

DARWIN SHIP LIFT FACILITY



NEWSLETTER QUARTER 4, 2025

The common user Darwin Ship Lift Facility is a critical enabling infrastructure project for the Northern Territory economy.

The NT Government owned ship lift facility will establish Darwin as a key maritime maintenance centre in northern Australia, servicing South East Asia and capitalising on the Territory's strategic position in the Asia Pacific region.

The facility is a keystone project of Darwin's marine industry and is located at East Arm, inside Darwin's deep water harbour in Australia's most strategic port.

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



Project update

Construction activity

Construction is progressing on the marine and landside infrastructure for the Darwin Ship Lift Facility.

A total of 17 out of the 47 caissons have been constructed to form the seawalls of the facility and the full extent of the eastern finger of the ship lift pocket and Berth A has been completed. Work continues on the caissons that form the remainder of the ship lift pocket.

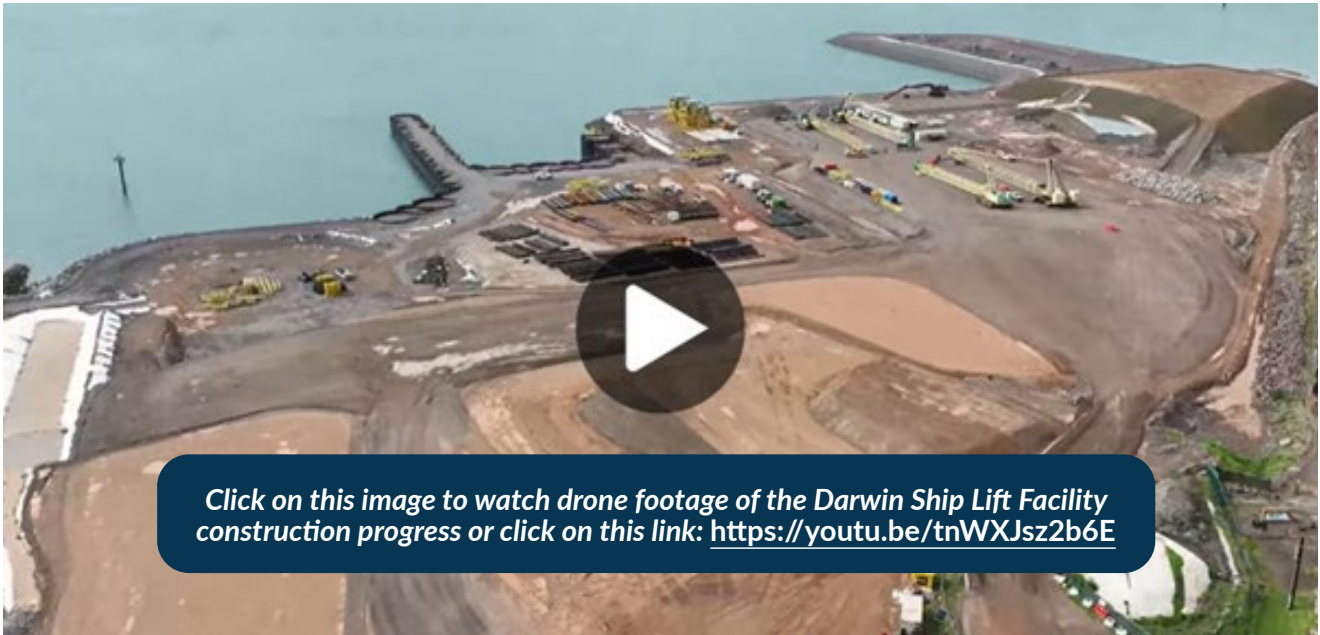
Land reclamation has been completed up to high tide level for the project. General fill for above high tide continues to be delivered by local quarries to form the hardstand and dry berth areas. A large excavator has started placing armour rocks on the seawall on the western side of the site.

Fabrication of the steel tubular piles that will support the wet berths and pontoons of the ship lift facility was completed in November 2025. Clough-BMD Joint Venture appointed an independent consultant to oversee fabrication and testing of the tubular piles during construction. The tubular piles are being shipped to Darwin's East Arm Port.

Construction continues on the administration building (pictured left), including:

- completing the blockwork ready for the roof to be installed
- completing underground services
- structural steel being installed.





Ship lift and SPMT systems

Design

Pearlson Shiplift Corporation has substantially completed the design for the ship lift system, including the ship lift platform and transfer cradles (also known as trestles).

These are currently undergoing Lloyds certification. The transfer cradles are the structures that will support and keep the vessels stable while they are moved from the ship lift drydock platform to onshore hardstand and dry berths using the self-propelled modular transporters (SPMTs).

Together with Pearlson Shiplift Corporation, Australian based company Mayfield is preparing the drawings for the switch room and control room, with fabrication anticipated to start in early 2026.

