



Victorian Regional Channels  
Authority

# Corporate Profile





**Our mission is to provide safe, secure and environmentally responsible navigation services to the users and operators of Victoria's regional commercial ports**

The Victorian Regional Channels Authority (VRCA), established in 2004, is the state authority responsible for managing the port waters for Geelong, maintaining shipping channels and navigation aids and providing direction and control of the movement of ships.

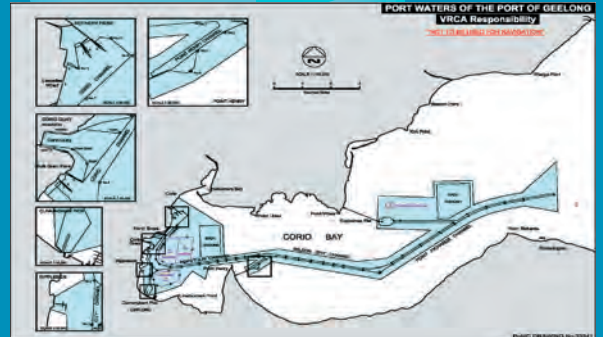
The VRCA also oversees channel operations in Victoria's regional commercial ports of Portland and Hastings.

### SAFER SHIPPING FOR REGIONAL PORTS

The VRCA is responsible for the direction and control of all vessels in Geelong Port waters.

The VRCA provides:

- shipping control
- maintenance of navigation aids
- dredging and channel maintenance
- port security and safety
- technical advice and support to port managers and integrated planning, development, management and promotional activities.



The VRCA has a direct role in maintaining shipping channels and approaches to Geelong and oversees the management of port waters at Portland and Hastings.

### STRUCTURE AND OPERATION

The authority's staff works from headquarters in central Geelong. The VRCA contracts most of its core services including maintenance dredging, hydrographic survey and navigation to external organisations.

### THE LEGAL BASIS FOR OUR OPERATION

The VRCA operates under the Port Management Act 1995. Under the Act, the VRCA is charged with managing the movement of vessels in port waters and ensuring appropriate management arrangements are in place in the port waters of Geelong, Portland and Hastings.

The VRCA reports to the Minister for Ports regarding industry policy and regulation and to the Treasurer in relation to shareholder and governance issues.

### HOW THE VRCA IS FUNDED

Most of the VRCA's income flows from a tonnage charge levied on commercial shipping using port waters. It does not charge passenger cruise liners and naval vessels for using the channels.

The ports of Portland and Hastings administer their channels under a channel operating agreement on behalf of the VRCA, which maintains an overseeing audit role without gaining any revenue from the two ports.

The VRCA aims to provide quality services to channel users at minimal cost and support its customers and stakeholders to achieve their business goals.

### SHARED CHANNELS

All vessels travelling to the ports of Geelong and Melbourne pass through Port Phillip Heads and the South Channel, managed by the Port of Melbourne Corporation. Geelong-bound vessels must pay a fee to the Port of Melbourne Corporation for use of these channels. The state's Essential Services Commission is charged with ensuring that pricing arrangements for using these shared channels do not disadvantage Port of Geelong users.

### REGIONAL CHANNELS - A COMMUNITY ASSET

The VRCA, a regionally-based authority, understands the challenges facing customers and stakeholders operating in regional ports, and their communities.

It recognises that maintaining strong links within regional port communities is vital. In Geelong, it liaises directly with customers through a Channel User Group, Port Security Committee, Port Emergency Committee and Port Safety and Environmental Committee and through regular informal contact to ensure interests are heard, understood and acted on.

The VRCA is also conscious that channels under its control are community assets. The authority works closely with the City of Greater Geelong, recreational boating groups and other non-commercial channel users to maintain safety and limit environmental risk.

The VRCA plays a strong role in ensuring Victoria's regional ports are served efficiently and are well equipped so they can continue their vital contribution to the future growth of local and state economies.

The authority strives to meet the medium and long-term needs of ships and shipping in the regional commercial ports. It works with business, industry and local communities to plan for future challenges so the ports will remain significant economic contributors for their communities and Victoria.





## PORT PROFILES

Ports and shipping play a crucial role in Australia's economy, transporting about 95 per cent of the nation's exports and imports and contributing a significant flow-on effect to the Victorian community.

At Victoria's three regional ports -- Geelong, Portland and Hastings -- more than 1130 ships a year load or discharge cargoes including grain, fertiliser, oil and other petroleum products, timber, alumina and steel.

The VRCA manages the shipping channels in the port waters of Geelong and oversees channel operations in the ports of Portland and Hastings.

