

DARWIN SHIP LIFT FACILITY



NEWSLETTER Q1, 2026

PROJECT UPDATE

The Northern Territory Government is delivering the ship lift facility works as part of the recently announced Northern Marine Complex to service defence, commercial and international vessels operating across northern Australia and the Indo-Pacific.

The Northern Marine Complex spans 246 hectares of land and water at East Arm and includes the ship lift, which has a 5,500-tonne vessel lifting capacity, and the Marine Industry Park as an integrated maritime precinct.

The Marine Industry Park anchors the northern marine industry in one location inside a purpose-built industrial subdivision for marine trades, engineering, logistics, storage and maintenance operations adjacent to the ship lift facility.

The ship lift facility allows multiple vessels to be dry-docked at the same time, enabling Darwin to service defence, commercial and international fleets across northern Australia and the Indo-Pacific.

This project newsletter shares key information and progress about the Darwin Ship Lift Facility project.

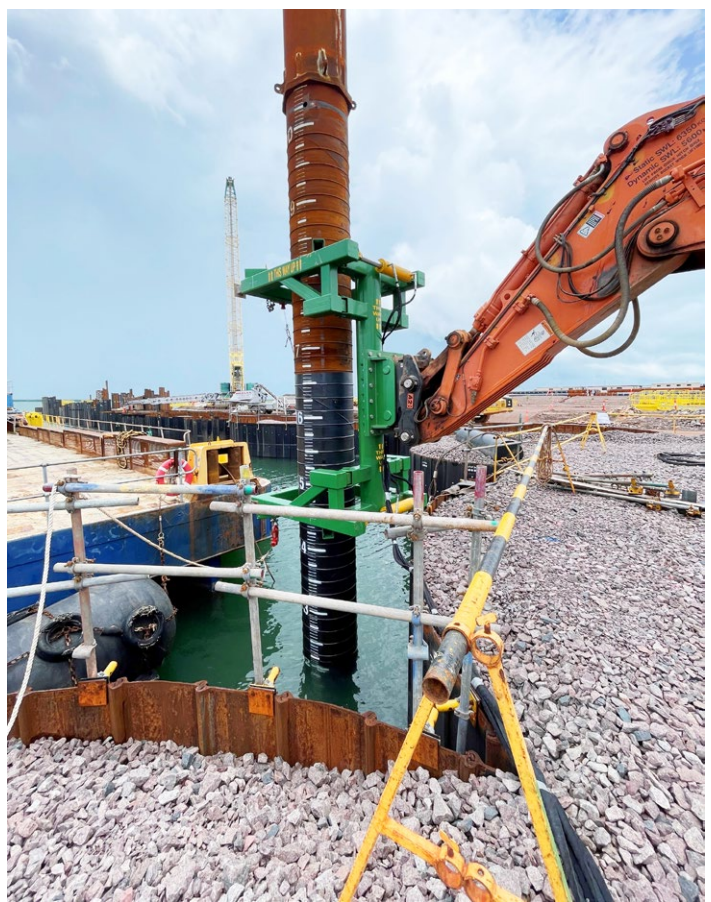
Marine piling starts

Marine piling has started for the Darwin Ship Lift Facility project in another construction milestone to establish a nationally significant maritime, servicing and maintenance hub.

Marine piling is the process of driving tubular marine piles – long hollow pipes – into the seabed to support offshore and nearshore structures like vessel berths and pontoons.

A total of 186 tubular marine piles will be installed to support the ship lift system, wet berths, pontoons and navigation aids for the ship facility.

The piles range in length from 17 to 33 metres and take approximately 8 - 10 months to install. The first marine pile (**pictured below**) was installed in late February 2026.



The large marine piles, which are up to 900 mm in diameter, are installed using a combination of an excavator equipped with a custom made pile guide on the landside and a crane barge on the marine side (**pictured right**).

The marine piling will be undertaken in accordance with the project's environmental management plan and NT Environment Protection Authority requirements. Environmental monitoring will continue during the piling activity.



Construction activity

Overall construction continues to progress on the marine and landside infrastructure for the Darwin Ship Lift Facility.

A total of 21 out of the 47 caissons have been constructed to form the seawalls of the facility. Land reclamation has been completed up to the high tide level as materials continue to be brought on site to complete the facility.

Construction continues on the administration and gatehouse buildings with the roof completed on the administration building and the electrical, plumbing and painting trades are currently on site.