Below: Components of the self-propelling modular transporters being manufactured by Cometto in Italy.



Construction

Construction of the SPMTs and ship lift system machinery and control is ongoing, with components being constructed and assembled in different locations all over the world including Italy, United States, United Kingdom, Vietnam and Australia.

The SPMTs are being constructed by Italian company Cometto with initial deliveries to Darwin anticipated in early 2026. One of the key parts of the 'structural backbone' of the SPMTs – the chassis modules – are being fabricated in Italy, see image below left.

Key components of the ship lift system will be shipped to Darwin in 2026, including components from the United States and the United Kingdom.

A total of 24 gear reducers are being manufactured in the United States, see image below of two gear box housings, which will be added to the ship lift hoist assemblies.

Below: Two of the gear box housings being manufactured in the United States.



Commercial activity

Clough-BMD Joint Venture awarded several subcontracts for tubular piles supply, staff accommodation, bored piling and rock armour construction in Q4 2025.

Procurement for several subcontractor packages are underway including stormwater drainage installation, blast and paint facility, SPMT garage, electrical, pavers, onsite concrete for marine works and grated trench drains. For upcoming procurements email Clough-BMD Joint Venture at dsl.procurement@cloughbmdjv.com.au



FAST FACTS



\$209.68 M
in subcontracts awarded
to Territory businesses



768,506 HOURS
worked on the project to
date for the head contractor
and subcontractors

Fast forward 19 months and after reaching a peak of 16 machines working on site at one time, the company's machinery is now working on land that used to be ocean.

The Aboriginal-owned and operated business was originally set up as a plant hire company in Queensland by 2 mates who each owned a piece of machinery in 2006. Plant Hire Manager Angus McKinlay said the company employs about 100 locals on projects across the Territory after the company first moved to the NT in 2014 to work on the INPEX project.

Now Black Cat Civil has more than 300 employees across northern Australia and a 450 plus fleet.

Angus said the Darwin Ship Lift Facility project has given Black Cat Civil a chance to show its capability on a large enabling infrastructure project.

"It is a nationally significant project and it is something we have been involved in from the start, so we are very proud to work on such a great project that supports local businesses," Angus said. "Our employees are very proud to be working on the ship lift project, which will be so important for government, Defence and local businesses."

Black Cat Civil has also employed 2 apprentices through the Clontarf Academy.

Project spotlight

Black Cat Civil makes its mark

One look at the busy Darwin Ship Lift Facility construction site and you will see Black Cat Civil's distinctive paw print logo on big machines operating across the site.

Large 40 tonne dump trucks, 30 tonne excavators, bulldozers, graders and water carts all display the Black Cat Civil symbol – the mark of a local Territory company.

Black Cat Civil began working on the ship lift construction site at the start of the project in April 2024.



Ship lift project keeps duo in Darwin

If it wasn't for the Darwin Ship Lift Facility project, Karen and her husband Shane would have had to pack up and move back to Queensland months ago.

Karen Scurry works as an operator for Black Cat Civil on the largest enabling infrastructure project under construction in the Northern Territory.

Karen is one of several female operators working on the ship lift construction site for Black Cat Civil. She began driving a large Moxy dump truck on the ship lift site in November 2024 after working for several years driving machines in Queensland and Kununurra in Western Australia.

The couple moved to Gove for a 6 month mine site project for Black Cat Civil and planned to return to Darwin to say goodbye to the local team before heading back to Queensland. Little did Karen know their plan to return home was about to change.

"We packed up and went back to Darwin to say goodbye to everyone there before we headed back to Queensland," Karen said. "But they told me they needed me to start working on the ship lift site the next day so it meant we could stay here."

Karen has now gained all her machinery tickets and is driving water carts and dump trucks 6 days a week while her husband Shane works at the yard and on site.

"If it wasn't for the ship lift project, we would have had to go back to Queensland," Karen said. "I just love Darwin and now I have my dream job."

"Sometimes when I am up driving in the Moxy and looking over the ship lift site I just need to pinch myself that I am here driving a dump truck on such a huge project."

Milestones

| TIMEFRAME | PROJECT ACTIVITY |
|-----------|--|
| MAR 2025 | Temporary access bunds construction completed |
| AUG 2025 | Backhoe dredging complete |
| NOV2025 | Bulk of land reclamation completed |
| Q1 2026 | First international shipments for ship lift system start |
| Q1 2026 | Expected delivery of SPMT component |
| Q2 2026 | Administration building to be complete |
| Q2 2026 | Caisson installation to be complete |
| 2026 -27 | Gain Defence Facility Qualification |
| 2027 | Ship lift facility to become operational in stages |



Road access

Road trains continue to bring material 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.

Marine access

Caisson construction 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:

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Click here
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