Gippsland Ports
Safety and Environmental Management Plan
2016-2018
Summary

Contents

1   Purpose of the Safety and Environmental Management Plan

The Gippsland Ports Safety and Environmental Management Plan 2016-2018 is prepared under Part 6A of the Port Management Act 1995 (Victoria).

The plan has been developed in accordance with the Ministerial Guidelines: Port Safety and Environmental Management Plans 2012.

It aims to promote improvements in safety and environmental compliance and performance across all aspects of port activities.

It supports management of port activities and operations for the benefit of employees, port users, neighbours and the wider Victorian community.

During the plan review, Gippsland Ports consulted a range of agencies, stakeholder, community groups and individuals.

We encourage everyone to participate in improving safety and environmental outcomes.
It provides for:
- Contemporary and effective environmental and safety management arrangements that satisfy statutory requirements;
- Identification, evaluation and control of significant safety and environmental risks across local ports and waterways;
- Improved integration and clarification of safety and environmental responsibilities;
- Increased stakeholder and community awareness and involvement in safety and environmental management.
- Improved safety and environmental outcomes for Gippsland's local ports and waterways.

2 Overview of Gippsland Ports

2.1 The Role of Gippsland Ports

Gippsland Ports is a Committee of Management under the Crown Lands Act overseen by a Board responsible to the Minister for Ports under the Port Management Act 1995 and the Marine Safety Act 2010.

Gippsland Ports has responsibilities for navigation, port operations, regulation, security and compliance, boating safety, incident management, emergency response, dredging and sand management activities.

We are a significant provider of public marine infrastructure and services, with oversight of 1400 sq. km. of waterways from Anderson Inlet to Mallacoota, including 800+ navigation aids, 100 wharves and jetties and approx. 900 berths and moorings.

Gippsland Ports also fulfils many community service obligations.

We play a major role in supporting the safe, efficient and sustainable use of our waterways, enjoyed by thousands of people and bringing many benefits to the Gippsland region.

2.2   Ports and Waterways Responsibilities

The Local Ports in Gippsland Ports' jurisdiction are:
- Port of Anderson Inlet, at Inverloch;
- 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.

Gippsland Ports is also the Waterway Manager for:
- Shallow Inlet, at Sandy Point immediately west of Wilsons Promontory, and
- Lake Tyers, located east of Lakes Entrance.

Gippsland Ports' activities 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
- Hydrographic surveying
- Dredging, sand management and channel maintenance;
- Wharves, piers, jetties, berths, swing moorings and marinas
- Vessel lifting and slipways
- Vessel maintenance and repair
- Port and related infrastructure planning and development
- Port / waterway related economic development
- Governance and business management

3   Local Ports and Waterways – Key Management Issues

The ports and waterways management issues faced by Gippsland Ports are described under three main headings:
1. Organisational functions and capability
2. Statutory and regulatory setting
3. Community and stakeholder expectations

3.1   Organisational functions and capability

Gippsland Ports is:
- The only local port manager that exists solely for the purpose of local port management;
- The only local port manager with responsibility as one of the 4 Victorian Marine Pollution Control Agencies under VicPlan;
- The only local port with responsibility to employ a Harbour Master;
- The only local port with quasi-commercial port operations within waters under its management;
- The only Victorian local port required to develop and maintain a Maritime Security Plan;
- The only Victorian port with a recurrent dredging program in excess of 200,000m3;
- The manager of 45% of the total area, 46% of total navigation aids, 62% of total wharves and jetties, 22% of total berths and moorings and 60% of people directly employed to manage Victoria's Local Ports;
- The host port to Victoria's largest commercial fishing fleet;
- The appointed Waterways Manager by TSV for two waterways in addition to the 5 Local Ports.

