



Sewage management for vessels in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park - New vessel sewage discharge regulations

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What do the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park vessel sewage regulations mean to me?

- If you carry 16 or **more** people on your boat you will need to store your sewage and may discharge it at least one nautical mile seawards from the nearest reef, island, mainland or an aquaculture facility.
- If you carry 15 or **less** people on your boat, you may pump out untreated sewage in the Marine Park if you are outside of a boat harbour or marina or more than one nautical mile from an aquaculture facility.
- Other options are available for discharging treated sewage (*see below*).

What if I have a fixed toilet on board?

All toilets on vessels need to be fitted with a macerator to reduce the sewage into a fine slurry so as to improve visual amenity and speed up the breakdown of the waste in the receiving environment. Most electric toilets contain macerators or they can be purchased separately.

Can I discharge treated sewage into the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park?

The new regulations provide details of treatment standards, generally adopted from Maritime Safety Queensland. These specify that:

- Sewage treated to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's tertiary standard in subregulation 135(3) can be discharged anywhere in the Marine Park unless contrary to a permission.
- Grade A treated sewage can be discharged anywhere outside of a boat harbour, canal and marina.
- Grade B treated sewage can be discharged outside of a boat harbour, canal or marina provided it is discharged at a distance of more than 700 metres seawards of the seaward edge of the nearest reef, aquaculture operation or person in the water.
- Grade C treated sewage can be discharged outside of a boat harbour, canal or marina provided it is discharged at a distance of more than a half nautical mile seawards of the seaward edge of the nearest reef, aquaculture operation or person in the water.

Details of sewage treatment standards for Grade A, B and C are described in Regulation 93B.

What type of treatment system should I buy?

A treatment system manufacturer should be able to advise you on the capabilities of a range of treatment systems and help you to determine the best one for your vessel. Generally, tertiary treatment systems remove at least 90 percent of the nutrients present in the sewage. Grade A and Grade B systems macerate, disinfect and remove some of the nutrients in the sewage while Grade C systems tend only to macerate and disinfect the sewage.


Aligning with Maritime Safety Queensland regulations

What happens when I am in Queensland waters?

Although written in a different format, the new Great Barrier Reef Marine Park regulations are nearly the same as the Queensland State Government vessel sewage management requirements. This will help to provide vessel owners or operators with a single approach to vessel sewage management in

GUIDE ONLY - Please read the GBRMPA Regulations for details.





Queensland coastal waters and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

The only significant difference between the State Government vessel sewage management regulations and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park regulations is that the State Government stipulates additional 'no discharge areas' within designated areas of State marine parks. For details of the Maritime Safety Queensland vessel sewage management requirements see www.msq.qld.gov.au/qt/msq.nsf/index/sewage_mgt.

Commercial vessels

Maritime Safety Queensland stipulates additional requirements for commercial vessels. Does the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority also have such requirements?

Maritime Safety Queensland requires commercial vessels to have on board a shipboard sewage management plan and to keep sewage disposal records when discharging into a sewage disposal facility. All declared vessels with a treatment system are also required to have on board system documentation and manuals for operating and maintaining the system.

The vessel sewage regulations for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park do not place any additional requirements on commercial vessels in respect of vessel sewage. However, vessels undertaking commercial activities in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park generally require written permission from the Great Barrier

Reef Marine Park Authority and/or the Environmental Protection Agency. These permissions or permits may stipulate additional requirements for vessels to manage their sewage in some circumstances, for example tourist pontoons.

Compliance with new regulations

How and when will the new regulations be enforced?

The GBRMPA will primarily rely on educational materials to raise awareness of the importance of vessel sewage management in the Marine Park. Enforcement activities will largely be undertaken by Queensland government agencies through random inspections of vessels and, in the case of commercial operators, review of the sewage disposal record book. Vessel owners, masters and operators will be expected to demonstrate compliance with the new regulations.

What are the fines for discharging vessel sewage in the wrong places?

A penalty of 50 penalty units (A\$5,500) applies to persons engaged in unlawful conduct causing the discharge of sewage in, or into, the Marine Park.

Effects of sewage on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

What are the effects of sewage waste discharge (from vessels) on coral reefs?

The marine environment has adapted to nutrients that come from birds and other marine life.

Typically, increased nutrient and pathogen loadings can affect coral reefs and tropical seagrasses particularly in poorly flushed areas such as bays and lagoons. Localised effects on the coral reef include reduced species diversity, lower coral cover and suppressed coral recruitment.

Vessel sewage is a minor contributor to the nutrient load in the Reef compared to the run-off from urban areas, sewage treatment plants and farms.

The GBRMPA is working with other Queensland and Australian Government agencies / departments to develop and implement plans of management and strategies that will help to reduce the input of highly nutrient loaded effluent into the Great Barrier Reef by 2010. These policies and plans will encourage waste water recycling and treatment of the waste water to tertiary treatment standards.

The Queensland and Australian Governments have also implemented the *Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Protection Plan*, which aims to halt and reverse the decline in the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park within 10 years.

For more information visit www.gbrmpa.gov.au or contact the Great Barrier Reef Marine park Authority on (07) 4750 0700.

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