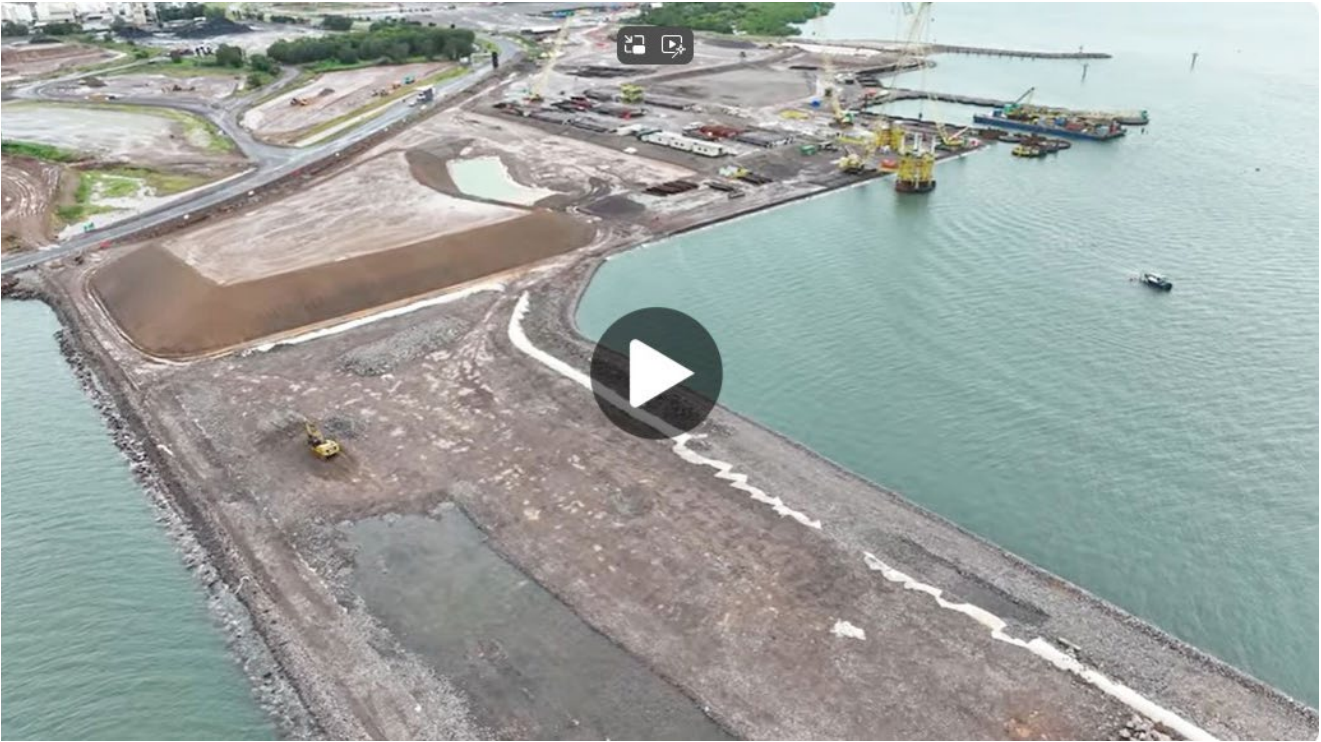
A \$13.4 million contract has been awarded to local company DTA Contractors for the electrical and water headworks upgrade required to service the ship lift facility on Berrimah Road.

The headworks scope includes the supply and installation of underground high voltage electrical infrastructure assets to service the ship lift facility and East Arm from the Wishart Zone Substation.

The works also includes supply and installation of 2 connections from the existing water main to the ship lift facility site. DTA Contractors Pty Ltd is a Northern Territory-owned company and the project is expected to support 18 direct and many other indirect jobs during construction, engage 5 local subcontractors and source materials and services from more than 20 local suppliers.

Works are anticipated to start in April and are expected to be completed within 12 months. The headworks contractor will work with ship lift head contractor Clough-BMD Joint Venture to minimise impacts and align with the construction requirements for both projects.





Click on this image to watch drone footage of the Darwin Ship Lift Facility construction progress or click on this link: <https://youtu.be/UIlNn92Xeu8>

Ship lift and SPMT systems

Design

Pearlson Shiplift Corporation (PSC) is in the final stages of completing the design for the switch room and control room, the structure that houses the power distribution and centralised controls for the ship lift system.

PSC is also preparing the Operations and Maintenance Manuals for the ship lift and self-propelled modular transporter (SPMT) systems.

Lloyd's Register, the internationally recognised classification society, has awarded certification for the structural design of the hoist, the ship lift platform and the transfer cradles. The cradles support and keep the vessels stable while they are moved by the SPMTs from the ship lift drydock platform to the onshore hardstands and dry berths.

Construction

The first shipment of internationally manufactured components for the specialised, custom made ship lift and transfer systems arrived in Darwin in late February 2026.

