

Port of Ashburton – Whale Strike Reporting and Safe Operating Distances

Number: A16-2026

Date: 10/07/2026

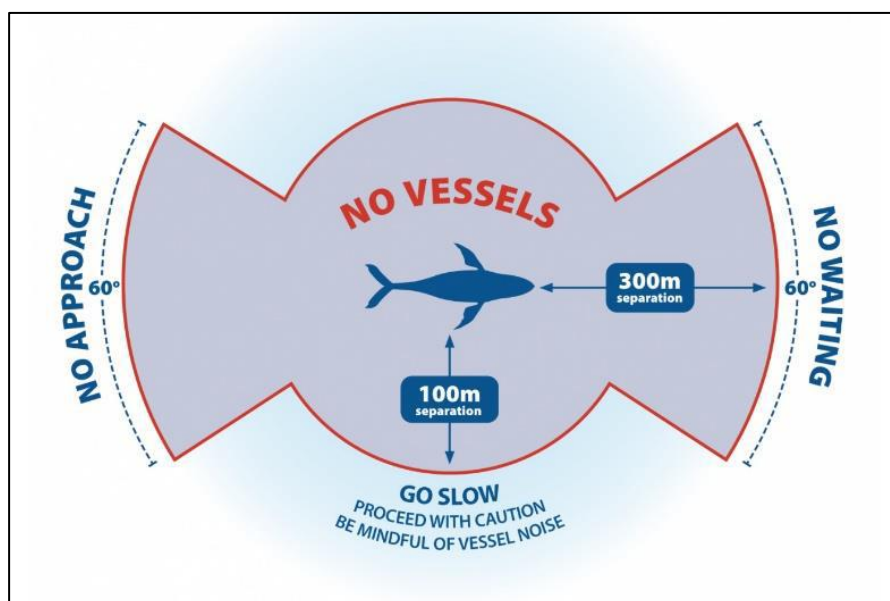
Date of effect:	10/07/2026
Details:	Port of Ashburton – Whale Strike Reporting and Safe Operating Distances
Former notice:	A15-2025 (Cancelled)
Charts and publications:	NA
Further notice:	NA
Attachments:	Chartlet displaying Coastal and Commonwealth waters limits

Whales and other marine fauna susceptible to vessel collisions are protected under both Commonwealth and State legislation.

The Western Australian coastline is a known migration route for the Western Australian Humpback whale population. Humpback whales pass through Ashburton port waters as they migrate from their Southern Ocean feeding grounds to their tropical breeding grounds in the Kimberley. The migration occurs annually between June and November. The presence of whales in relatively shallow port waters limits their ability to avoid vessels, significantly increasing the risk of collisions between vessels and whales.

All Vessel Masters are required to maintain a safe distance from whales:

- 100m on either side
- 300m in front or behind



Commercial Vessels, as part of their Safety Management Systems are required by Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) to conduct a risk assessment when operating in areas where marine fauna is likely to be present.

AMSA advise the below precautions to prevent incidents in high-risk locations

- **Maintain a good lookout:** where possible, posting extra lookouts in known migration, resting and breeding areas to scan ahead with binoculars on the bridge or from the bow of the vessel, including at night.
- **Reduce speed:** especially in low visibility, within known migration, resting and breeding areas, and when entering or leaving ports, bays and harbours. Higher vessel speeds reduce the time available for both the person in charge of the vessel and the animal to react and avoid collision and increase the likelihood of serious impact or injury.
- **Be aware** of any special management zones, 'caution zones' or seasonal exclusion zones that may exist to protect particularly susceptible species.

During times of whale activity Ashburton Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) will broadcast Sécurité messages on VHF Channel 14 and 16 detailing recent whale sightings.

Vessel Masters are asked to report to Ashburton VTS any whale activity in the vicinity of shipping routes or where marine fauna could pose a navigation hazard in port waters (i.e. a carcass floating in shipping channel).

Ashburton VTS can be contacted 24 hours a day on **08 9159 6556** or **VHF Channel 14 and 16**.

Reporting a Collision with Marine Fauna

Within Port Waters

All collisions with marine fauna or injured marine fauna sightings should be immediately reported to Ashburton VTS.

Notifying Ashburton VTS does not relieve you of your obligation to report to the appropriate authorities below. If for any reason you are unable to report to the below authorities, please inform Ashburton VTS.

Within State Waters (three nautical miles from the coast, see below chart)

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) Parks and Wildlife Service must be notified.

Phone: 08 9182 2000

Email: karratha.admin@dbca.wa.gov.au

Within Commonwealth Waters (three to 200 nautical miles from the coast, see below chart)

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment, and Water (DCCEEW) must be notified.

Hotline: 1800 920 528

Email: EPBC.Permits@dcceew.gov.au

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/marine/marine-species/cetaceans/notification-interactions>

Notifications of injured marine animals can also be made to the **Wildcare Helpline**: 08 9474 9055.

Additional Obligations within Port, State, and Commonwealth Waters

All collisions with whales within Australia must be reported to the Australian Marine Mammal Centre (AMMC) at: <https://www.marinemammals.gov.au>

The requirements for Commercial Vessels to submit incident notifications as per Port of Dampier Marine Notice D18/2024, and the AMSA and Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) obligations are unchanged by this Marine Notice.

Actions to be taken

Notifications should include but not be limited to:

- Time and date of incident
- Location (Lat/Long and general)
- Species (if known)
 - Approximate size of animal
 - Number of animals sighted
- Speed of collision and events leading up to incident
- Animal behaviour prior and post collision and any evidence of injury
- Weather conditions at the time of collision.

The DBCA request, if safe to do so, a vessel to remain at a safe distance (outside 100m) and monitor the condition and behaviour of the injured animal until advised by DBCA on next course of action. If possible, take video and photographs identifying any injuries or behaviours post incident, and pass this on to assist with the DBCA response. Drones may be used to monitor, noting a separation distance of 60m.

Further information can be found at:

[Have a whale of a time watching southern migration | Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions \(dbca.wa.gov.au\)](https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/conservation-and-attractions)

<https://www.amsa.gov.au/collisions-between-vessels-and-marine-fauna>

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