Background

Gippsland Ports has for some time been concerned about the future of the Port Franklin Slipway facility, with its reduced patronage, ongoing maintenance and capital and compliance costs, particularly given the relative proximity of the under-utilised, larger capacity slipway at Port Welshpool.

The slipway is operated under an agreement with the Port Franklin Public Purposes and Recreation Reserve Committee of Management (CoM).

Gippsland Ports Board in 2017 resolved that the Port Franklin Slipway be either closed and decommissioned or responsibility divested.

A range of management options have been considered, along with the advice of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

DELWP has advised the CoM that it does not support a transfer of ownership and management responsibility to the CoM.

Gippsland Ports is undertaking a consultation process with all interested stakeholders and community members before reaching a final decision.

A drop-in session and roundtable discussions with all interested community members will be held on Wednesday, 15th May 2019 at Port Franklin to provide information and hear community feedback. The session times will be confirmed through the local newspapers, by e-mail and on the Gippsland Ports web site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00-3.00pm</td>
<td>Drop-in Session</td>
<td>All stakeholders invited to speak informally to Gippsland Ports representatives about issues and options</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.00-7.30pm</td>
<td>Roundtable – any interested stakeholders parties</td>
<td>To have a group discussion about issues and options</td>
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**Maintenance**

Ongoing maintenance and capital works requirements (excluding operations) include:
- Routine maintenance
- Periodic maintenance including dive inspections, anode replacement, spot blasting and painting of cradles, cradle wheels and pawl maintenance.
- Winch cable replacement
- Cyclic compliance winch strip down and rebuild
- Winch shed maintenance
- Cyclic assessment of condition and load capacity
- Jetty maintenance and rebuild

**Usage and Costs**

Gippsland Ports understands that there are eight commercial fishers operating primarily from Port Franklin and about 80 private berths licenced by the Committee of Management.

In the last 10 years, the number of slippings at the facility has fallen from between 25-35 per year to about 13 per year.

Expenses incurred by Gippsland Ports associated with periodic maintenance and compliance interventions currently average approximately $6,500 per year.

These costs do not include routine maintenance and operational costs currently borne by the licensee.

In addition, a 10-year asset plan for the slipway estimates future costs averaging about $8,000 per year for periodic maintenance and $50,000 to rebuild the slipway jetty.

The Committee of Management has historically paid a nominal annual licence fee to Gippsland Ports.

Under these circumstances, there are severe financial limitations on the future operation of the facility.
Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why can't the facility continue to be operated as it is currently?
A. Gippsland Ports is carrying the financial cost of retaining the facility with limited funds to maintain the asset. Gippsland Ports does not intend to continue to carry the cost of facility maintenance, compliance and risk management. It does not appear financially viable for the CoM to meet these costs.

Q. Why can't the responsibility for the asset be transferred to the Committee of Management or a private owner?
A. DELWP has advised the CoM that the management of a slipway and associated infrastructure would be a substantial burden on a volunteer committee. Facilities will require regular inspections to assess, identify and treat risks and undertake routine maintenance. The costs associated with managing and upgrading these facilities will be significant for a volunteer committee to fund. The facility is on Crown Land and there would be substantial hurdles to its sale or lease to a private operator.

Q. Why can’t another source of funding be found to cover the costs of operating and maintaining the slipway?
A. Gippsland Ports has limitations on the availability of funds for maintenance and refurbishment of boating infrastructure. Operating budgets are insufficient to maintain all existing infrastructure to an acceptable standard and Gippsland Ports must compete for annual grant funding for capital works. In these circumstances, Gippsland Ports needs to prioritise infrastructure spending and, in some cases, will need to decommission some facilities that do not attract external funding.

Q. What will slipway users do as an alternative to maintain their vessels?
A. The facility has a low level of usage and the alternative slipway facilities at Port Welshpool can cater for that need. Gippsland Ports will assist slipway users to access and utilise facilities at Port Welshpool if the Port Franklin Slipway is closed.

Q. What will happen to the slipway site if the slipway is closed?
A. Gippsland Ports would decommission the slipway. An environmental audit would be undertaken to inform the decommissioning and site rehabilitation requirements.

Q. How do I have my say?
A. Attend the community drop-in session and/or roundtable discussion on Wednesday, 15th May 2019 at Port Franklin. Further details available from Gippsland Ports.

For further information or comment, please contact Gippsland Ports at feedback@gippslandports.vic.gov.au