

MEDIA RELEASE

4 July 2022

Operation commences to tow drifting cargo ship to safe waters

An operation is underway to tow a vessel, MV Portland Bay, that was drifting with no power towards the shoreline south of Sydney.

Port Authority of NSW was appointed incident controller at 10.20am today with an Incident Control Team established at Port Botany to oversee the multiagency response.

Incident Controller, Chief Operating Officer at Port Authority of NSW Captain John Finch said the operation involved three tugs coordinating a towing operation to move the vessel into safe deeper waters out to sea.

“The priority is getting this vessel and its crew into safer waters and away from land and the potential of grounding,” Captain Finch said.

“We have eight metre swells and 30 knot winds, so the conditions are really difficult for the teams working on the water to move this vessel out,” Mr Finch said.

“All tugs have now arrived and connected to the ship so the operation has commenced to raise its anchors and move this ship safely out to sea in a slow and controlled manner.

“The conditions make the towage operation quite difficult. In eight metre swell the vessel is going to be rising and falling and rolling. That’s going to put a lot of stress on the equipment and the tug lines.

“Central to this operation is the safety of the ship’s crew and the frontline responders and our thoughts are with those onboard and out on the water.

“The aim at this point is to get the vessel out well off the coast tonight before the weather deteriorates further.

“The next few hours are critical. I want to thank the incredible response already from so many agencies to undertake an operation of this magnitude, giving us the best possible chance of success.”

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