

# Consultation Paper

Implementation of dedicated ship anchorages at Abbot Point

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# Document control options

## Departmental approvals

Refer to the appropriate Risk Assessment Tool for relevant reviewer and approver

Date	Name	Position	Action required (Review/endorse/approve)	Due
4/12/2020	Frank D'Souza	RHM Townsville	Endorsed	
21/1/2020	Paul Brandenburg	ED (MS)	Endorsed	
21/2/2020	Jennifer Tumbers	A/GM (MSQ)	Approved	

## Risk level

☐ GACC major      ☐ GACC minor      ☐ High risk (but not GACC)      ☐ Medium risk

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<b>Project/program</b>	Implementation of dedicated ship anchorages at Abbot Point
<b>Project number</b>	
<b>Project location</b>	
<b>Status</b>	Final
<b>DMS ref. no.</b>	

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of consultation paper

The purpose of this document is to explain Maritime Safety Queensland's (MSQ) intent with respect to the implementation of dedicated ship anchorages at Abbot Point.

## 1.2 How to respond to this consultation paper

The closing date for providing comment on this paper is 28 February 2020.

Written submissions should be sent to:

Mail: Maritime Safety Queensland  
GPO Box 2595  
Brisbane QLD 4001  
Or  
Email: [consultation@msq.qld.gov.au](mailto:consultation@msq.qld.gov.au)

## 1.3 Access to submissions

This paper has been sent directly to stakeholders originally identified in the 2015 proposal. Access to this paper is also available through MSQ's Townsville office.

Ph: (07) 44218100

Email: [Townsville.Maritime@msq.qld.gov.au](mailto:Townsville.Maritime@msq.qld.gov.au)

## 1.4 Consideration of issues raised

After the comment period closes, MSQ will consider issues raised. Further consultation may occur to address concerns of significance prior to the development of a final position on the implementation of dedicated ship anchorages at Abbot Point.

## 1.5 Further enquires

Further enquiries can be made to MSQ's Townsville office by:

Ph: (07) 44218100

Email: [Townsville.Maritime@msq.qld.gov.au](mailto:Townsville.Maritime@msq.qld.gov.au)

# 2. Background

One of the Queensland Government's key priorities for the community is the protection of the Great Barrier Reef. Protecting the environmental, social, and economic value of the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) drives many of the Queensland Government's environmental policies and activities.

It is recognised that shipping plays a critically important role developing industries and supporting communities, as well as expanding the Queensland economy. It is essential for Queensland's economy that shipping routes through the Great Barrier Reef remain open and available to shipping on an equitable basis. Limiting the environmental footprint of shipping by implementing a dedicated ship anchorage at Abbot Point is one way that the government supports the local community and economy while also protecting the GBR.

The port of Abbott Point does not currently have dedicated anchorages. Ships needing to anchor off this port currently choose their own location of where to anchor. This has led to a wide area of seabed being affected by ships anchors. It should be noted that the creation of a dedicated anchorage will not in itself attract additional ships but is designed to allow for a more orderly and predictable use of the waterway by existing and future ship traffic.

In 2015, in response to plans to expand the port, MSQ investigated the potential to implement a dedicated anchorage for the Port of Abbot Point. That investigation included consultation with key stakeholders who generally agreed that the proposal was good for on-water safety and offered suggestions on its preferred location, size and use. Due to the port expansion not materialising, the proposed anchorage was not progressed at that time.

With mining approvals now granted for the Galilei Basin and an increased focus on the environmental protections for the GBR, MSQ is re-visiting the need for a more formal anchorage management practice for the port.

Drivers for a dedicated anchorage include:

- enhanced focus on protecting the GBR
- projected mine developments that will utilise the port of Abbot Point
- an increase in the number of ships expected to need to go to anchor

## 3.Objectives

The introduction of designated anchorages in Abbot Point supports the Queensland Government's objectives for the community.

- Keep communities safe:
  - providing a level of certainty to trawl fishermen where they can expect to encounter seabed disturbances caused by ship's anchors to reduce occurrences of hook-ups
  - providing a level of certainty to recreation and commercial boaters on where they will encounter ships at anchor
- Protect the Great Barrier Reef by:
  - minimising the geographic area of seabed disturbance from ship's anchors and its effect on benthic habitat
  - minimising the geographic area of potential disturbance to marine animal behaviour from ship's operations
  - reducing the overall footprint of anchorage area
- Create jobs in a strong economy:
  - Maintain open access by the fishing and boating communities to the anchorage area
  - Facilitating the safe and efficient movement of trade ships to the port

## 4.Intent

The intent is to implement dedicated anchorages for trade ships to use when visiting the port.

