



Submission on the Victorian Ports Strategy - Coastal Shipping Review

Gippsland Ports Committee of Management Inc

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Introduction

Gippsland Ports Committee of Management Inc. is pleased to provide this submission on the Victorian Ports Strategy - Coastal Shipping Review. The Coastal Shipping Review is recognised as a key initial step in the process of developing a much-needed Victorian Ports Strategy.

Coastal shipping is a key element in the regional economic prosperity of areas such as Gippsland. It not only provides much-needed activity in the port towns themselves, but also contributes to economic growth through regionally-based industries that support coastal shipping.

As an agency with substantial statutory responsibilities, expertise and experience in port management, and strong connections with government, the maritime sector and the community, Gippsland Ports is well placed to provide commentary on the Coastal Shipping Review (CSR).

Gippsland Ports is a significant provider of public marine infrastructure and services, with oversight of 1400 sq. km. of waterways from Anderson Inlet to Mallacoota. Commercial shipping operates from two of Gippsland's ports being the Port of Gippsland Lakes (Lakes Entrance) and the Port of Corner Inlet (Port Welshpool, Port Anthony and Barry Beach Marine terminal).

Gippsland Ports also has responsibilities for emergency management under VicPlan and for maritime security under the Maritime Transport and Offshore Facilities Security Act (Commonwealth), along with many other statutory responsibilities.

About Gippsland Ports

Gippsland Ports is responsible for the management, operation and administration of five Local Ports along the Gippsland coast.

The Local Ports in Gippsland Ports' jurisdiction are:

- Port of Anderson Inlet, at Inverloch in South Gippsland,
- **Port of Corner Inlet and Port Albert**, immediately east of Wilsons Promontory,
- **Port of Gippsland Lakes**, stretching from Sale on the Thomson River to Lakes Entrance,
- Port of Snowy River, extending upstream from Marlo, and
- Port of Mallacoota, covering all of Mallacoota Inlet near the NSW border.

Gippsland Ports' responsibilities include:

- Port operations, regulation and compliance
- Boating safety and information
- Port safety and environmental management
- Incident management and emergency response
- Marine pollution response (Wilson's Promontory to NSW border)
- Maritime security (Port of Corner Inlet & Port Albert)
- Assessment, installation and maintenance of navigation aids
- Dredging, sand management and channel maintenance;
- Provision, allocation and management of wharves, piers, jetties, berths, pens and swing moorings and marinas;
- Port and related infrastructure planning and development.

Overview.

Gippsland Ports coastal shipping activity is currently based around three key industries:

1. Commercial Fishing – based primarily at Lakes Entrance and to a lesser degree Corner Inlet.
2. Livestock and general cargo transport across Bass Strait including Flinders Island and King Island.
3. Offshore Oil and Gas industry supply and support vessels. Activity based primarily around Corner Inlet and to a lesser extent Lakes Entrance.

Although these industries have driven the bulk of coastal shipping activity in Gippsland, there are current limitations that hinder their growth. More importantly, emerging projects in Gippsland are likely to drive a need for increased port capacity, particularly at Corner Inlet.

Port specific issues.

Corner Inlet.

Corner Inlet provides a base for offshore support and supply vessels for the Bass Strait oil and gas industry that exists off the south-east coast of Victoria. These vessels berth at either the Barry Beach Marine Terminal (Qube facility) or Port Anthony Marine Terminal. Both Barry Beach and Port Anthony are immediately adjacent to each other and are accessed from Bass Strait through Corner Inlet Channel, Toora Channel and Barry Beach Channel. .

The bar at Corner Inlet and constructed channel at Barry Beach have a least depth of 5.2m LAT, thereby restricting draft of support vessels. . Larger, deeper draft vessels associated with this industry are forced to undertake some of their activities from ports further to the west, due to the increased depth available at those ports. This creates inefficient use of resources due to the increased transit time between the oil and gas fields and those ports.

The likely growth of mining activity in East Gippsland (Sand mining and Gold and Copper) will place a significant burden on the road network from both safety and traffic volume perspectives. To reduce these significant impacts, transit of goods by road should be minimised. This could be achieved by improving the viability of Corner Inlet through deepening of access channels. Increasing the available depth to approximately 7.5-9.0m and upgrading associated port infrastructure would ensure access for vessels of the size required to service these industries. Road transport would then be contained to the relatively uncongested rural/regional road network, rather than having to access metropolitan road links, parts of which are already approaching their capacity.

The other significant project that would benefit greatly from increased channel depth of this magnitude is the proposed Star of the South offshore windfarm. Discussions with the project proponent would suggest significant cost efficiencies if larger vessels could access Corner Inlet, rather than having the additional transit time associated with Port of Hastings. Most importantly this project would likely manufacture many of the necessary components in the Latrobe Valley and ongoing maintenance and support would come from this industrial hub. The increased employment opportunities and economic

benefit to the ailing region, following the Hazelwood mine closure, would be transformational for the Gippsland community.

Port of Gippsland Lakes.

Lakes Entrance is home to the largest commercial fishing fleet in Victoria. It also provides a base for vessels supporting the offshore oil and gas industry. Although the current depth of the Lakes Entrance bar and inner channels is generally sufficient for vessels wishing to access the port, the condition of the entrance training walls are of concern. Gippsland Ports has engaged expert consultants to review and provide advice on the entrance infrastructure. This review has been completed.

The State Government has recently provided emergency funding to repair a failed section of the training wall. However, this is a band-aid treatment and does not address the underlying overall poor condition of the structure. The consultant's report makes clear that major upgrades are required in the short term (1-5 years) and medium-long term (5-20 years), if the integrity of the entrance to the Gippsland Lakes is to be maintained.

Gippsland Ports looks to the Coastal Shipping Review to acknowledge the required expenditure to maintain the Lakes Entrance training walls to ensure viability of the commercial fishing fleet and for offshore oil and gas industry support vessels. Both industries are key to the economic prosperity of Gippsland, with the town of Lakes Entrance being heavily reliant on these major contributors to the economy of the town.

It is hoped that the development of the Victorian Ports Strategy will provide a more structured and less ad-hoc approach to investment in port infrastructure across the State.