

Frances Bay Mooring Basin upgrade – Project update October 2021

Background

- The Northern Territory Government announced a \$20 million upgrade of the Frances Bay Mooring Basin in March 2021 to replace the lock.
- The mooring basin was opened in 1987 and the lock has been providing access in and out of the basin for around 35 years.
- The mooring basin provides 91 berths which offer weather protection while vessels are tethered at the basin. However, the basin does not provide full cyclone protection.
- There are approximately 136 vessels which regularly base their operations within the mooring basin.

Key facts

- The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics (DIPL) commissioned engineering reports to investigate the current condition of the lock.
- These reports indicated that the lock and particularly the doors are close to the end of their economic life, and that without significant upgrades, access through the lock into the mooring basin will become increasingly more constrained due to maintenance issues.
- The priority elements identified for replacement are the tie bars, lock doors and deteriorating concrete structures.
- It was originally anticipated that the basin could be closed for a significant period of time while necessary upgrade works are completed. However, further engineering analysis and consultation with stakeholders and industry is vital to determining the best approach to undertake the required upgrades.
- The Northern Territory Government is committed to consulting and working with stakeholders to determine solutions to maintain business continuity during construction of the upgrade works.
- DIPL has listened to industry concerns about the impact the lock closure would cause and industry's needs for suitable facilities to undertake cargo operations, perform maintenance and to access and secure their vessels.
- DIPL understands the significant anxiety from operators about how they will continue to operate during the construction of the project, and concerns from associated industries such as road transport. DIPL will continue to work in collaboration with industry to mitigate impacts as far as practically possible.
- Currently, DIPL is exploring other available wharf space in Darwin Harbour for cargo and maintenance operations, as well as moorings for vessels. These investigations have found that Fishermen's Wharf cannot accommodate both maintenance and cargo operations and that the Raptis and Hornibrook wharves are constrained but may be utilised as part of a holistic solution.

Next steps

- DIPL is meeting regularly with industry representatives via the Maritime Industry Council of the Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce, the Northern Territory Seafood Council and the Northern Territory Road Transport Association.
- DIPL is discussing potential contingency options with the operator of the Darwin Port including consideration and exploration of how barges may be used as well as suitable locations for moorings in Darwin Harbour.
- DIPL is currently undertaking market research to understand availability, cost and capacity of existing operators in the marine services industry to provide facilities and services.
- Industry will be consulted throughout to ensure the best possible solution is adopted.
- Industry and stakeholder feedback is very welcome to co-develop a solution to progress this vital project.