## 5. Legislation

MSQ is a branch of the Department of Transport and Main Roads within the Customer Services, Safety and Regulation Division. MSQ's role is to protect Queensland's waterways and the people who use them—providing safer, cleaner seas.

MSQ is responsible for:

- improving maritime safety for shipping and small craft through regulation and education
- minimising vessel-sourced waste and responding to marine pollution
- providing essential maritime services such as aids to navigation and vessel traffic services
- encouraging and supporting innovation in the maritime industry

MSQ exercises its power through the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994 and the Transport Operations (Marine Pollution) Act 1995.

MSQ's Regional Harbour Masters have the power under part 7 of the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) Act 1994 ('the Marine Safety Act') to designate anchorages for ships waiting to use Queensland ports, in or adjacent to pilotage areas.

## 6. Previous consultation

### 6.1 Design Criteria

MSQ is committed to the safe movement of ships in the GBR and the protection of the marine environment from the potential impact of ship sourced pollution.

MSQ has previously worked with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, North Queensland Bulk Ports and stakeholder groups to identify the best location and management practices for anchorages at the Port of Abbot Point.

Implementing the proposed anchorages will provide a level of certainty to other ships, fishing vessels and recreational boaters, of where they can expect to encounter large ships to anchor. It is also expected that having dedicated anchorage positions will dramatically reduce the overall area of seafloor that is directly impacted by a ship's anchor.

In determining a suitable anchorage location, MSQ has reviewed where ships are currently anchoring and also taken into consideration the following:

- Outstanding Universal Values of the GBR
- navigational safety in the area
- minimise adverse effects on the marine environment, position in already disturbed areas where possible
- access for competing users of the waterway
- reduce and minimise overall impact on other waterway users
- proximity to the port to limit pilotage time and enhance port efficiency.
- prevailing winds, tides and sea conditions
- depth of water and quality of sea bottom – provides suitable holding ground for ships anchor and to determine the length of ship's chain and swing radius/diameter of the anchorage.
- separation of groups of anchorage - to avoid ships criss-crossing when manoeuvring towards the Pilot Boarding Ground or shipping channel
- the ability to evacuate the anchorages in an efficient manner in the event of an approaching cyclone or a severe weather event

- anchorage to be a safe distance from a hazard (e.g rocks, shoal, reef etc) or other ships - to enable the ship to take action in case of dragging.
- a suitable distance away from any known environmentally sensitive area or known wrecks
- location to be accessible by boats or helicopter in the event of a medical emergency, pilot transfer or supply of parts/provisions.
- number of anchorages to meet the estimated level of demand
- anchorages are to be within port VTS coverage for control and monitoring

## 6.2 Initial design

The initial anchorage design, shown at Appendix A, was released for comment as part of the 2015 consultation process.

There was overwhelming support for the implementation of designated anchorages.

There were varied comments about where the exact location of the anchorages should be.

Generally, the main themes from the feedback were:

- minimise the overall footprint as much as possible
- constrain to those already most disturbed and with least environmental impact
- minimise effect on trawl fishing
- fishermen to retain access
- no anchorage within proposed two-way route

Based on feedback from stakeholders the initial design was amended to minimise the overall footprint of the anchorage. The location of the anchorage area was also moved slightly to the east so that it does not encroach on fishing effort grid L22 or on the charted two-way route's northern approach to the port. This resulted in the revised anchorage design shown at Appendix B.

## 6.3 Proposed design

MSQ has revisited the 2015 proposed designated anchorages, reviewed the consultation and amended the proposed configuration of the anchorages to further accommodate suggestions, namely;

- *The preferred option is to utilise the deeper anchorages (i.e. the most easterly positions) first. This would minimise the impacts to the more productive fishing grounds, keeping the anchored ships further away from working fishing vessels.*

MSQ has removed all anchorages that are within the 30m contour. VTS will direct vessels to the seaward 2 rows and only use the inner row (closest to the 30m contour) if required.

- *It would be best to have a wider separation between the anchorages as this would provide increased ease and safety for trawl operations to continue fishing between ships at anchor.*

The revised design provides for between 1.2 to 1.6 nm from a 2-cable arc of the centre of each anchorage. Given the technology and experience of Trawler Master's this is adequate clearance to safely trawl between ships and keep well clear of the anchor divots which are expected to be confined to around the centre of the anchorage circle.

