



## AUSMEPA MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Grounding of the Shen Neng 1 38 kms East of Great Keppel Island**

AUSMEPA, like all other marine environmental organisations and associations is very concerned at the grounding of the 65,000 tonne coal carrier Shen Neng 1 in the pristine waters in the southern part of the Great Barrier Reef and the potential for environmental harm from the grounding, including the possible break up of the vessel and the release of the 950 tonnes of bunker oil.

A spill of this magnitude of bunker oil is often far more serious in terms of the harm it can cause the environment than the loss of many thousands of tonnes of light crude oil, carried as cargo in tankers.

While Australia's National Plan to combat pollution of the sea was quickly brought into action including aerial chemical dispersant spraying, we are still to hear of the Salvage Master's plan to refloat the vessel and if necessary the possible transfer of the bunker oil to another vessel. This will clearly take some time to evaluate.

While a number of uninformed people are jumping to demand extending further south the current mandatory pilotage scheme which operates from Cairns to Torres Strait. Firstly such a requirement would need to be justified and secondly it would take many years to implement, including obtaining international approval. At this stage based on many previous studies this is not warranted in this region of the Great Barrier Reef where navigation is not sufficiently complex to require a pilot.

However, a much quicker solution and one which would help prevent a grounding such as the **Shen Neng 1** and one which serious consideration

should be given, is to extend the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait Vessel Traffic Service, jointly operated by the Federal and Queensland governments. This traffic service monitors ships movements through the Barrier Reef and has the capacity to warn ships if they get off course. This service was enhanced following other groundings off Cairns several years ago.

This system has proved successful in avoiding a number of groundings in the area in which it operates. See

[http://www.msq.qld.gov.au/~media/msqfiles/home/shipping/reefrep-changes/pdf\\_reefvts\\_user\\_manual\\_pt1.pdf](http://www.msq.qld.gov.au/~media/msqfiles/home/shipping/reefrep-changes/pdf_reefvts_user_manual_pt1.pdf)

Unfortunately the current area for this service commences at latitude 22 Degrees South, which is roughly halfway between Yeppoon and Mackay, up to Torres Strait, this is about 120 kms north of where the Shen Neng 1 grounded.

AUSMEPA will closely monitor the ongoing National Plan response to this incident as well as the investigations by various agencies.

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