

Media release

Immediate Release Friday August 14, 2015

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New \$8 million program adds to Geelong port efficiency.

A new works program that will further improve access, safety and efficiency for ships using Geelong shipping channels and berthing at Refinery pier was announced today.

The works also pave the way for a new berth at Lascelles Wharf.

Announcing the new initiative Captain Peter McGovern of the Victorian Regional Channels Authority (VRCA) said the works program will ensure safety and ease of efficient access for larger vessels using the Geelong port.

An \$8 million dollar contract has been awarded to Heron Construction Company Limited, following an extensive tender process.

The works program, expected to commence next month and take eight weeks, involves dredging in vicinity of Refinery Pier. Works will be carried out by the *Machiavelli*, which is returning to Geelong after successfully completing a project during 2014.

Geelong company Elstone Diving will relocate navigation marks and another local firm, Fusion Map, will conduct hydrographic surveys.

"Combined with the recent adoption of the Dynamic Under Keel Clearance technology which allows larger vessels and vessels carrying more cargo to use the channel, these improvements highlight to the shipping world that Geelong is a vibrant and efficient port," Captain McGovern said.

"Forecasting and modelling predict that there will be additional tonnes through the port during the next few years. With the potential for congestion on some of the berths.

"These works are an essential precursor to the expansion of Lascelles Wharf, which will relieve congestion and add to the long-term viability of Geelong's port," he said.

The dredging will eliminate the risk of a large vessel being caught by a northerly wind and being pushed into the shallows, which places ship and tug in danger. The works will improve safety for vessels and tugs alike.

Material removed from the vicinity of Refinery Pier will be transported by towing barges to the existing dredge material ground located east of Point Wilson which was previously used during the 1990's when the *Machiavelli* last visited Geelong.

Approval for the works has been granted under the Coastal Management Act 1995, following extensive consultation with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). The project meets all requirements for the protection of the marine environment, ensuring that nature and commerce coexist.



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Dredging and placement activities will be managed under the strict controls of an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) approved by DELWP.

"I am completely confident that these works will improve safety and efficiency while protecting the Bay", Captain McGovern said.

Works will be completed within six to eight weeks. There will be no interruption to normal shipping activity in the port although a 100 metres exclusion zone will be in force around the dredging operations.

Notices to Mariners will be issued.

Further information can be obtained by contacting the VRCA or visiting www.regionalchannels.vic.gov.au