



GEELONG CHANNEL DEEPENING STUDIES - GEOTECHNICAL

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PLAN




April 2019

Document Control

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A (Draft)	1 February 2019	J Milne	Internal review
B (Draft)	5 March 2019	C Bell	Incorporation of VRCA comments
C (Draft)	21 March 2019	I. Clydesdale	Minor amendments
D (Final)	10 th April, 2019	I. Clydesdale	Final - following DELWP feedback

Endorsed By

Name	Signature	Date
Michael Harvey, CEO Project Sponsor		10 th April, 2019

BACKGROUND

The *Transport Integration Act 2010* (Section 141M (1) (a) (iii)) requires that Victorian Regional Channels Authority (VRCA) ensure, in relation to regional port waters and channels in those waters, the general direction and control of the movement of vessels within those channels is in accordance with the *Marine Safety Act 2010*.

The objects of the *Marine Safety Act 2010* (Section 14) are to promote:

- (a) the safety of marine operations; and
- (b) the effective management of safety risks in marine operations and in the marine operating environment; and
- (c) continuous improvement in marine safety management; and
- (d) public confidence in the safety of marine operations; and
- (e) involvement of relevant stakeholders in marine safety; and
- (f) a culture of safety among all participants in the marine operating environment.

VRCA actively engages with local communities on a number of levels to promote awareness of port, boating safety, environmental issues and the significance of the port to the local economy and community.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Port of Geelong is the second largest port in Victoria, and handles approx. 14 million tonnes of bulk cargo per annum. The activities of the port and port related companies are a major contributor to the economy of the region and the state, supporting thousands of jobs in Geelong and the surrounding region. The port attracts over 600 ship visits per annum, requiring more than 1200 ship transits of the shipping channels.

Victorian Regional Channels Authority (VRCA) is responsible for the provision of safe access for commercial vessels visiting Victoria's regional ports. It is the only government agency with responsibility for the safety of vessel access to the ports of Geelong, Hastings and Portland.

There has been a steady and continuing increase in the size of ships in the global commercial shipping fleet. To inform the future planning of channel improvements in response to this trend in global shipping, VRCA has undertaken site investigations in recent years to determine the geotechnical conditions in areas which could be affected by future channel improvements.

A basalt rock outcrop in the vicinity of Wilson Spit is a major potential risk to future channel improvement projects, and has been the subject of recent geophysical surveys to map the surface profile and the variability of the subsea bed materials. A program of geotechnical investigations including the drilling of marine boreholes is now required to corroborate and calibrate the results of the geophysical surveys, in order to fully understand the nature of the material and the technologies required for its removal. The investigations will be used to reduce the construction, contractual and environmental risks associated with future channel improvements.

The proposed actions are entirely within Geelong Port Waters and are consistent with current Victorian government policy frameworks.

The investigations will consist of the drilling of marine geotechnical boreholes located as shown in Figure 1 (Total No. 13) and conducting of field and laboratory testing to determine physical properties. Drilling

will be undertaken by a drilling rig mounted either on a barge stabilised by spud legs or a jack up barge to provide a stable working platform.

VRCA has conducted an environmental risk assessment to identify the controls required to reduce ecological risks to low. This Environmental Management Plan (EMP) has been prepared for the project, in response to the environmental risk assessment.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

VRCA recognises that, although periodic maintenance and investigation activity is deemed to be part of routine port operations, there is genuine community interest, particularly in waterside areas, in such activities.

With that in mind, VRCA accepts the view that it is most appropriate for the organisation to openly and transparently inform interested stakeholders and the community about these works. It will provide clear and succinct information on:

- **the need for such work**
- **when, where and how the work will be undertaken**
- **the Environmental Management Plans which govern such work**

VRCA's approach to the project will be open and transparent. The availability of clear, consistent and timely information should help negate disinformation and advise stakeholders and the community what to expect ahead of time.

In short, VRCA's communications with agencies, interested stakeholders, port customers and the Victorian community is prefaced with a 'no surprises' approach. As an example, the deployment of barges and drilling plant and equipment is announced well before it arrives and stakeholders are advised accordingly.

KEY MESSAGES

VRCA proposes the following key messages to support its geotechnical investigation work:

- 1) Planning for the safe access of future ships is a routine part of port operations and geotechnical investigations have been undertaken for this purpose for over many years.
- 2) VRCA has an inherent responsibility under legislation to ensure safe channel access and to undertake such works as required.
- 3) Details of the scope and delivery of such works are readily available to the public.
- 4) All geotechnical investigation works are governed by an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) approved by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and prepared in response to a project specific risk assessment.
- 5) Drilling of geotechnical boreholes does not pose a significant threat to marine life.
- 6) Public amenity is not affected.
- 7) Safety is our priority.

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

VRCA will adopt the same communications model for all Geelong Channel Deepening Studies.

- VRCA will keep stakeholders informed of projects at all stages.
- This information will be clear, succinct and easily accessed.

The VRCA CEO or his delegate will be responsible for and undertake all requirements with respect to media announcements.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

This consultation plan is being implemented for VRCA's Geelong Channel Deepening Studies - Geotechnical.

VRCA has engaged and will continue to engage in community consultation during the course of this project, primarily through regular Port - City group meetings involving key stakeholders in the port.

In addition to ongoing engagement with DELWP on environmental issues, VRCA consults a number of other departments and agencies, including: -

- Fisheries Victoria
- The Nature Conservancy
- other user groups in the Bay

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

VRCA is aware that works on the seabed are exempt under Regulation 18 of the *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2007*.

VRCA will consult the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register in relation to the proposed borehole drilling sites. VRCA is unaware of any issues of indigenous cultural significance in the area affected by the proposed action. Most of the area under consideration has been subject to previous dredging activity over many years.

In relation to the *Native Title Act (Cth) 1993*, VRCA will consult with DELWP to ensure that there are no requirements for VRCA to take any action.

MEDIA STATEMENTS

VRCA will issue a media statement to announce the project when approvals are granted and timing of the works is determined. Further media statements may be issued at key stages of the project as required.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK AND SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

Prior to the project proceeding, VRCA will increase its engagement with the community to include the following:-

- **VRCA Website** - Updates on the progress of the project will be provided. (with contact details for community feedback)
- **Media Releases** - When dates have been fixed for the commencement of works, VRCA will issue a press release explaining the rationale behind the geotechnical works and outline the key details

of the project. Subsequent press releases will be issued on an “as required” basis during and after the project.

- **Notices to Mariners** – Official alerts to the shipping and boating community will be issued during the course of the project.
- **Issues Log** – A community issues log will be established for this project with protocols in place to ensure that all issues raised by the community are addressed in an efficient and timely fashion.

In keeping with VRCA’s stated communications objectives above on keeping stakeholders informed about the geotechnical investigation works, VRCA will make a range of materials, including the EMP, available via its website at www.vrca.vic.gov.au