- *Most heavily used anchorages should be the ones that carry the lowest risk of the range of impacts under consideration and proposed for consideration.*

VTS will direct vessels to the seaward 2 rows and only use the inner row (closest to the 30m contour) if required.

The revised design layout is shown at Appendix C. This is the anchorage layout being proposed.



## 6.4 Management practices

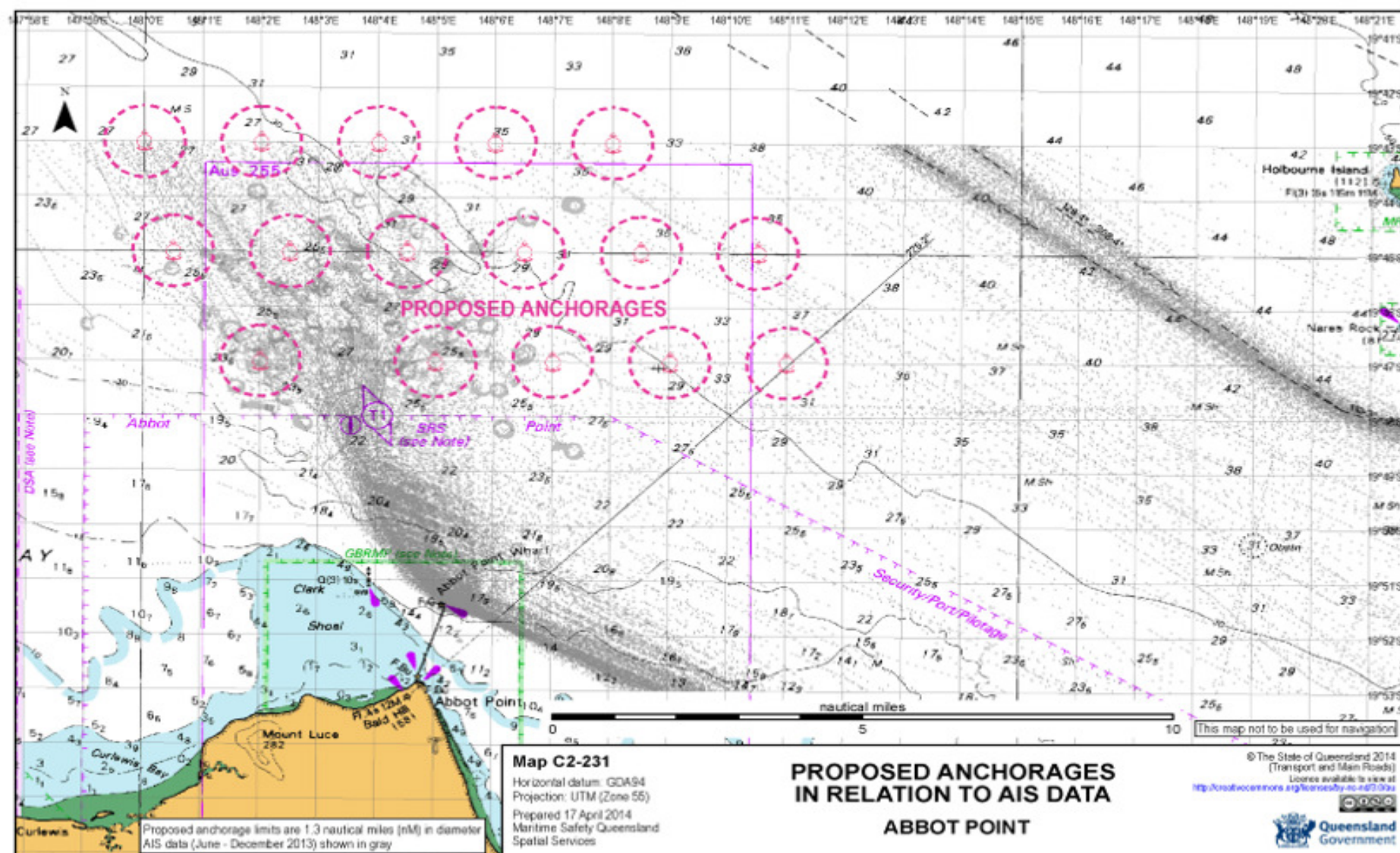
A number of the responses raised concerns more related to anchor management practices, rather than the location of the anchorage. These include:

- minimising the area affected by ships anchoring
- constrain anchoring to heavily used anchorages with least environmental risk – those areas that are already disturbed
- access to and through the anchorage area remains open
- utilise deeper anchorages the most to minimise effect on fishing grounds

