

Bruny Island ferry service

General

The contract to operate the Bruny Island ferry is outcome-based. This means that without specifying how every aspect of the service will be run, the contract sets minimum requirements that must be met, including in relation to:

- operating the service every day of the term of the contract;
- managing queuing;
- ensuring capacity and meeting the reasonable needs of residents;
- continuing the arrangement where no one is left behind when they have arrived for the last scheduled sailing;
- communication with ferry users;
- ensuring a range of ticket selling options are made available; and
- providing at least four weeks notice of changes to fares and/or the ferry timetable.

Both SeaLink (as the operator) and the Transport Commission (as the contracting party) have clear and detailed contractual obligations, but there is also flexibility for both parties to propose or request changes, for example to things like the ferry timetable, fares and infrastructure.

The following information is a summary of the contractual requirements in relation to the timetable, priority boarding arrangements, fares, new vessel procurement, step-in rights, and reporting obligations. The contract is intended to be a partnership arrangement whereby the parties work together to ensure the ferry service meets the needs of all users. The full contract will be published in due course and available for anyone to access.

Timetable

The contract specifically provides for the Transport Commission to request changes to the frequency of the service if the need arises. There is also an obligation on SeaLink to work proactively with the Transport Commission on potential changes to the timetable to optimise the service, including in response to changes in demand, easing vehicle queuing and improving passenger experience.

Priority boarding

Priority boarding arrangements will continue for the school bus and emergency services vehicles and the new contract formalises a similar requirement for undertakers, livestock (where there is a risk to animal welfare caused by boarding delay), perishables and other time critical produce.

Fares

The contract specifies the fare structure to apply from service commencement and includes a framework that relates to changes to the fares, covering both increases to fares and changes to fare classifications (including any introduction of new classifications).

For the duration of the contract, any fare increases for residents and property owners will be limited to annual CPI, and fare increases for visitors will be limited to 5% per annum.

No fare changes of any sort can be made without the prior approval of the Transport Commission.

Eligibility for resident and property owner fares and concessions is specified in the contract, both of which are intended to match the current arrangements at a minimum.

New vessels

The contract requires new vessels must be built in Tasmania unless SeaLink can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Transport Commission that *“the price or other terms of doing so would be adversely materially different compared to the price and terms of procuring the New Vessels outside of Tasmania.”*

While the contract does not prescribe all design specifications for new vessels, the contract does require new vessels must be fit for the purpose of providing the service in accordance with contract requirements, including factors such as crossing capacity. It also requires SeaLink to operate, maintain and repair the vessels safely and in accordance with best practice.

Step-in rights

The contract provides the Transport Commission with significant step-in rights and access to all contract ferries and staff in the event SeaLink is unable to operate the service for any reason. This is a standard risk management approach that would have been negotiated regardless of the operator to ensure the service can continue in case of unforeseen circumstances.

Reporting obligations

There are increased reporting obligations on the operator in the new contract including the type and level of information about the service. More data will assist both parties to make changes to scheduling and other aspects of the service as required to meet the needs of all users. With the reporting framework is also a key performance indicator (KPI) framework that covers punctuality (‘on time’ services), missed or cancelled services, timeliness of responses to customer complaints and provision of service information. The KPIs will be measured, reported and assessed quarterly.