Michael Gunner
Chief Minister of the Northern Territory

Media Statement

Ship Lift to be Built in Darwin

8 August 2019

The Territory Labor Government will build the largest ship lift in Northern Australia, paving the way for hundreds of jobs and positioning Darwin as a major international and national player in the marine services industry.

Territory-owned and headquartered Paspaley Group is partnering with the Territory Government in the $400 million project.

The ship lift at East Arm will bring $260 million into the NT economy every year. It will create about 100 jobs during the construction phase, lead to an expansion of the ship building and repairs and maintenance industry, and generate around 400 direct and indirect ongoing jobs during its operation.

The 103m ship lift will be capable of servicing large vessels from industries including offshore petroleum, fishing, pearling, Defence and Border Force.

A ship lift is used to lift vessels out of the water so they can be serviced, repaired or stored, including for safety during cyclones.

The agreement between the Territory and Paspaley will result in the ship lift constructed on Territory Government-owned land, operated by Paspaley under a 10-year renewable agreement.

The Paspaley Group own and maintain a large fleet of vessels, with many sailing in and out of Darwin harbour on a regular basis. The vessels currently maintained in Darwin will help ensure the ongoing viability of the ship lift, as the anchor tenant for the facility.

The facility will operate on a commercial basis with access available to all customers. The independent Utilities Commission will oversee pricing and access.

Key design features of the ship lift include:

- 20ha of hard stand area for ship repair and maintenance works
- A 103m ship lift capable of lifting vessels up to 5000 tonnes
- 4 wet berths (wharves)

The facility will dry dock and launch vessels. Up to 150 vessels are expected to use the ship lift every year.

Darwin is the only functional deep water harbour in Northern Australia, further emphasising the critical need for this infrastructure. Without this facility large vessels travel 10 days to be serviced in another town.
The ship lift will be funded by the NT Government, which has already committed $100 million, and either the Federal Government, the Northern Australian Infrastructure Facility (NAIF), or further NT Government investment.

The next steps are the finalisation of a project development agreement with Paspaley Group and attaining all relevant environmental approvals.

The engineering, design and construction contract will be awarded in late 2020, enabling construction to commence during 2021. Construction is anticipated to take 2 years, enabling the facility to be operating in 2023.

**Quotes from the NT Chief Minister, Michael Gunner:**

“There will be a ship lift built in the Northern Territory.

“This is a major national project, positioning the Territory’s marine industry on the national and international map, and delivering hundreds of jobs for Territorians.

“It is a strategic investment that will further open up the investment potential of the region, and mean more business opportunities.

“Darwin is the only functional deep water harbour in Northern Australia. Without this facility, large vessels will have to travel 10 days to be serviced in another town or another country, adding inconvenience and cost to ship operators.

“A ship lift in Darwin is good for the Territory and is good for the nation.”

**Quotes from Paspaley CEO, James Paspaley:**

“The Paspaley Group is proud to bring decades of experience and world-class marine industry capabilities to this project.

“This local knowledge, combined with our international experience, will help us to develop and operate this facility to the international standard it deserves.

“The Paspaley Group own and maintain a large fleet of vessels, all sailing in and out of Darwin Harbour on a regular basis.

“These vessels, currently maintained in Darwin, will help ensure the ongoing viability of the ship lift, as the anchor tenant for the facility.

“The Paspaley head office is in Darwin, with operations across Australia and internationally in South East Asia, Hong Kong, the USA and Japan. Paspaley Group employs more than 900 people, about half of whom are Territorians.”

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