The tools and accessories for the SPMTs were shipped to Darwin from Italy, where they were manufactured by Italian company Cometto.

The SPMTs are part of the ship lift transfer system that will move vessels to and from the ship lift platform to the hardstands and dry berths inside the ship lift facility. They can be operated via remote control and are assembled in various configurations to suit the length and weight of each vessel.

The first shipment included spares, tool kits, a compressor kit for inflating tyres and coupling kits to connect power packs and the modules or trailers in a variety of configurations.

Components of the SPMT system, trestles and ship lift system are being manufactured and shipped from several countries including Vietnam, Italy, United States, United Kingdom and Australia. More components for the ship lift system are anticipated to arrive in Darwin in April 2026.



Above: The first international shipment arrives in Darwin from Italy and includes tools and accessories, such as spares, for the self-propelled modular transporter (SPMT).

This image shows where each of the different components that make up the ship lift and transfer systems are made:



SELF-PROPELLED MODULAR TRANSPORTERS (SPMTS) move the vessels to and from the ship lift platform – *Designed and built in Italy*



MOTOR CONTROL CENTRE distributes power to individual hoists – *Designed in the US, built in Australia*



STEEL TRESTLES are steel structures supporting docking blocks of the vessel transfer system – *Designed in the US, built in Vietnam*



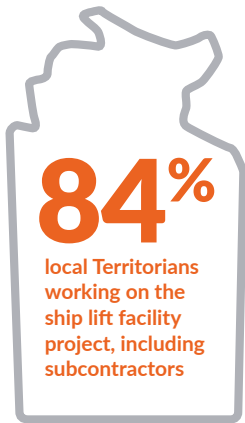
SHIP LIFT HOIST ASSEMBLIES are machines that raise and lower the ship lift platform – Designed in the United States and built in the US and Vietnam, with other components including:

- hoist lower sheave assemblies – *built in Vietnam*
- gear box reducers – *built in the US*
- load cell pins – *built in the US*
- wire rope assemblies – *built in United Kingdom*



SHIP LIFT PLATFORM is a fabricated steel structure that is lowered into the water to raise and lower vessels – *Designed in the US, built in Vietnam*

FAST FACTS



\$256.89 million

in subcontracts awarded to Territory businesses



906,483 hours

worked on the project to date by the head contractor and subcontractors

Commercial activity

Clough-BMD Joint Venture awarded several subcontracts for tubular piles, structural steel, bored piling, electrical installation and precast stormwater drainage in the first quarter of 2026.

Territory business Molloy Electrical Contractors (MEC NT) has been awarded a \$21.42 million contract to supply and install electrical services and infrastructure for the Darwin Ship Lift Facility.

The contract involves installing, testing and commissioning generators, cabling and bulk electrical equipment, including lighting, earthing systems, conduits and trenching for the ship lift facility site.

MEC NT was established in the Northern Territory in 2010 and is a locally owned and operated electrical contracting service that has delivered projects for the civil, defence and mining sectors. The local company is expecting to employ a predominantly local workforce based in Darwin for this project.

Procurement for several subcontractor packages are underway including the SPMT garage. For upcoming procurements email Clough-BMD Joint Venture at dsl.procurement@cloughbmdjv.com.au

Project spotlight

Boost to local marine expertise

Territorian Luke Mansfield started his career in marine infrastructure as a young crane operator and rigger at a Frances Bay ship yard in Darwin in the 1990s.

Luke now works as a supervisor for Clough-BMD Joint Venture building the Darwin Ship Lift Facility at East Arm – the largest marine infrastructure project under construction in the Territory.

The Darwin born construction supervisor said he started ‘playing with cranes’ as a 21 year old building ships in a Darwin ship repair yard.

Since then he has worked on almost all of the Territory’s largest infrastructure projects, including the Alice Springs to Darwin ADrail project, Darwin Port, Conoco Phillips (now Santos) and INPEX.

Luke worked with Clough to build the modular offloading facility (MOF) for INPEX and is using the similar marine construction methodology to build the ship lift facility.

The caissons scope of the Darwin ship lift project is triple the scale of the INPEX module offload facility (MOF).

“**For the INPEX MOF there was only 13 caisson cells and we have more than triple that number for the ship lift facility,**” Luke said.



Above: Luke Mansfield

“ It is the biggest infrastructure project being built in the Territory at the moment ” Luke said.

Large scale projects are not new to Luke who has worked on many large construction projects across Australia, with just one of his projects in Western Australia involving building a 19 kilometre overland conveyor as well as several large wharf projects in New South Wales and Gladstone in Queensland.

Luke is enjoying teaching a new generation of Territorians about the complexities of building infrastructure in a marine environment.

