



NMSC Media Release

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National guidelines offer equivalent safety solutions for commercial vessels

The National Marine Safety Committee (NMSC) has released for public comment a draft administrative protocol to be used by Marine Safety Agencies when reviewing equivalent solutions for the design, construction and operation of commercial vessels. The draft guidelines propose a new process for the national approval of generic equivalent solutions in relation to compliance with the National Standard for Commercial Vessels (NSCV).

NMSC's CEO Ms Margie O'Tarpey said the NSCV has been developed to provide national uniformity in the technical requirements applied to commercial vessels in Australia, making it easier for a vessel designed and constructed in one state to then go into service in a different state.

"Vessels which comply with the deemed-to-satisfy solutions in the NSCV should already be able to move between different states and territories without the need for reassessment by the local Marine Safety Agency," Ms O'Tarpey said, "however, having generic equivalent solutions considered and approved at the national level will provide a similar benefit for vessels that achieve an acceptable safety level in an alternative, yet equally satisfactory, manner".

Standards Team Leader for NMSC, John Henry further explained that the equivalent solutions concept caters for innovative design and new approaches, while deemed-to-satisfy provisions are applicable to well-established designs and traditional practices.

"The NSCV sets out a risk-based approach to determine whether or not the equivalent solution proposed provides an acceptable level of safety," Mr Henry said.

"In some cases, the proposed equivalent solution would only be considered adequate to deliver the safety outcome in certain operational areas, like on an inland river in which case it would be called a 'local equivalent solution' – by contrast, a generic equivalent solution would have no such restrictions".

A national Peer Advisory Network (PAN), as proposed in the draft guidance manual, will provide a forum where regulators can come together to agree whether a proposed generic equivalent solution will deliver the necessary level of safety under all the circumstances the vessel could encounter around Australia.

"The overall aim of a national guidance manual like this one is to build confidence in the national system of marine safety", Ms O'Tarpey added, "and we can do this by ensuring that a common approach is taken by all those charged with the important role of assessing vessels for compliance with the NSCV.

"In the spirit of transparency, we are seeking feedback from industry on this proposed administrative protocol, including any ways it might be improved to deliver a better service to vessel owners and operators".

Have your say

To obtain a copy of the draft guidance manual please phone [02] 9247 2124 or download from website: www.nmsc.gov.au click on 'Have Your Say'. **The comment period closes on 30 January 2010**

The NMSC aims to achieve nationally uniform marine safety practices and is made up of an Independent Chair and the CEOs of Australia's marine safety agencies.

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