Some of the world’s largest commercial ships now have all-tides access to Darwin Harbour after a successful dredging operation.

“This $3.8 million dredging project means Darwin now has a harbour that can safely accommodate the volume and scale of shipping traffic needed to support the development of Northern Australia,” Chief Minister Adam Giles said.

“Improved shipping access and Port facilities are increasing efficiencies, reducing turn-around times and cutting costs for the growing number of larger vessels stopping in Darwin.”

The dredging at Charles Point Patches has involved the removal of 105,000m³ of sand and sediment from a section of the shipping channel that is 450m wide and approximately 2km long.

“Until now, this section has hampered access for larger ships at low tide but the dredging means deeper hulled vessels will now be able to enter the Harbour 98% per cent of the time,” Mr Giles said.

“This is great news for shipping operators and the Territory economy, reducing freight costs and driving down the cost of living. The improved access will be particularly important for dry bulk, petroleum, liquid bulk and cruise ships, as well as LNG vessels.

“It means there will no longer be the frequent need for larger vessels to be delayed on entry to or departure from the Harbour which will be crucial as major projects ramp up.”

The channel depth in this area has now been increased from 10.1 to 14.0 metres at the lowest tide.

“The dredging has been underway since late March and has proceeded without any environmental incidents,” Parliamentary Secretary for Northern Australia Development Gary Higgins said.

"The shipping channels also remained open to larger vessels throughout the dredging project, ensuring there was minimal disruption to Harbour users."
"The Port of Darwin is going from strength to strength, achieving annual growth of 31 per cent in cargo and 24 per cent in trade vessels. It’s also setting new records for container handling efficiencies and cattle exports.

“New privately operated mobile cranes at East Arm are providing record productivity at the Port, more than quadrupling the handling capacity.

"One of the cranes is now reaching rates of up to 32 containers per hour compared to the previous rate of 10 per hour using the Port’s 30 year old permanent crane.”

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