“This project is a new experience for a lot of crane operators and riggers and it means local people can stay in Darwin and help put money back into the economy,” he said.

While working fly in fly out (FIFO) has always come with working in construction, Luke is very happy to be working on the ship lift project in his home town of Darwin.

“It’s nice to be home, it is fantastic to be able to work on a project like this in Darwin,” he said.

“This is the biggest marine infrastructure project in Darwin since INPEX was built.”

As a Berry Springs local for the past 20+ years, it means during his time off from a 2 week roster Luke can still do the Territory things he grew up doing – hunting and fishing.

Local trainees hit the ground running

Four new trainees have started working on the Darwin Ship Lift Facility project for head contractor Clough-BMD Joint Venture.

The 2 full time trainees and 2 school based trainees are all undertaking a Certificate III in Civil Construction.

Michael Cleary and school based trainees Martin Campbell and Max Holtze-Sariago all joined Clough-BMD Joint Ventures traineeship program in early 2026 through the head contractor’s connections with the Clontarf Academy.

Caoimhe Lauder is a full time trainee and she was part of the STARS Foundation while completing high school at Taminmin College.

The STARS and Clontarf Foundations are both organisations dedicated to improving educational, health, and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young women and men and had students visit the Darwin Ship Lift Facility construction site in May 2025.



Above: Clough-BMD JV trainees Micheal Cleary, Caoimhe Lauder, Max Holtze-Sariago and Martin Campbell.

Michael Cleary was also one of the students who visited the ship lift construction site last year and was intrigued by the size of the site and the marine infrastructure. The 19-year-old said his family is proud that he is one of the first in the family to pursue a career in construction and is enjoying the chance to work on site and be “hands on”.

“There is a lot of cool stuff happening on site and I am interested in the big cranes,” he said.

Caoimhe has already had a taste of the construction industry working in her partner’s carpentry business but is excited for an opportunity to learn how to operate large cranes, dozers, rollers and excavators required for civil construction.

“ It is very different and it will be good to get all my certificates to drive the different machines, ”

Caoimhe said.

Martin and Max are both working one day a week at the ship lift facility while completing year 12 at Casuarina Senior College. Martin said two of his uncles work in the construction industry and they were very pleased he could finish year 12 while starting a certificate in civil construction.

“Working in construction is a family thing, my uncles both work for AKJ and they said it was great I was getting a lot more opportunities than they had when they were my age,” he said.

The 17-year-old said meeting new people and seeing what was happening on site were the highlights so far of working on the ship lift facility project.

Max agreed that meeting new people was a great part of the traineeship as well as the chance to work outdoors. Born in Katherine and with family who work in roofing construction, the 17-year-old is also very interested in the marine infrastructure side of the project and working near the ocean.

“ It is good meeting new people and getting my hands dirty, ” Max said.

Milestones

TIMEFRAME	PROJECT ACTIVITY
MAR 2025	Temporary access bunds construction completed
AUG 2025	Backhoe dredging complete
NOV 2025	Bulk of land reclamation completed
FEB 2026	SPMT accessories arrives in Darwin from Italy
FEB 2026	Marine piling starts
Q2 2026	First international shipments for ship lift system arrive
Q3 2026	Administration building to be completed
Q3 2026	Caisson installation to be completed
2026-27	Gain Defence Facility Qualification
2027	Ship lift facility to become operational in stages



Road access

Road trains continue to bring materials to the Darwin Ship Lift Facility site with the route including the Arnhem Highway, Stuart Highway, Tiger Brennan Drive, Wishart Road and Berrimah Road.

The speed limit on Berrimah Road (adjacent the site) continues to be 40 km/h from the Common User Facility to the Darwin Port entrance. Road users are advised to slow down, take care and follow the traffic controls in place. The speed limit is expected to remain in place for the duration of the project. Further traffic control arrangements will be implemented along Wishart and Berrimah Roads for the headworks project.

Marine access

Caisson construction and marine piling continues in the marine construction activity zone around the Darwin Ship Lift Facility site.

Harbour users are directed not to enter the construction area marked by hazard markers and lights and keep well clear of marine support vessels and barges.

Contacts

For further project information visit Darwin Ship Lift Facility or contact **8936 5668** during business hours or email **DHIP@nt.gov.au**.

For construction, procurement or recruitment related queries please email Clough-BMD Joint Venture at:

Construction: darwin.shiplift@cloughbmdjv.com.au

Procurement: dsl.procurement@cloughbmdjv.com.au

Recruitment: 41213.HR@cloughbmdjv.com.au



**Click here
to go to the
project website**



 dhip@nt.gov.au  (08) 8936 5668

 Darwin Ship Lift Facility