The authority ensures the access and safety of ships entering these ports, and the safe, secure and environmentally responsible operation of the channels and waters of the ports.

The VRCA makes sure that navigation aids mark the channels to guide ships into the ports, maintains the depths of channels and protects the underwater environment.



### GEELONG – VICTORIA'S LARGEST REGIONAL PORT

Geelong is Victoria's second largest port and handles over a quarter of Victoria's overseas exports, including more than half the state's grain exports, as well as petroleum products and wood chips. Crude oil, petroleum products and fertiliser are major imports.

The VRCA recognises the safety of the 770 ships that visit each year is a priority and is continually striving to improve navigation and safety in the Port of Geelong.

As part of the ongoing improvement program, it has installed 78 high-tech beacons with solar powered lights and navigation aids at a cost of about \$7 million. Some of the beacons have GSM capabilities and provide performance reports and warnings remotely.

The use of 'virtual' beacons also places the VRCA at the forefront of maritime navigation. The installation of a sophisticated laser docking aid device at the refinery berths is another element of the VRCA's commitment to continually improving safety.

The VRCA recognises ship sizes are increasing and is planning for the challenges larger vessels pose for Geelong, the state's most important bulk cargo port. The authority uses cutting-edge modelling and computer simulation programs to test channel constraints and capacity for larger ships operating in the port. The VRCA has also undertaken detailed development strategies and studies to help plan for a continuing strong economic future for the vibrant port.

GeelongPort Pty Ltd has operated most of the land-based infrastructure since the port was privatised in July, 1996. GeelongPort manages all commercial wharves and piers, with the exception of Point Wilson Explosives Pier (Commonwealth Government) and Bulk Grain Pier Number 3 berth (GrainCorp).

The Port of Geelong and the businesses who rely on it are also major contributors to the community and the economy, contributing an estimated output impact of around \$7.1 billion on the Barwon economy. Together they provide employment (fte) for more than 7600 people across the region.

The VRCA has developed an education program for secondary students in Geelong region. Implemented in 2006, program My Port, Our Place, Your Geelong recognises the importance of the port in the life of the city and the region. It has introduced thousands of local students to the port, its operations and job opportunities.

Corio Bay is Geelong's jewel in the crown when it comes to commercial shipping and recreation and the VRCA is playing a key role in keeping waters safe for all vessels, big and small. The authority's Keep clear of big ships campaign targets small boat users and focuses on the rules and regulations for safe navigation in shipping channels.

### PORTLAND – A STRATEGIC DEEP WATER LOCATION

The Port of Portland is strategically located between Melbourne and Adelaide, is a major import and export facility for South Eastern Australia.

A range of the region's key commodities moves through the port including grain, livestock, forest products, aluminium and fertiliser.

Major import commodities include petroleum coke, alumina, fertiliser product and liquid pitch.

The port, privatised in 1996, is owned and managed by private company Port of Portland Pty Ltd.

The VRCA contracts its channels responsibilities to the port owner.

### HASTINGS – MELBOURNE'S FUTURE DEEP WATER PORT

The commercial Port of Hastings is located in the north arm of Western Port Bay, 70 kilometres south east of Melbourne.

Major international and domestic shipping movements through the port include the import and export of oil, LPG and ULP.

While the state of Victoria owns the facilities, Asciano has leased and managed them since mid-1997.

The VRCA contracts management of the port waters, which includes the Port of Hastings, Long Island Point, Crib Point, Stony Point Jetties and approaches, to Asciano.

Deep water access and close proximity to Melbourne's eastern growth corridors are key factors in assuring the port's continued growth in the future.

The Port of Hastings Development Authority is playing a major part in the port's evolution. Established in early 2012, its role is to push forward and oversee the port's container expansion and optimise economic opportunities.



# Victorian Regional Channels Authority

## CONTACT DETAILS

Level 2  
235 Ryrie Street  
Geelong Victoria 3220  
GPO Box 1135  
Geelong Vic 3220

Captain Peter McGovern  
Chief Executive Officer

Captain Dilip Abraham  
Harbour Master

Kas Szakiel  
Commercial Manager

**Telephone (03) 5225 3500**  
**Facsimile (03) 5225 3599**

[admin@regionalchannels.vic.gov.au](mailto:admin@regionalchannels.vic.gov.au)  
[www.regionalchannels.vic.gov.au](http://www.regionalchannels.vic.gov.au)

View our website for additional information  
about our services and for useful links to other  
areas of maritime interest within Victoria.

