

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Wood

to Minister for Transport and Infrastructure

Adelaide to Darwin railway – Freight Containers

1. If the freight on the Adelaide to Darwin railway starts to increase, and the port starts to get busy, will it be possible to extend the port.
2. If more shipping companies start using post-Panamax vessels (which the new East Arm wharf can't accommodate) what plan does the government have to cope.
3. How much extra freight can the old port crane cope with.
4. Are there any plans for a new crane

ANSWER

1. The East Arm Wharf Master Plan provides for extensions of the existing 760m of continuous berth face to a total length of 1500m. There is currently 22 hectares of hardstand available on the East Arm Facility with approximately 18 hectares of bunded areas for future reclamation of additional hardstand as demand requires. There is no future significant capital works budget for East Arm Wharf extensions past the completion of stage 2 in November 2004. All future extensions will be assessed on an individual business case basis. The current FreightLink Intermodal terminal has space to handle up to 250,000 containers per year.
2. Economies act as the ultimate limit on the size of vessels that support port hinterlands. Darwin's hinterland economy, with a lack of significant manufacturing capability, broad acre agriculture, remoteness and isolated small population is such that it will only support medium to midsized shipping services in the foreseeable future. Given the international landbridge traffic projections for the AustralAsia Trade Route (AATR) there is little expectation that Darwin and or the AATR would generate sufficient trades to induce a regular service call of a post-panamax vessel. The major Australian ports of Melbourne and Sydney are unable to accommodate post-panamax vessels and are reviewing their options given the nature of the entire Australian seaborne containerised trade is such that it may not support the deployment of the next generation of these mega-sized vessels. Over the next decade, it is forecast that 9,000/10,000 **twenty-foot equivalent units (teu)** will become a ship of choice for the main arterial routes from 2005, with 12,000 teu plus vessels being phased into operation from 2009/2010 (Drewry Shipping Consultants). The Australian trade is not considered a main arterial and the maximum size vessel servicing this

country will be the 4,500-6,000 teu vessels displaced from the main trade routes by the introduction of post-panamax vessels. From a navigation and berth access perspective the Port of Darwin can accommodate the largest of the container vessels that would be reasonably be expected to be employed on the Australian trades. The shoreside infrastructure and supporting logistics services, in most instances provided by 3rd party commercial operators, will be encouraged to develop with the emerging trades.

3. As part of the relocation of the existing Container Crane to East Arm Wharf the crane's equipment was upgraded which will extend the life of the asset 10-15 years. The crane cycles at 30 lifts per hour which is comparable to more modern cranes. The crane also has a 70 tonne lift capacity which is greater than modern cranes of around 36 tonne and also increases **its** versatility to adapt for bulk grab operations and for project and general cargo. Currently the crane has considerable idle time and significant capacity for greater utilisation. The **crane's** cycle time, lift capacity and outreach are appropriate for the projected trade and vessel size. A single crane terminal operation has the capacity to handle up to 60,000 containers per annum. All container vessels currently calling at Darwin have their own ships lifting gear.
4. A second crane is included in the Darwin Port Corporation 05-06 forward budget. The introduction of a second crane can be accelerated if a commercial business case need is established prior to 05-06.