

Darwin's Ship Lift Project

July 2021



Fact Sheet #2



This fact sheet provides an update on progress with the Darwin Ship Lift Project and expected timelines.

Key activities in the next few months include:

- lodging a referral to the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment for assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
- lodging an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) by the Darwin-based office of AECOM
- an application to the Development Consent Authority (DCA)
- final procurement stages to appoint a design and construct contractor.

Overview of the project

The Northern Territory Government is building the largest ship lift in northern Australia. The Darwin Ship Lift Facility will enable the maintenance and servicing of Defence, Australian Border Force, commercial and private vessels, including from the oil, gas and marine industries.

The project is critical enabling infrastructure that supports the Northern Territory Government's vision of establishing a world-class maritime services and supply industry for Northern Australia.

Better marine facilities should unlock private sector investment and complement a marine industries precinct at East Arm, capitalising on Darwin's deep-water port, strategic location and multi-modal transport and logistics capabilities.

The project has been funded by a \$300 million concessional loan from the Northern Australian Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) and \$100 million from the Northern Territory Government.

Location

The Darwin Ship Lift Project will be built at the end of the East Arm Peninsula between the Marine Supply Base at the Port of Darwin and the multi-user barge ramp facility (MUBRF) at the Marine Industry Park.

Land use zoning under the NT Planning Scheme 2020 is DV – Development, which allows for major industries with strategic importance to the future economic development of the Territory.

Environmental studies

In December 2019, the NT EPA issued terms of reference for an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Darwin Ship Lift Project.

In May 2020, the Northern Territory Government awarded a tender to the national environmental and engineering consultancy, AECOM, to prepare the EIS.

Studies covered by the EIS include:

- marine water quality
- marine sediment sampling and analysis
- benthic (sea floor) habitat mapping, including seagrass
- marine ecology, including mangroves and marine animals such as dolphins, turtles and dugongs
- terrestrial (land-based) soil sampling
- social and economic impact assessment
- heritage and cultural heritage
- noise, vibration, light and air quality.

The above studies will be incorporated into the draft EIS, which will go on public exhibition, along with a summary document, for comment by the public. Other regulatory approvals include a development application to the Development Consent Authority (DCA) NT, a dredge management plan, a waste discharge licence and an Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority sacred sites clearance certificate.

The Darwin Ship Lift Project location and indicative layout (next to East Arm Port)





Draft concept layout showing what the facility may look like

Construction

Procurement for the design and construction for the facility commenced with a call for expressions of interest (EOI). The EOI stage is complete and the following respondents will be invited to participate in the request for proposals (RFP) stage:

- Clough Projects Australia Pty Ltd
- McConnell Dowell Constructors (Aust) Pty Ltd
- Sitzler Pty Ltd
- Territoria Civil
- Watpac Construction Pty Ltd.

The RFP stage will involve more detailed assessment to further shortlist the respondents to proceed to the final detailed design development stage.

The procurement process is being promoted by the NT Industry and Capability Network, which focuses on buying local and supporting local businesses.

A construction contractor is expected to be appointed in the first half of 2022. Subject to regulatory approvals and awarding of contracts, construction is expected to start in mid-2022.

Dredging

Dredging will create a manoeuvring basin, as well as the berth and ship lift pockets.

The dredging volume for the project is expected to be about 500,000 cubic metres. This compares with 685,000 cubic metres dredged for the Marine Supply Base.

Most of the dredge spoil will be used in land reclamation for the project. Subject to agreement with Darwin Port, some of the finer dredged material may be pumped to the Port of Darwin dredge spoil ponds if it cannot be used for reclamation.

Approvals for the dredging campaign (Dredge and Dredge Spoil Placement Management Plan, Waste Discharge Licence and development consent) will be submitted at the same time as the EIS.

Operations of the Darwin Ship Lift Facility

This critical piece of enabling infrastructure will be a common user facility and a Northern Territory-owned asset. Access to facilities and infrastructure will be available to anyone on a user-pays basis subject to access and pricing legislation and regulated by the Utilities Commission.

Vessel owners will be able to choose and manage their own service and maintenance providers. This means that multiple providers will be able to operate concurrently at the facility.

What will people see and hear?

Construction is expected to take about two years after a design and construct contractor has been appointed, subject to reclamation consolidation and seasonal effects. While general construction will take place during normal working hours, tide-dependent activities (dredging and piling) may need to be done at night. This is similar to work done for the Marine Supply Base in 2012.

There is likely to be some additional turbidity in the water during dredging, however mitigation measure will be deployed to reduce these effects, which will be short-term. The dredge spoil will be pumped straight to dredge spoil ponds at East Arm or recycled for reclamation works at the site.

A key aspect of the environmental studies is to avoid disturbance to any cultural and heritage sites in the Harbour. While surveys have been undertaken and cultural and heritage clearances gained to remove this risk, there will be further engagement with key stakeholders to comment on and provide feedback that will be taken into account.

Safety during dredging and construction

Construction contractors will be required to comply with the Regional Harbour Master's directions for marine safety during dredging, piling and reclamation works, including public notices and exclusion zones marked with buoys and navigation lighting at night.



Draft concept of the facility layout

Components of the project

The proposal covers waterside and landside infrastructure across 27 hectares. This area includes 4.5 hectares of existing land, 8.5 hectares of reclaimed land and 9.0 hectares of water (see the photo above). The waterside infrastructure includes:

- a common user ship lift (103 metres long and 26 metres wide, capable of lifting vessels up to 5000 tonnes)
- all-tide wet berths for vessel mooring
- a manoeuvring basin
- access channel
- navigation aids.

The facility is designed to lift vessels out of the water so they can be serviced, repaired or stored, including for safety during cyclones.

The landside infrastructure includes:

- a vessel wash-down area with a separate contained drainage system
- dry berths for vessel maintenance and repair works
- a blast and paint facility
- vessel transfer area
- hardstands and laydown areas
- internal roads, car parks, utility services and site office

- stormwater system to capture and treat runoff water before discharge.

Once operational, the ship lift will have capacity to lift several vessels a week, and there will be sufficient hardstand area and covered areas to undertake a range of work on multiple vessels. In the early days of operation, it is expected that one to two vessels would use the ship lift each week, accessing it via the existing multi-user barge ramp facility (MUBRF) channel.

Useful links

For more information on the project, go to [Darwin Ship Lift Project – Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet](#)

To read the NT EPA's terms of reference for the environmental studies, go to ntepa.nt.gov.au/your-business/public-registers/environmental-impact-assessments-register/assessments-in-progress/assessments-in-progress-register/darwin-ship-lift-and-marine-industries-project

For general inquiries on the project contact shiplift@nt.gov.au

To register for updates on potential works packages for the project, go to NT Industry Capability Network (NTICN) at icn.org.au/northern-territory