IMO-adopted ships’ routeing systems to be introduced in
the Coral Sea

Mariners, shipowners, ship operators and
agents are advised that the International
Maritime Organization (IMO) has adopted
two new two-way routes and an associated
area to be avoided (ATBA) in the Coral Sea
(Figure 1).

These measures come into effect at 0000
hours UTC on 1 January 2016.

The routeing systems will serve as
associated protective measures for the
recently-extended Great Barrier Reef and
Torres Strait Particularly Sensitive Sea
Area in the Coral Sea.

Regulation V/10 of SOLAS (Ships’
routeing) provides for IMO-adopted ships’
routeing systems that may be
recommended for use by some or all ships.

**Two-way routes**
The five mile wide, two-way routes aim to
separate opposing streams of traffic and
keep ships clear of the shoals, reefs and
islands that lie in close proximity. The 60
nautical mile (nm) route in Diamond
Passage aligns with the existing traffic
pattern (Figure 2). The 53 nm route west of
Holmes Reefs provides a routeing measure
for ships navigating west of the ATBA
(Figure 3).

**Area to be avoided**
The ATBA aims to enhance safety by
keeping ships away from the charted reefs,
islets and cays, which lie between the two-
way routes (Figure 4).

In order to reduce the risk of a maritime
casualty and potential harm to the sensitive
marine environment, transiting ships that
are required to conform to SOLAS
requirements, should not enter the ATBA.
However, ships that demonstrate an
operational need to visit a location within
the ATBA (e.g. cruise ships) and which
have adequate risk mitigation measures in
place, may enter the ATBA.

**General**
Use of the two-way routes and avoidance
of the ATBA is recommended - but not
mandatory. The two-way routes do not give
vessels any special right of way. They do
not affect other obligations (for instance
those associated with the prevention of
collisions at sea), as applicable.

The Australian Hydrographic Service (AHS)
will incorporate the new routeing measures
in relevant paper and electronic charts.
AHS will advise by Notices to Mariners
when these updates are available.

Shipowners, ship operators and agents are
urged to ensure information on the new
routeing measures is provided to their
ships operating in the region.

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Figure 1: The IMO-adopted ships’ routeing systems in the Coral Sea
Figure 2: The two-way route in Diamond Passage

Figure 3: The two-way route west of Holmes Reef
Figure 4: The Area to be avoided, lying between the two-way routes