No other Victorian local port or waterway manager has this diverse functional scope and accordingly, Gippsland Ports is unique amongst Victoria's eight local port management bodies.
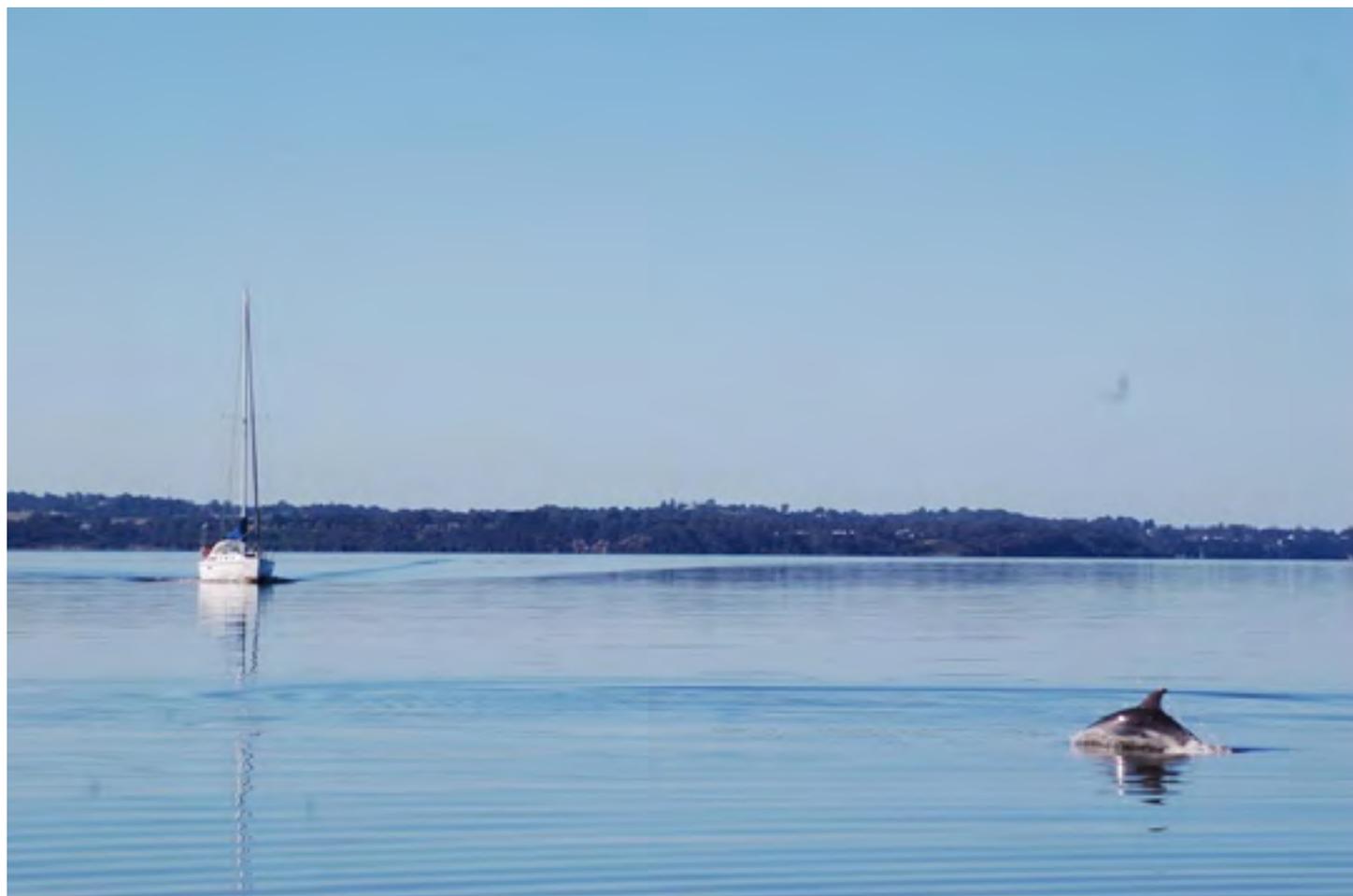
Gippsland Ports relies on an annual Victorian State Government operating grant, ad hoc grants and income generated from commercial operations for it to undertake its responsibilities. Operational funding has declined by 40% since 2007/8. Consequently, the success and viability of Gippsland Ports' operations is subject to adequate continued future funding.

3.2   Statutory and regulatory setting

Gippsland Ports has specific obligations under many legislative and regulatory instruments. Gippsland Ports advocates a rationalisation of agencies involved in the provision of public access and services (waterway safety and compliance, navigation aids, itinerant berthing & mooring, dredging, hydrographic services, boat ramps, destination jetties, waterway events management, marine pollution and emergency response).

The current model where there are multiple public agencies providing similar or related services in the same port / waterway is inefficient, confusing for users, and delivers variable service standards, safety and environmental outcomes.

3.3   Meeting Community and Stakeholder Expectations

Gippsland Ports provides a range of facilities and services for specific users (recreational boaters, commercial vessel operators, the commercial fishing sector, maritime industries, event managers, tenants and contractors), and has responsibilities to local landowners, residents, and the communities of the Gippsland region and State of Victoria.

