



## **Drilling rig Noble Tom Prosser to stay in Western Port until August**

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The Noble Tom Prosser drilling rig will remain anchored in Western Port until August.

The large jack-up rig was on its way from Bass Strait to Portland when bad weather caused its owners to seek shelter in Western Port on April 19.

With safety of the crew paramount, Victorian Regional Channels Authority (VRCA) gave temporary approval for the rig to seek shelter in the bay, about 2km from the coastline, off Cowes.

It was hoped the Noble Tom Prosser, owned by Noble Group, would be able to continue on its journey last Friday.

The owners of the rig have subsequently informed VRCA that their operations have been temporarily suspended due to the extraordinary circumstances surrounding COVID-19 and have requested to stay in Western Port until August this year.

“In order to ensure the safety of the crew, the rig and to minimise the danger posed to the rig should she have to relocate to another location, VRCA has allowed the rig to remain where she is, as requested”, VRCA Chief Executive Officer Peter Mannion said.

“However, strict conditions have been imposed on the rig while she is in port, including but not limited to the minimising of noise and light, ensuring that nothing is discharged into the water from the rig and that the crew follow all requisite COVID-19 procedures.”

Once the current situation eases and the rig is able to resume operations in the Bass Strait the owners need a window of calm weather, a period of three to four days to move the rig safely.

“It is important that a tow does not occur in sea conditions that will compromise the stability of the rig when underway at sea,” Mr Mannion said.

VRCA manages the commercial navigation in the port waters of Geelong and Hastings and oversees the channel management for the Port of Portland.

VRCA will continue to update the community with any developments over the coming months.