

For Public Notice via Internet

**DECISION UNDER *ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS ACT 1978*
AND REASONS FOR DECISION**

Title of Proposal: Corio Bay Channel Realignment Project

Proponent: Victorian Regional Channels Authority

Description of Project:

The project involves minor capital dredging within three areas of the existing commercial shipping channels in the Geelong Arm of Port Phillip and Corio Bay which provide access for vessels to the Port of Geelong. The project consists of the removal of material from three locations (Refinery Pier Berth No 4 (Area A); City Bend (Area B) and; Point Henry Alcoa Swinging Basin (Area C)) and its placement in the existing dredge material ground in the Outer Harbour (Area D). The total volume of material to be removed is estimated by the Victorian Regional Channels Authority to be 550,000 cubic metres and is planned to occur over a period of three months.

Decision:

The Minister for Planning has decided that an Environment Effects Statement **is not** required for the proposed Corio Bay Channel Realignment Project, as described in the referral accepted on 2 November 2009 (2009R00018), for the following reasons:

- The proposed scale (550,000 cubic metres), location (within and adjacent to the current shipping channel) and short duration (three months) of the proposed dredging works, as well as the associated transport and placement of dredged material at the existing dredge material ground in the Outer Harbour, if implemented in accordance with a suitable environmental management plan, would be unlikely to pose a significant risk to the environmental values or beneficial uses of marine waters as a result of generation of turbid plumes and associated changes to the environment.
- The project would not cause significant effects on biodiversity as a result of either the removal of seabed areas or the placement of dredged material, because of the modified ecological conditions in the affected areas and the small amount of seagrass to be removed.
- The proposed dredging is unlikely to affect the health of marine biota, commercially harvested mussels or human users as a result of the release of contaminants from sediments, in light of the small scale of dredging, previous testing and experience, as well as the intended assessment and monitoring of dredging effects.
- Extensive monitoring before, during and after major capital dredging for the Geelong Channel Improvement Project in the mid 1990s, which included similar areas to those to be dredged for the current project, did not detect significant environmental effects on seagrass beds, other marine biota or aquaculture in the Geelong Arm of Port Phillip and Corio Bay.

Date of Decision: - 8 DEC 2009