



MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 23 January, 2008

VRCA ISSUES SKANDIA GEELONG WEEK SAFETY MESSAGE

The Victorian Regional Channels Authority (VRCA) today issued a reminder to all crews competing and visiting during Skandia Geelong Week (24 – 28 January) to exercise caution and keep well clear of commercial ships navigating Corio Bay.

Chief Executive Officer of the VRCA, Captain Peter McGovern, said that while the Skandia festival is a wonderful opportunity to showcase Corio Bay's recreational features, priority must still be given to commercial vessels entering and exiting the port.

“While the VRCA is charged with providing a safe and secure navigational path for the commercial users of Geelong's port facilities, ensuring everyone's safety during this busy time will be our highest priority,” said Captain McGovern.

“During Skandia Geelong Week we believe the celebrations will include about 450 competitor yachts and that numerous other craft will visit such as tall ships and passenger ferries,” he said.

“It will be congested, so we ask that all recreational craft take care.

“Large vessels have right of way in the channels and it is important to keep a lookout as you may not hear one approaching over the noise of your engine or the wind and waves.

“If a ship blows its whistle it means get out of the way as they may not be able to avoid you! These vessels take a lot of time to slow down or turn. The responsibility lies with yachts to stay out of the shipping channels when the vessels are moving through.”

During Skandia Geelong Week, the VRCA Harbour Master will conduct regular safety patrols onboard the VRCA's boat, the *George Molland*. Important safety information will also be provided in competitor show bags.

The safety message issued today complements the VRCA's 'Keep Clear of Big Ships!' campaign launched at the end of 2007. Supported by local radio advertisements and the distribution of promotional flyers and merchandise, the campaign aims to educate people on the rules and regulations surrounding shipping channels in Corio Bay.

Further information about navigating Corio Bay channels can be found on the VRCA's website www.regionalchannels.vic.gov.au.

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Caption: *The VRCA asks that all vessels 'Keep Clear of Big Ships' in port channels.*