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Media release

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New \$4 million program adds to Geelong port efficiency

Victorian Regional Channels Authority will begin a \$4 million works program late this month to further improve access, safety and efficiency for ships using Geelong shipping channels.

Announcing the new initiative today, VRCA chief executive officer Michael Harvey said the works program will ensure safety and ease of efficient access for larger vessels using the Geelong port.

VRCA awarded a \$4 million contract to Heron Construction Company Limited following an extensive tender process.

The works program, expected to start by the end of October and take seven weeks, involves dredging in Corio Channel. Works will be carried out by large backhoe dredger *Machiavelli*, which is returning to Geelong after successfully completing projects during 2014 and 2015.

PW Johnson Constructions Pty Ltd will relocate navigation marks, assisted by local firm Elstone Diving Services. Another local firm, Total Hydrographic, will conduct hydrographic surveys.

“Combined with the recent adoption of the Dynamic Under Keel Clearance technology, which allows larger vessels and vessels carrying more cargo to use the channel, these improvements highlight to the shipping world that Geelong is a vibrant and efficient port,” Mr Harvey said.

“Forecasting and modelling predict that there will be additional tonnes through the port during the next few years.

“The works will improve safety for vessels and tugs alike.”

Material removed from Corio Channel will be transported by towing barges to the existing dredge material ground located east of Point Wilson which was used when the *Machiavelli* last visited Geelong.

Approval for the works has been granted under the Coastal Management Act 1995, following extensive consultation with the Department of the Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). The project meets all requirements for the protection of the marine environment, ensuring that nature and commerce coexist.

Dredging and placement activities will be managed under the strict controls of an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) approved by DELWP.

"I am completely confident that these works will improve safety and efficiency while protecting the bay," Mr Harvey said.

There will be no interruption to normal shipping activity in the port although a 100-metre exclusion zone will be in force around the dredging operations.

Notices to Mariners will be issued.

**For more information, contact VRCA or visit
www.regionalchannels.vic.gov.au**