The following anchorage management practices will be adopted in order to address any concerns

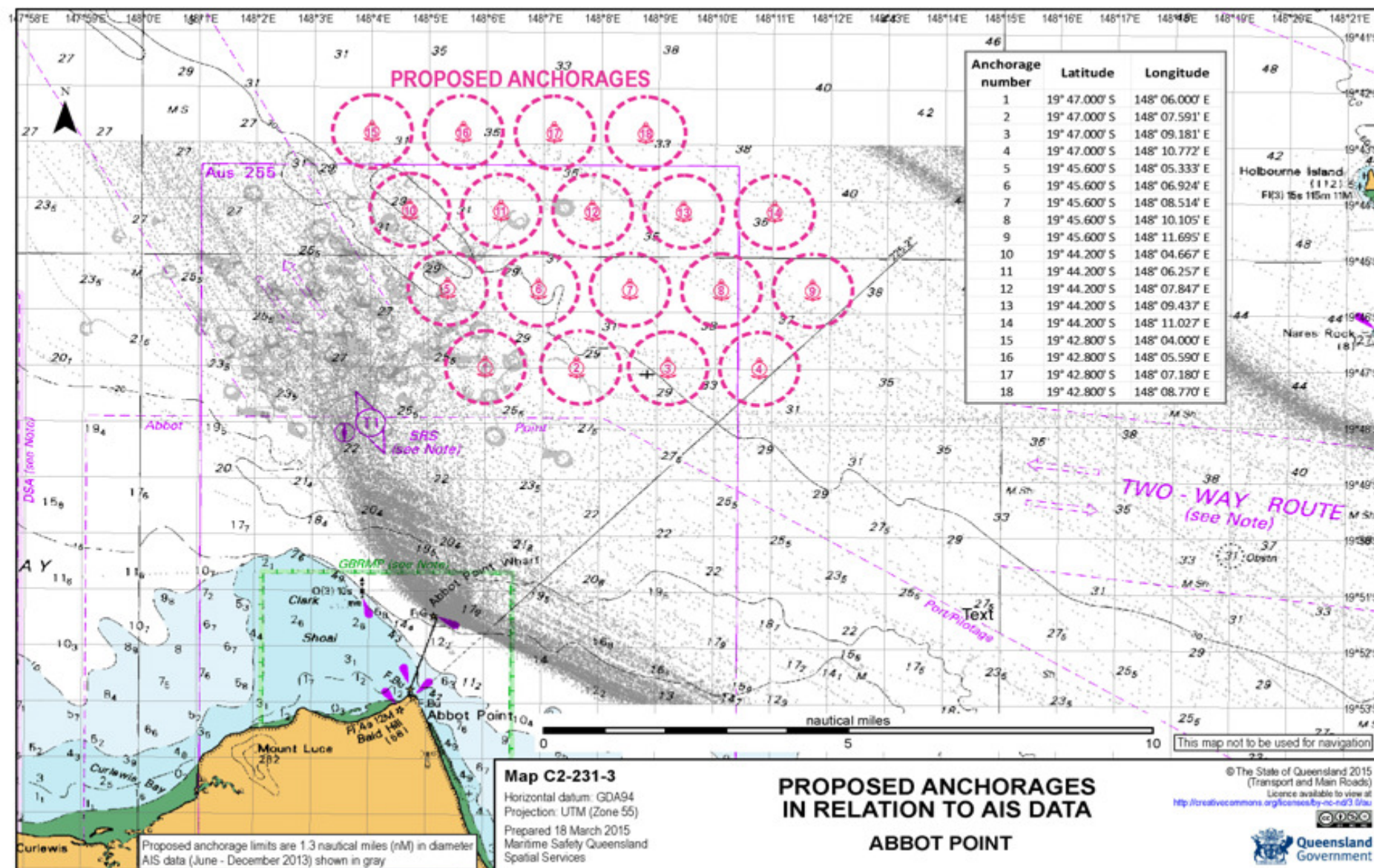
- the distance between anchorages will be kept to a safe minimum separation in order to minimise the area effected by ships anchors
- coordinates of the centre of the anchorage area will be provided to ships planning on going to anchor, this will limit the area effected by the anchor drop around the centre of the anchorage circle
- no access restrictions will be implemented over the anchorage area.
- Abbot Point VTS will designate the anchorage to the ship and will concentrate on using the deepest anchorages

## Appendix A – Initial anchorage concept design 2015





## Appendix B – Revised anchorage design from 2015 consultation





# Appendix C – Proposed anchorage design 2019

