

# Important Changes to REEFVTS

Effective 1 July 2011

The mandatory ship reporting system in the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait is being extended to the southern boundary of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park from 1 July 2011 (see Figure 1). Ships will report through the Vessel Traffic Services system, REEFVTS.

Within the extended area, REEFVTS will provide the same measures to enhance navigational safety and protect the marine environment as are currently provided between Torres Strait and High Peak (south of Mackay).

## Background

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) adopted Australia's proposal for a mandatory Ship Reporting System (REEFREP) in 1996 as a mechanism to enhance navigational safety, reduce the risk of shipping incidents and minimise any resulting ship-sourced pollution within the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait. REEFREP was one of the world's first mandatory ship reporting systems and came into force on 1 January 1997.

Since then Australia has progressively enhanced the delivery of services in the region through a suite of measures such as Automated Position Reporting via Inmarsat C, Automatic Identification System (AIS) and the use of decision-support tools.

These measures led to the introduction of REEFVTS in 2004, following IMO approval of Australia's submission proposing amendments to REEFREP.

REEFREP is an integral component of REEFVTS. Within the REEFVTS Area ships identify themselves and report their intended passage through the region. This information, together with sophisticated monitoring and communication systems, enables REEFVTS to monitor a ship's transit through the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait.

The introduction of REEFVTS is attributed to significantly reducing the number of groundings, from one per year between 1997 and 2003 to only one incident between the years 2004 and 2009. In addition, the provision of assistance to ships approaching shallow waters has successfully averted groundings on at least six occasions.

## Why extend the REEFVTS Area?

The incident involving the bulk carrier *Shen Neng 1* on Douglas Shoal in the Great Barrier Reef on 3 April 2010 highlighted the need to reassess measures for mitigating risks associated with shipping activity in the Great Barrier Reef.

Following the incident, AMSA released a report entitled "Improving Safe Navigation in the Great Barrier Reef (April 2010)". The report noted that Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) provide a cost effective mechanism and proven track record of mitigating the risk of groundings and recommended that REEFVTS coverage be extended to the southern boundary of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

## What was required to extend REEFVTS?

Extending the delivery of services provided by REEFVTS required:

- approval from the IMO to extend boundaries of the REEFREP mandatory ship reporting system; and
- expansion of the monitoring and communication systems to provide REEFVTS with comparable capabilities to monitor the extended area.

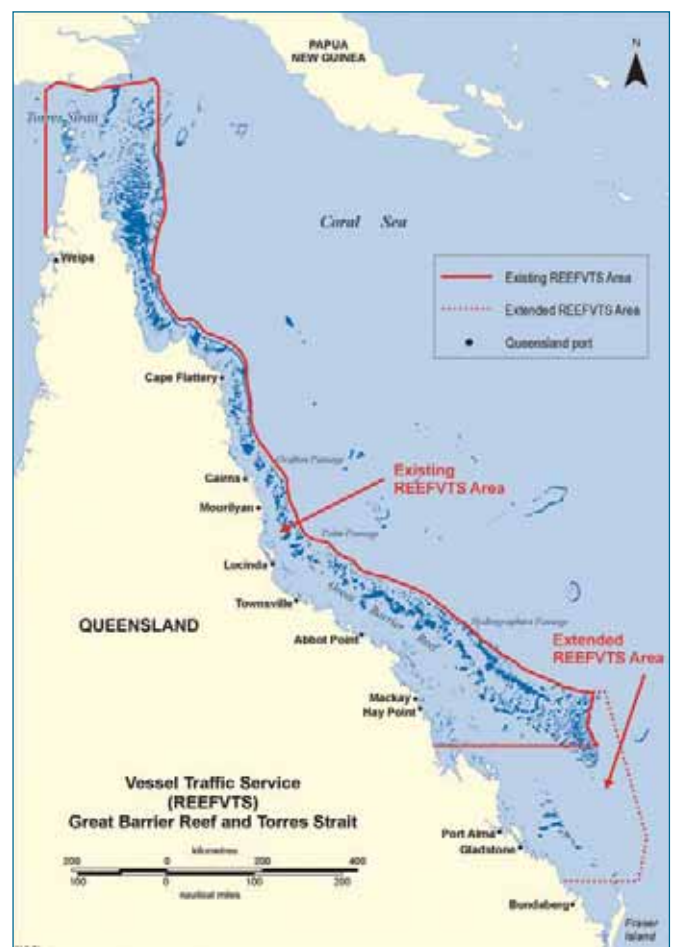


Figure 1: Boundaries of the new REEFVTS Area

**Summary of the changes**

**1. Amendments to Legislation**

Marine Orders Part 56 is being amended to give legislative effect to the extension. The changes will come into effect on 1 July 2011.

**2. New Ship Reporting Points**

Historical ship traffic data was analysed to identify the standard shipping routes and common entry/exit points in the extended area. The new reporting points and standard shipping routes are shown in Figure 2.

**3. New Hydrographic Charts**

Australian Hydrographic Charts AUS 4620 and AUS 4621 have been updated, and new charts AUS 4635 and AUS 490 have been compiled to show the extended REEFVTS Area.

