



## **Media Release**

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### **Ports fees review**

Gippsland Ports has undertaken a comprehensive review of fees and charges to address the increasing shortfall between income derived from fees and charges and the cost of provision of infrastructure and services.

Gippsland Ports CEO, Nick Murray said “the fees and charges review was a very detailed and thorough process that took into account the significant use of infrastructure for purposes unrelated to maritime activities or berthing and mooring, such as promenading on or fishing from public jetties, the provision of reticulated water to fish cleaning tables, public safety lighting together with a range of other services and accordingly the provision of these community service outcomes was excluded from the fees and charges model used to determine user charges”.

“It is an unfortunate reality that Gippsland Ports is compelled to increase user charges to reflect increasing operating and maintenance costs and we have sought to do this as equitably as we can based on detailed analysis of the use of particular infrastructure and who the beneficiaries are of services that we provide. Gippsland Ports understands and accepts that a number of customers will be unhappy with some of the changes we intend to introduce although in a number of instances the changes will result in a reduction in fees and charges” Mr Murray said.

Services provided by Gippsland Ports include provision of navigation aids, wharves and jetties for commercial and recreational maritime activities, destination jetties, berths and moorings, public swing moorings, maritime safety information and facilities such as the publication of Boating Guides, provision of information through web cams, tide gauges and wave rider buoys, maintenance of navigation channels including maintenance dredging and clearing of debris, marine pollution response, maritime security, hydrographic surveys, waterway events management, waterway patrols, boater education and compliance activities, the provision of slipway and boatyards facilities and services and extensive support for community activities on waterways including fireworks , music festivals and an extensive variety of regattas.

About a third of operating income comes from fees and charges for services provided directly to vessel owners, berth and mooring holders, shipping operators and others. The balance of Gippsland Ports’ recurrent operating costs and capital works program is provided by the Victorian State government or through ad hoc grants.

CEO Nick Murray said “that whilst we have generally applied annual increments to our fees and charges, this is the first major review of the actual basis of fees and charges in 15 years. Through this process we

have sought to provide a more transparent, logical, equitable and realistic structure to fees and charges, consistent with Department of Treasury and Finance cost recovery guidelines. Whilst Gippsland Ports will continue to seek additional Government funding to support the growing demand for recreational and commercial boating facilities and services within our region, our success will in part be dependent upon whether we are recovering an appropriate level of contribution from those who benefit.”

“Gippsland Ports is confronted with a challenging financial outlook, we have sought to reduce operating costs across all areas of our operations without impacting negatively on service levels to waterway users and without compromising responsible asset management standards. Ultimately, we need to generate more income”, he said.

“In addition to accurately analyzing the cost of providing services and infrastructure for different user groups, we have also reviewed fees and charges imposed by other public and private sector service providers operating in the same market sectors both regionally and in bayside areas. Gippsland Ports is confident that the structure of our fees and charges is not inconsistent with other service providers and does not compromise Gippsland Ports’ competitive neutrality obligations”.

The review affects all berth and mooring permit holders, commercial shipping operators, on-water event proponents and customers of Gippsland Ports’ slipway and boat yard services.

Information and feedback sessions are being held to provide the opportunity for customers to hear about the review and provide comment on the new system.

“We are keen to explain how the changes have come about and listen to our customers’ responses”, Mr. Murray said.

Sessions will be held at:

- Paynesville - Tuesday 26th April, 7.00pm, Gippsland Lakes Yacht Club
- Port Albert – Wednesday 27th April, 7.00pm, Port Albert Hall
- Lakes Entrance – Wednesday 4th May, 7.00pm, Bellevue on the Lakes

More information is available by contacting Gippsland Ports.

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