

Congestion within Sydney Cove

It was reported that the current Code of Conduct for controlling vessel movements within Sydney Cove had become ineffective, due to the growth of traffic levels and the manoeuvring practices of some Masters.

CSIRS Requirement

The Office of Transport Safety Investigation (OTSI) sought verification of the claims from the NSW Maritime Authority, as well as specific comment about the:

- Appropriateness and effectiveness of the Code of Conduct for controlling vessels within Sydney Cove.
- Methods used to ensure the Code of Conduct remains relevant to variations in traffic levels.
- Practices to ensure that ferry Masters have adequate knowledge of, and abide by, the Code of Conduct for Sydney Cove.

Investigation outcome

The NSW Maritime Authority advised that the original Code of Conduct was prepared with reference to the Collision Regulations, good seamanship and in consultation with users. Notwithstanding, issues had been identified with the Code of Conduct for Sydney Cove and a review had already commenced.

The regulator also advised that before a vessel can enter Sydney Cove it must have the written authority of the NSW Maritime Authority. The prerequisites for gaining such an authority require vessel operators to be conversant with the Code of Conduct. In addition, the Master of a vessel in excess of 30 metres is required to be in possession of a valid Certificate of Local Knowledge.

In addition to the Code of Conduct, maximum traffic levels within Sydney Cove are controlled by the combination of the NSW Maritime Authority's wharf booking system and the Sydney Ferries' control centre at Circular Quay. The wharf booking system applies to operators other than Sydney Ferries and permits a maximum of four vessel movements per hour at each berth. Sydney Ferries' vessels are separately controlled by the Sydney Ferries' control centre.

To monitor adherence to, and the appropriateness of, the Code of Conduct, the NSW Maritime Authority performs regular observation patrols of Sydney Cove as a part of its daily patrol strategy.

Safety Action

The NSW Maritime Authority had previously identified a number of issues with the Code of Conduct. As a result work had commenced to review and issue a revised Code of Conduct by October 2004.

OTSI Action

OTSI has advised the reporter of the response, actions and plans provided by the regulator.

The outcomes of the inquiries made by both OTSI and the responsible regulator have been recorded in the OTSI's Safety Investigation Database for future review and safety trend analysis.