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Future emergency response vessel secured for Torres Strait and Great Barrier Reef

With the signing of a contract, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) has secured an enhanced future first response capability to protect the marine environment and mariners in the Torres Strait and Great Barrier Reef.

Smit Lamnalco, a world leader in marine towage and support services, and an employer of 340 Australian seafarers and shoreside workers, will provide that enhanced capability from July 2024, after the current contract ends.

AMSA Executive Director Response Mark Morrow said the new dedicated emergency towage vessel would replace the existing *Coral Knight*, offering a more modern build with a 46% increase in bollard pull power (120 tonnes versus 82 tonnes) to tow bigger ships, and a greater top speed for a faster response time.

Smit Lamnalco will provide an interim vessel to protect the Torres Strait and Great Barrier Reef for the first 2 years of the 10-year contract, while the dedicated vessel is built. The interim vessel will also have the enhanced capability of an increased bollard pull of 100 tonnes and a faster top speed. The dedicated vessel is expected to come online in mid-2026.

“Unprecedented pressures on the global maritime industry and powerful economic drivers are seeing the rise of bigger ships which can carry more cargo than ever before,” Mr Morrow said.

“While this is good news for economies, it must be matched with an increase in emergency response capability which can ensure the continued protection of Australia’s precious marine environments, the mariners who live and work in them and local communities.

In addition to an increased bollard pull and greater top speed, both the interim and dedicated Smit Lamnalco vessels will also have an extra crew complement, totalling 12 crew members.

The dedicated vessel will also be more fuel efficient than its predecessor, the *Coral Knight*, with a hybrid propulsion system that allows the power generation system to be optimised for the desired operational profile and speed. Consideration has also been given in the design stage for the use of methanol as an alternative future fuel source which aligns with the global push to reduce emissions and decarbonise shipping.

“Our commitment to *safe and clean seas, and saving lives* is unwavering. That is why we have secured this enhanced capability via a contract with Smit Lamnalco. The *Coral Knight* has served us well for the last 10 years, and this new ship will serve our future needs.”

Smit Lamnalco Managing Director for Australia and Papua New Guinea, David Fethers said the company was delighted to have been chosen to provide this critical service to AMSA.

“Having delivered on a number of successful casualty responses in recent times within the region, we know the operational task sits well within our capability. The Robert Allen designed RASalvor 6500 will be a game changer in terms of first-response capability, as well as environmental sustainability,” Mr Fethers said.

Follow AMSA on social media for updates on its new ship.

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