

Vessel Check frequently asked questions (FAQs)

These FAQs should be read in conjunction with the Vessel Check User Guide and Help section within the online tool.

1. Why should I use Vessel Check?

- A. If you are concerned about the risk status of your vessel, completing a Vessel Check risk assessment will help clarify the vessel's current risk status and provide possible actions to reduce risk if necessary.

The Department recommends using Vessel Check and completing recommended actions to manage vessels to a LOW / ACCEPTABLE risk rating. This will reduce the likelihood of transferring live non-endemic or noxious fish (including IMS) into WA contrary to the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994* (FRMA) and regulations, and may also provide evidence to support a defence to any charge under this legislation. It will also provide you with some reassurance that your vessel management practices are adequate for the proposed voyage, and will help you improve your vessel's ongoing biofouling risk and best practice management.

(Submitting a Vessel Check risk assessment for an actual vessel movement will provide you with more reassurance because the Department will be able to review the assessment and provide advice.)

As an alternative to Vessel Check, the Department recommends the active use of a biofouling management plan and record book that meet all requirements under Appendix 2 of the current edition of the International Maritime Organisation's Guidelines for the Control and Management of Ships' Biofouling to Minimise the Transfer of Invasive Aquatic Species.

2. Do I have to use Vessel Check?

- A. The use of Vessel Check is voluntary, but the Department highly recommends that you use it for the reasons above.

3. What will happen if I travel to WA without completing a Vessel Check risk assessment?

- A. Before travelling to WA waters, it is important to know the status of your vessel and take the appropriate steps to achieve and maintain a LOW / ACCEPTABLE risk. This is because vessels may be subject to inspection by Fisheries and Marine Officers and prosecution could result if IMS are detected. The cost of remediation and delays in your vessel's scheduled activity can also be considerable.

4. What kinds of remediation might be required if a pest is detected?

- A. Examples of remediation actions that companies have taken include:
 - I. Vessels have been cleaned in dry dock in WA.
 - II. Vessels have returned to overseas ports to be cleaned in dry dock when WA facilities have been unsuitable or already heavily used.
 - III. Depending on the reproductive status of the IMS, more urgent remediation steps have been taken or directed by the Department.

When remediation has not been undertaken voluntarily by vessel operators, the Department has directed vessels to safe locations and restricted subsequent travel into WA waters when the vessels have remained untreated.

5. Who should use Vessel Check?

- A. The person responsible for the management of the vessel, and who has a good knowledge of its operational history, should complete the risk assessment.

6. Which types of vessels should be assessed using Vessel Check?

- A. All types of vessels other than recreational vessels (yachts and small craft) and rigs should use Vessel Check. The tool is not specifically designed for submersible equipment that is not an integral component of a vessel.

7. When should I use Vessel Check?

- A. Prior to every mobilisation to WA from an overseas or interstate location.

You should consider using the scenario facility well in advance of the estimated departure date, to allow sufficient time to take management actions if your vessel requires them. For example, these could include booking dry dock space, an IMS inspection, or seeking an alternative vessel.

Once relevant actions have been taken and evidence is available, you can then convert the scenario into an actual movement assessment and submit it to the Department of Fisheries prior to departure.

8. Do Western Australian resource projects require Vessel Check?

- A. Vessel Check is intended to be the standard tool used across the State, including where the Department of Fisheries is involved in the regulation of resource projects.

However, resource companies need to meet a range of requirements, sometimes due to operating under ministerial conditions or other similar agreements, so you need to check your contractual obligations.

Often these requirements are more stringent than those required for general activity in WA, however, Vessel Check is the tool the Department uses internally to risk assess vessels, and is also a good first step to understand the risk status of your vessel.

9. What does my result mean?

- A. Vessel Check uses a high-level, semi-quantitative approach based on a number of assumptions detailed in the User Guide, to assign a vessel to one of three overall risk categories: LOW / ACCEPTABLE, UNCERTAIN or HIGH.

It does not attempt to pinpoint whether or not a vessel is actually carrying an IMS, but ranks vessels on a relative scale of 'more' or 'less' risk, in order to isolate which vessels may require further detailed investigation and/or management actions to reduce risk.

10. What do I do if I cannot achieve a LOW / ACCEPTABLE risk rating for my vessel?

- A. Firstly you should check that you have answered the questions correctly and refer to the Help section. Make sure you have uploaded your documents. (NOTE: you do not need to

upload documents for scenario assessments, but if you know documents are available, you should still answer the question as if you have them to upload.)

Without an antifouling coating (AFC) certificate, you CANNOT achieve a LOW / ACCEPTABLE outcome.

Review the recommended management actions on your risk assessment report and prioritise those actions with greatest impact. You may use the scenario function on Vessel Check to test the effect of different management actions.

Refer to the User Guide for scenarios which may be similar. Finally if you are still concerned, please contact the Department for assistance.

11. Will anyone check my result?

- A. Vessel Check assessments submitted as actual vessel movements will be audited by the Department. These will include a number of desktop audits and in the field inspections. All risk categories will be audited.

Scenario assessments are considered hypothetical and are confidential to the user. They will not be audited or be available to view by Biosecurity staff.

12. Can I use Vessel Check for interstate movements within Australia?

- A. Yes. The Department considers that WA is under threat from pests from any port in the world, including other Australian ports. For interstate movements, under the country of last port of call question, simply select Australia. You may then enter the Australian port or location from which you will mobilise.

Vessel Check has not been developed for intrastate movements.

13. What do I do for movements within WA?

- A. If your vessel recently achieved a low risk status prior to entry into WA via Vessel Check, your vessel may move freely within WA, subject to any specific resource project conditions, port authorities' restrictions or notifications of pest outbreaks.

The Department recommends that all vessels are always well managed to reduce the risk of translocating non-endemic or noxious species within the State.

14. Is ballast water management covered by Vessel Check?

- A. No, only vessel biofouling is covered by Vessel Check. International ballast water management is covered by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture. You can obtain advice from their web pages.