



The Place To Be

Media release

From the Minister for Transport

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NEW CORPORATION FOR REGIONAL PORTS

The ports of Portland, Geelong and Hastings will be stronger and better equipped to meet future challenges following the establishment of the new Victorian Regional Channels Authority (VRCA), the Minister for Transport, Peter Batchelor announced today.

Mr Batchelor said the new Authority, based in Geelong, would oversee the operation of the channels and port waters serving the regional commercial ports on behalf of the Government, ensuring appropriate management arrangements were in place.

“In Hastings and Portland, this will involve maintaining existing channel operating agreements with port managers. In Geelong, the new entity will assume direct responsibility as channel operator and for contracting services,” Mr Batchelor said.

“A priority of the VRCA is to understand the medium and long-term needs of all three regional commercial ports, work with them to meet future challenges and enable the ports to contribute to the growth of local economies.”

The chairperson of the new organisation is Michael Dowling.

Mr Dowling is the former Deputy Chairperson and Director of the Victorian Channels Authority. He was previously a director and company secretary of Australian and international shipping businesses, and has extensive experience in finance, compliance and business issues.

Merran Kelsall and Alan Taylor will join Mr Dowling on the board.

Ms Kelsall has a strong background in corporate governance and considerable experience in aligning performance management with corporate strategy, while Mr Taylor has extensive industry experience, and is a former director of the Victorian Channels Authority.

Mr Dowling said the board’s combined expertise in corporate governance and industry knowledge would enable the new Authority to help the three ports reach their full potential.

“One of the first things the directors will do is meet with the Geelong Channel Users’ Group and receive advice on various issues, including safety and costs, associated with the Port of Geelong,” Mr Dowling said.

“This insight will be invaluable in gaining a better understanding of users’ requirements and growing demand for the port’s services.”

The board will also visit Portland and Hastings to be briefed by port representatives.

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Mr Batchelor said the new authority had an important role to play in protecting Port of Geelong users' interests and ensuring they continued to receive quality services.

“The Essential Services Commission will continue to regulate channels in Port Phillip Bay, including pricing and access arrangements for the shared channels, which are used by both Melbourne and Geelong-bound vessels.

The establishment of the VRCA is one of the final elements of the port reform program.

Mr Batchelor said the Bracks Government's ports reform agenda began in 2001, when the Government asked Professor Bill Russell to review the Kennett Government's privatisation and related changes of the 1990s.

“This Government accepted the key elements of the changes Professor Russell advocated in his December 2001 report, and has introduced an historic package of legislative reforms,” Mr Batchelor said.