



16 February 2024

Senator Catryna Bilyk
By email: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator Bilyk

Re: Questions on Notice

In response to your request to respond to Questions on Notice, I trust the following information meets your needs.

Do you wish to respond to comments made by Mr Sean Sullivan from the AAD on 29 January 2024 in relation to the approval process for the RSV Nuyina to transit beneath the Tasman Bridge?

TasPorts recognises abundant collaborative engagement with AAD over some 20 years to discuss current and future Hobart-based operational needs. Our records however do not support suggestions that there was a regular monthly meeting with the AAD going back to 2013-2014.

TasPorts is committed to maintaining its collegial relationship with AAD about its existing and future Hobart-based operational requirements.

Please provide the dates and minutes for all monthly meetings between TasPorts / the Harbour Master and the AAD in relation to the design requirements, the conditional approval process, and the eventual denial of the RSV Nuyina to transit beneath the Tasman Bridge.

As detailed above, our records do not support suggestions that there was a regular monthly meeting with the AAD going back to 2013-2014.

Marine safety remains TasPorts' number one priority. The protection of human life, marine assets and the environment are critical considerations for all vessel movements in Tasmanian waters.

The Tasman Bridge is regarded as one of Tasmania's most significant and critical pieces of transport infrastructure, forming part of the key urban freight and passenger corridors in Hobart linking the eastern and western suburbs of the city.

The safe transit of any large vessel under the Tasman Bridge is a highly complex operation subjected to its own legislation designed to protect the States asset.

Each successful transit requires precision planning and execution across three distinct areas – environmental conditions, a vessel's configuration and performance, and a team of highly skilled mariners all working together.

The safe parameters that exist surrounding the Tasman Bridge transit are well established.

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Vessel transits under the Tasman Bridge must comply with the prescribed port parameters as stipulated in the Marine and Safety (Pilotage and Navigation) Regulations 2017 and documented in the TasPorts Ports Procedure Manual.

As a result, transiting guidance and restrictions apply to all vessels.

These are the same Tasman Bridge parameters that have been in place since prior to 2011.

On 28 February 2022, following the completion of extensive and diligent risk assessments, including complex simulation exercises and a peer review by a leading international maritime consultant, TasPorts provided the RSV Nuyina with conditional approval to transit the Tasman Bridge.

That approval was subject to the successful completion of a comprehensive Marine Pilot Familiarisation Program, including harbour trials within the Port of Hobart, followed by further simulation exercises at the Australian Maritime College (AMC).

Harbour trials were initially undertaken on 1 April 2022 followed by simulation trials at the AMC on 12 May 2022.

The trials confirmed that a bespoke set of environmental parameters are required for transiting the Tasman Bridge.

Shortly after this, the vessel departed for Singapore for scheduled maintenance and remained in Singapore for an extended period.

On her return to Tasmania in late April 2023, the RSV Nuyina underwent on-water trials as part of the safety case assessment being undertaken by the Office of the Harbour Master.

The Non-Standard Vessel Assessment was complete and found that the RSV Nuyina does not meet the minimum safe criteria to transit the Tasman Bridge

The Nuyina has the greatest sail area (windage) of any vessel considered for a bridge transit.

The Nuyina has a hull form of which has never been seen on a vessel considered for a bridge transit.

The vessel handling characteristics as observed during normal operations to and from Macquarie Point berths in the Port of Hobart have shown the vessel carries significant drift.

In terms of the Nuyina, regardless of the increasing beam and physical size of the ship, it was the unfavourable handling characteristics for the south bound transit which led to the decision not to let it pass through the Tasman Bridge.

During the second set of Harbour trials in 2023, a virtual approach to the Tasman Bridge was set up using electronic navigation aids in the exact configuration of the Tasman Bridge aperture and on water assessments were carried out using this virtual platform.

These assessments validated the vessels unique handling characteristics as noted in the simulation exercises.

In 109 virtual simulations conducted at the Australian Maritime College alongside AAD's own marine expert the vessel came dangerously close to the Tasman Bridge pylons on 40 occasions.

It also impacted the bridge four times and was on track to do so a further 10 times before those virtual test runs were called off.

TasPorts is currently working closely with the Department of State Growth on the assessment of available safe options for a fuel barge for Hobart.

When did TasPorts first raise the issue of 'windage' as a critical risk factor with the AAD in relation to the RSV Nuyina being able to safely transit beneath the Tasman Bridge?

As above, the [Non-Standard Vessel Assessment](#) was completed on 8 August 2023 and found that the RSV Nuyina does not meet the minimum safe criteria to transit the Tasman Bridge.

We note the NSVA assessment and simulations require the development and usage of a vessel simulator model which AAD were required to provide, and this model was still under continuous development as late as 2023.

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In terms of the Nuyina, regardless of the increasing beam and physical size of the ship, it was the unfavourable handling characteristics for the south bound transit which led to the decision not to let it pass through the Tasman Bridge.

Yours sincerely



Anthony Donald
Chief Executive Officer