified sewage treatment system) cannot be discharged in prohibited discharge waters, designated smooth waters, rivers and creeks.

In Hervey Bay waters and northern Moreton Bay waters untreated sewage cannot be discharged within specified distances of sensitive areas:

- for ships with 1–15 persons on-board it is:
 - illegal to discharge within 1nm (1852m) of a person in the water, aquaculture fisheries resources (for example, an oyster lease or fish farm), a reef, and the mean low water mark of an island or the mainland.

In open waters untreated sewage cannot be discharged within specified distances of sensitive areas:

- for ships with 1–6 persons on-board it is:
 - illegal to discharge within 0.5nm (926m) of a wharf or jetty (other than a jetty that is a marina)
 - illegal to discharge within 1nm (1852m) of a person in the water and aquaculture fisheries resources
- for ships with 7–15 persons on-board, as above and in addition, it is:
 - illegal to discharge within 1nm (1852m) of a reef or the mean low water mark of an island or the mainland.

For ships with 16 or more persons on-board, it is illegal to discharge untreated sewage anywhere in Queensland's coastal waters.

NOTE: *Coastal waters* as defined in Schedule 1 of the *Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995* means the coastal waters of the State, and includes other waters within the limits of the State that are subject to the ebb and flow of the tide.

Macerators

Ships with a fixed toilet must be fitted with a macerator which must not be able to be bypassed. In waters where the discharge of sewage is permitted, any sewage discharged from a fixed toilet must first pass through a macerator. This assists in dispersion and improves visual amenity for all waterway users.

Note – sewage that has been macerated only, is not ‘treated sewage’.

On-board documentation

All ships fitted with a treatment system are required to have on-board system documentation and manuals for operating and maintaining the system with particulars as described in sections 42 and 44 of the *Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Regulation 2018* and to maintain and assess the treatment system in accordance with section 43 of the Regulation.

What are ship owners and operators of ships other than declared ships required to do?

- Ensure sewage is not discharged in specified nil discharge waters.
- If the ship is used for overnight or extended trips, the ship owner will need to adopt on-board measures to ensure compliance with the relevant nil discharge requirements. This could simply involve the use of a portable toilet, a sewage holding device and/or treatment system.
- Ship owners and operators should carefully study the sewage discharge restrictions in the waterways they plan to visit.

How can I determine the best sewage management measures?

Ship chandlers stock a range of sewage management devices. Some companies manufacture and distribute a range of treatment systems to suit a variety of requirements and budgets. Boating and yacht club representatives, operators of commercial ships and marine dealerships may be able to provide advice from personal experience and industry knowledge.

Where can I get more information?

- Information is available from the Maritime Safety Queensland website at <https://www.msq.qld.gov.au/>
- The sewage legislation requirements are part of the *Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995* and *Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Regulation 2018*. This legislation can be accessed at www.legislation.qld.gov.au
- Refer to the Quick reference guide – discharge of treated or untreated sewage from ships ‘other than declared ships’ below.

Quick reference guide – discharge of treated or untreated sewage from ships ‘other than declared ships’ (September 2018)

Nil discharge waters – discharge restrictions for ships ‘other than declared ships’

Nil discharge waters are waters where the discharge of sewage is not permitted. The discharge restrictions for nil discharge waters are based on the type of sewage being discharged (treated or untreated) and the type of vessel from which the sewage is being discharged (a 'declared ship', or a ship 'other than a declared ship' (all other ships)).

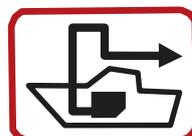
Type of waterway Sensitive area	Prohibited discharge waters	Smooth waters	Hervey Bay waters	Northern Moreton Bay waters	Open waters
Person in the water	Treated and untreated (illegal)	Grade A (0m) Grade B (700m) Grade C (926m) Untreated (illegal)	Grade A (0m) Grade B (700m) Grade C (926m) Untreated (1852m) & (illegal) [#]	Grade A (0m) Grade B (700m) Grade C (926m) Untreated (1852m) & (illegal) [#]	Grade A (0m) Grade B (700m) Grade C (926m) Untreated (1852m) & (illegal) [#]
Aquaculture fisheries resource (such as an oyster lease or fish farm)	Treated and untreated (illegal)	Grade A (0m) Grade B (700m) Grade C (926m) Untreated (illegal)	Grade A (0m) Grade B (700m) Grade C (926m) Untreated (1852m) & (illegal) [#]	Grade A (0m) Grade B (700m) Grade C (926m) Untreated (1852m) & (illegal) [#]	Grade A (0m) Grade B (700m) Grade C (926m) Untreated (1852m) & (illegal) [#]
Reef	Treated and untreated (illegal)	Grade A (0m) Grade B (700m) Grade C (926m) Untreated (illegal)	Grade A (0m) Grade B (700m) Grade C (926m) Untreated (1852m) & (illegal) [#]	Grade A (0m) Grade B (700m) Grade C (926m) Untreated (1852m) & (illegal) [#]	Grade A (0m) Grade B (700m) Grade C (926m) Untreated (1852m) [^] & (illegal) [#]
Mean low water mark of island or mainland	Treated and untreated (illegal)	Treated (0m) Untreated (illegal)	Treated (0m) Untreated (illegal) [#]	Treated (0m) Untreated (1852m) & (illegal) [#]	Treated (0m) Untreated (1852m) [^] & (illegal) [#]
Wharf or jetty (other than jetty that is a marina)	Treated and untreated (illegal)	Treated (0m) Untreated (illegal)	Treated (0m) Untreated (illegal)	Treated (0m) Untreated (illegal) [#]	Treated (0m) Untreated (926m) & (illegal) [#]

926m = 0.5nm / 1852m = 1nm

*<7 persons on-board

[^]7 to 15 persons on-board

[#]16 or more persons on-board



Pump out to shore facilities

NOTE – this fact sheet is provided as a guide only. For complete details, ship owners and operators should obtain copies of the *Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995* and *Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Regulation 2018*