

5 July 2004

Public release of Channel Deepening EES

The Port of Melbourne Corporation publicly released the Channel Deepening Environmental Effects Statement (EES) today.

The Channel Deepening EES investigates the deepening of commercial shipping channels into and within Port Phillip Bay and assesses the economic, environmental and social impacts of this major project.

Announcing the public release of the EES documents, Port of Melbourne Corporation Chairman, Neil Edwards, said:

“The EES on Channel Deepening is the most comprehensive ever compiled in Victoria. Its key findings indicate that environmental impacts on Port Phillip Bay will be temporary and can be managed sustainably.

“Subject to final approval, the Channel Deepening Project will significantly improve the efficiency of the port of Melbourne and underpin its reputation as Victoria’s trading gateway to the world and the nation’s largest port.”

The depth of the channels means more than 30% of container vessels currently entering and leaving the port cannot load to full capacity and this figure will increase in the future. As a result, Victorian business will miss out on lower freight costs making our exports less competitive.

The Port of Melbourne Corporation, the proponent of the project, engaged Parsons Brinckerhoff to co-ordinate the assessment of the impact of channel deepening.

Prepared in accordance with the Assessment Guidelines outlined by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, the key findings of the Channel Deepening EES indicate:

- there will be an imperceptible impact on waves, current and tides
- there will be no beach erosion resulting from channel deepening
- the sea level will not change as a result of the project
- no explosives will be used in the project
- turbidity from dredging will be temporary and localised
- all dredging will be undertaken in existing shipping channels

The port of Melbourne handles \$70 billion of trade each year and contributes around \$5.4 billion to the Victorian economy. It directly and indirectly employs around 80,000 Victorians.

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The Victorian Government recognises the significant economic benefits to the Victorian economy outlined in the EES for business and job security. Its support for the Channel Deepening Project, recently outlined in the Economic Statement *Victoria – Leading the Way*, has always been subject to meeting sound environmental, technical and financial conditions.

The EES has been prepared using a comprehensive risk management approach to minimise the environmental impacts of dredging of the channels.

The Port of Melbourne Corporation Chief Executive Officer, Stephen Bradford, said:

“We have concluded an Alliance Agreement for the development phase of technical and environmental solutions with renowned dredging company Royal Boskalis NV who brings best of practice specialist technology to the Project.

“Royal Boskalis NV have extensive expertise in minimising the environmental impacts of dredging. The company was awarded a certificate of excellence in environmental management by the Swedish Maritime Organisation for its work in deepening the channels to the port of Gothenburg in Sweden in 2003.”

The estimated cost of the project is around \$400 million which will be primarily recouped by the Port of Melbourne Corporation from port users. The Government has also signalled it may be prepared to make a contribution to the project subject to its approval.

The EES will be on public display at various locations across Melbourne and Bayside municipalities until 16 August and comprises 16 independent specialist studies. Any person or organisation is invited to make a written submission on the EES during the exhibition period.

The EES can also be viewed and downloaded free of charge from the Port of Melbourne Corporation website at <http://www.portofmelbourne.com/portdev/channeldeep/ees.asp>

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