



# MARITIME ZONES

Border Protection Command protects Australia's maritime areas by overseeing surveillance and response operations within our maritime zones.

## WHAT ARE 'MARITIME ZONES'?

Australia, along with other countries bordering the sea, has sovereign rights over an area of ocean and the resources within. The management and protection of the waters that yield these resources is a complex task.

Maritime zones delineate the sovereignty or sovereign rights a coastal state has over the offshore environment. These zones have been established in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (LOSC) 1982. Those parts of the Convention dealing with the establishment of maritime zones have been incorporated into Australian law by amendments to the *Sea and Submerged Lands Act 1973*.

## WHAT ARE AUSTRALIA'S MARITIME ZONES?

Under the LOSC, there are four principal maritime zones. These are:

- ▶ the territorial sea
- ▶ contiguous zone
- ▶ exclusive economic zone
- ▶ the continental shelf.

Each of these zones is measured from the territorial sea baseline. The normal baseline is the low water line; however there are a number of exceptions to this.

The territorial sea extends to a maximum of 12 nautical miles (nm) from the baseline. In some areas such as the Torres Strait the territorial sea is only three nautical miles. Australia's jurisdiction extends to these areas including the seabed, subsoil and airspace above the territorial seas, subject to the right of 'innocent passage' which enables vessels to transit without interference through the territorial sea of a coastal state. Again this is subject to some exceptions.

Within Australia there is an additional zone known as coastal waters,

which extend three nautical miles seaward from the baseline and form part of the territorial sea. Within these waters the States and Northern Territory can exercise jurisdiction, although these waters do not actually form part of the State or Northern Territory.

The contiguous zone extends to a maximum of 24 nm from the territorial baseline. In this zone, Australia is able to enforce our customs, fiscal, immigration or sanitary laws and regulations.

The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extends to a maximum of 200 nm. Within the EEZ, Australia has sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving and managing all natural resources of the waters, seabed and its subsoil. Coastal states are also permitted to establish and make use of artificial islands, installations and structures, and to undertake marine research and activities to protect and preserve the



marine environment. In the waters north of Australia, this zone overlaps with the Australian Fishing Zone (AFZ).

The continental shelf comprises the seabed and subsoil of the areas that extend beyond the territorial sea - in some instances the continental shelf can extend beyond the outer limit of the EEZ. Australia is able to exercise sovereign rights for the purposes of exploring and exploiting the natural resources found on the continental shelf.

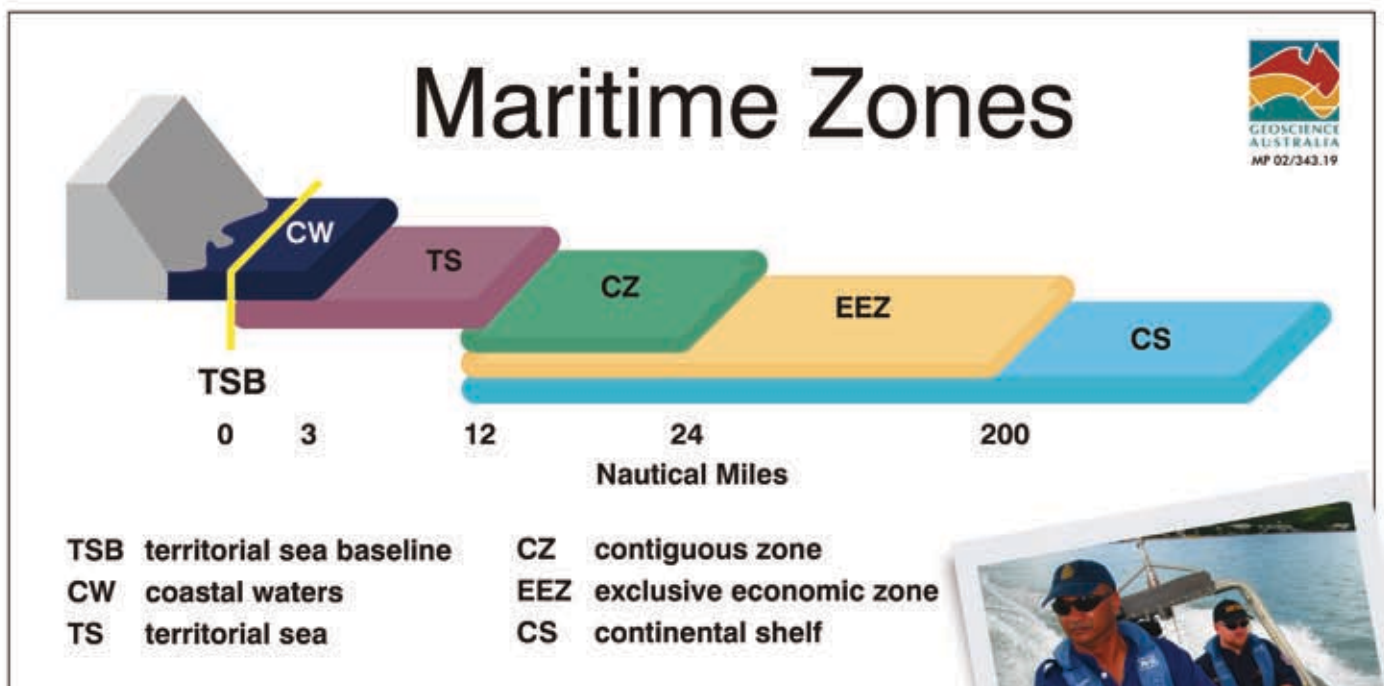
## WHAT INTEREST DOES BORDER PROTECTION COMMAND HAVE IN MARITIME ZONES?

Border Protection Command is part of a whole-of-government strategy to protect Australia's maritime areas.

The protection of natural resources within the AFZ and EEZ is important for the future sustainable development of Australia's offshore environment. This needs to be balanced with the economic advantage that can be obtained from

the careful management of the oceans' natural resources.

Border Protection Command coordinates surveillance and response operations that detect and deter maritime threats within Australia's maritime areas. Border Protection Command enforces relevant legislation within maritime zones on behalf of principal agencies, including the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service.



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Border Protection Command Headquarters,  
Customs House, 5 Constitution Avenue, Canberra, ACT 2600.  
Telephone 1300 558 287.

Website: [www.bpc.gov.au](http://www.bpc.gov.au)