**4. Additional Infrastructure and Monitoring Sensors**

Seven new AIS and five new VHF installations will provide additional ship monitoring and voice communications capabilities in the extended area.

Most of the extended area will be covered by voice communications through VHF. Where VHF coverage is not possible due to the large area covered, the use of Inmarsat C messaging will enable effective communications.

**5. Decision Support Tools**

REEFVTS uses a suite of decision-support tools to monitor the transit of individual ships and assist the

Vessel Traffic Services Operator to determine where interaction may be necessary to assist on-board decision-making. This could include situations where a ship may be standing into shallow water, deviating from a recommended route or is apparently not altering course at a critical waypoint.

The use of these tools will be extended to the new area.

**6. Revised User Guide**

A revised REEFVTS User Guide will replace the current User Manual to reflect the extended REEFVTS Area.

Copies may be requested by email: reefvts@amsa.gov.au or obtained on-line at www.amsa.gov.au or www.msq.qld.gov.au.

**7. Revised VHF Communications**

The VHF Channels in the existing REEFVTS Area have been reviewed and rationalised to VHF Channels 11 and 14. These alternate through the REEFVTS Area based on latitude (see table below). This change will be implemented to coincide with the extension of REEFVTS on 1 July 2011.

Latitude from:	Latitude to:	VHF Channel
9° 00' S	13° 30' S	14
13° 30' S	18° 00' S	11
18° 00' S	20° 00' S	14
20° 00' S	22° 00' S	11
22° 00' S	24° 30' S	14

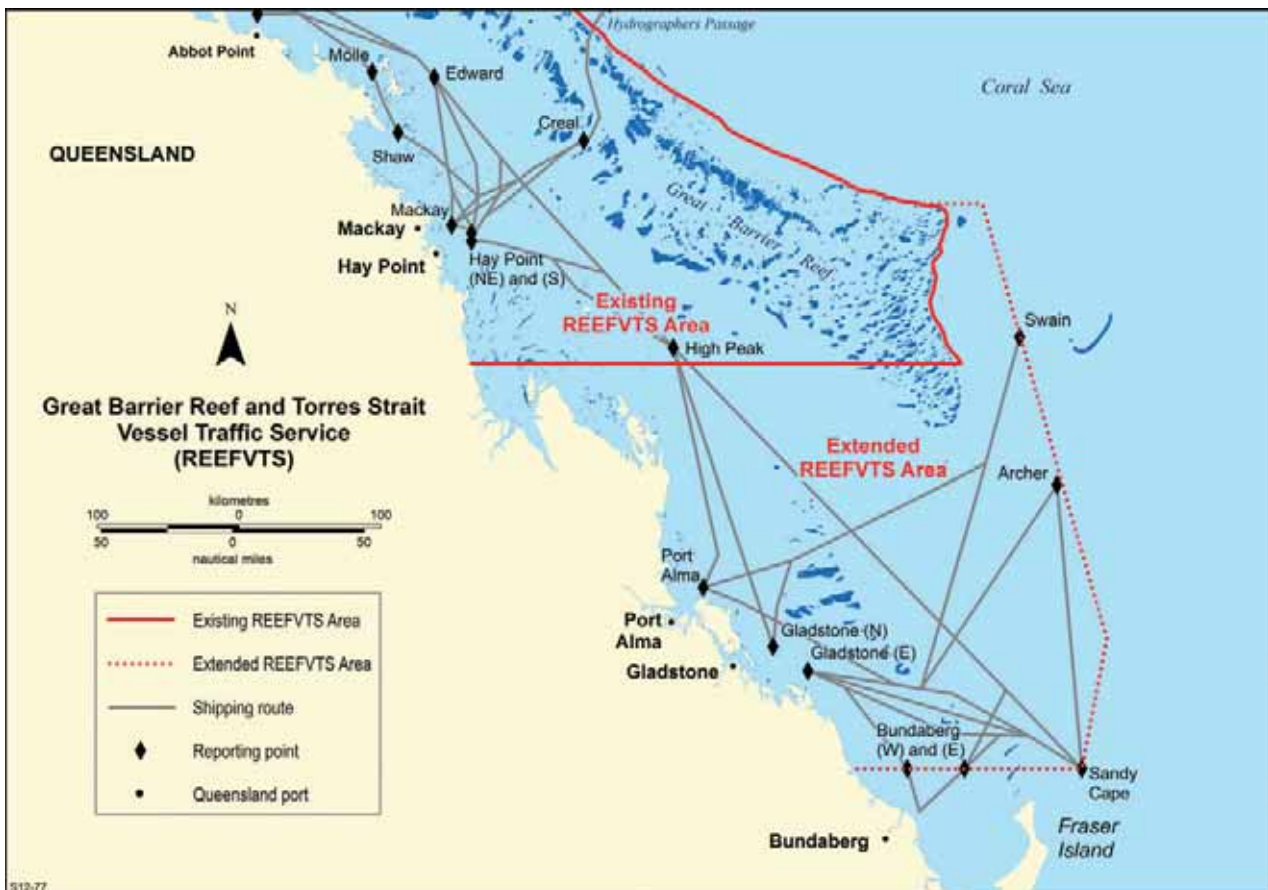


Figure 2: New ship reporting points and standard shipping routes