Community members and stakeholders have ever-increasing expectations in relation to accessibility of waterways, effectiveness and efficiency of facilities and services, provision of information, protection of public safety and amenity, environmental protection and support for community aspirations in public recreation, foreshore management, tourism and economic development.
Gippsland Ports aims to meet public and stakeholder expectations, within the limits of its statutory role, resource capacity and often competing demands.

4   Safety and Environmental Management Framework

4.1   Vision

The overall vision for Gippsland Ports is:

To be the most effective port and waterway manager in Victoria in the eyes of our customers, community, regulators and portfolio department.

Accordingly, Gippsland Ports' vision for safety and environmental management is:

To provide the most effective management of safety and environmental risks that meets the needs of customers, stakeholders and the community.

Gippsland Ports' Safety and Environmental Objectives are:

4.2   Safety Objectives

1. To undertake or participate in the planning and management of sustainable port safety outcomes;
2. To provide a safe port environment with equitable access for all users;
3. To eliminate work-related injuries and illness arising from our operations;
4. To encourage tenants, contractors and all waterway users to eliminate injuries and illness arising from their activities and operations;
5. To communicate, educate and inform industry, relevant agencies and the public of port related safety management issues; and
6. To sustain and continually improve Safety Management.

4.3   Environmental Objectives

1. To undertake or participate in the planning and management of sustainable port environmental outcomes;
2. To prevent or minimise pollution arising from Port activities;
3. To communicate, educate and inform industry, relevant agencies and the public of port related environmental management issues;
4. To encourage tenants, service providers and the community to minimise waste, prevent pollution, utilise resources efficiently and reduce environmental impacts; and
5. To maintain and continually improve environmental management.

Photo: Araluen Park Cottages

5   Safety and Environmental Risks

5.1   Safety Risks

Contributing factors to the waterway safety risk profile in the Gippsland's ports and waterways include:

- Tidal currents – particularly of the Entrance Channel at Lakes Entrance and other estuary openings;
- Entrances to Bass Strait with changing conditions and potentially dangerous sand bars;
- Maintenance of waterway channels;
- High seasonal visitation and waterway use;
- Limited capacity or functionality of boating infrastructure;
- Conflicts on waterways and jetties;
- Limited refueling facilities;
- Mix of commercial and recreational boating activity particularly at Lakes Entrance and Corner Inlet;
- Variable vessel operator skill and knowledge of waterways;
- Irresponsible behaviour.

5.2   Environmental risks

Contributing factors to the environmental risk profile in the Gippsland's ports and waterways include:

- Increased boating activity and high seasonal use;
- Limited refueling facilities;
- Limited sewage pump-out facilities;
- Port/waterway infrastructure;
- Mix of commercial and recreational boating activity;
- Poorly maintained vessels;
- Vessel maintenance at boatyards and slipways;
- Gaps or overlaps in management responsibilities;
- Illegal or irresponsible behaviour.

These environmental hazards arise from emergency situations where there is a risk of marine pollution, disturbance of coastal processes, fuel or sewage spills, inadequate planning for infrastructure, or insufficient local knowledge and experience.

5.3   Emerging risks

Gippsland Ports has highlighted a group of emerging risks driven by external influences that warrant further attention over the life of this Plan. These strategic risks areas have been highlighted either due to recent emergence through a specific incident (marine pests) or their importance at a broader policy level.

Marine Pests

Marine pests can seriously affect waterway habitats, food chains, the ecosystem and enjoyment of the marine environment. Some marine pests are also a risk to human health and affect the social and economic benefits provided by the marine environment including aquaculture, recreational and commercial fishing and domestic and international shipping.

Bio-security and Animal Welfare

The shipping of livestock to and from Port Welshpool presents various hazards potentially affecting environmental, animal and human health.

The primary identified hazards are unintentional transfer of cattle with infectious diseases, livestock injury/sickness during shipping.

Commercial and recreational vessel activity can also potentially affect wildlife and cause damage to wildlife or wildlife habitat due to conflict with boating activities.

Climate Change

The Gippsland coast is likely to experience significant impact from climate change in the future, with as yet unknown effects on maritime use and activity.

Gippsland Ports' immediate concerns include the consideration of climate change in infrastructure planning and design and Gippsland Ports' role in interagency planning and adaptation at the broader level.
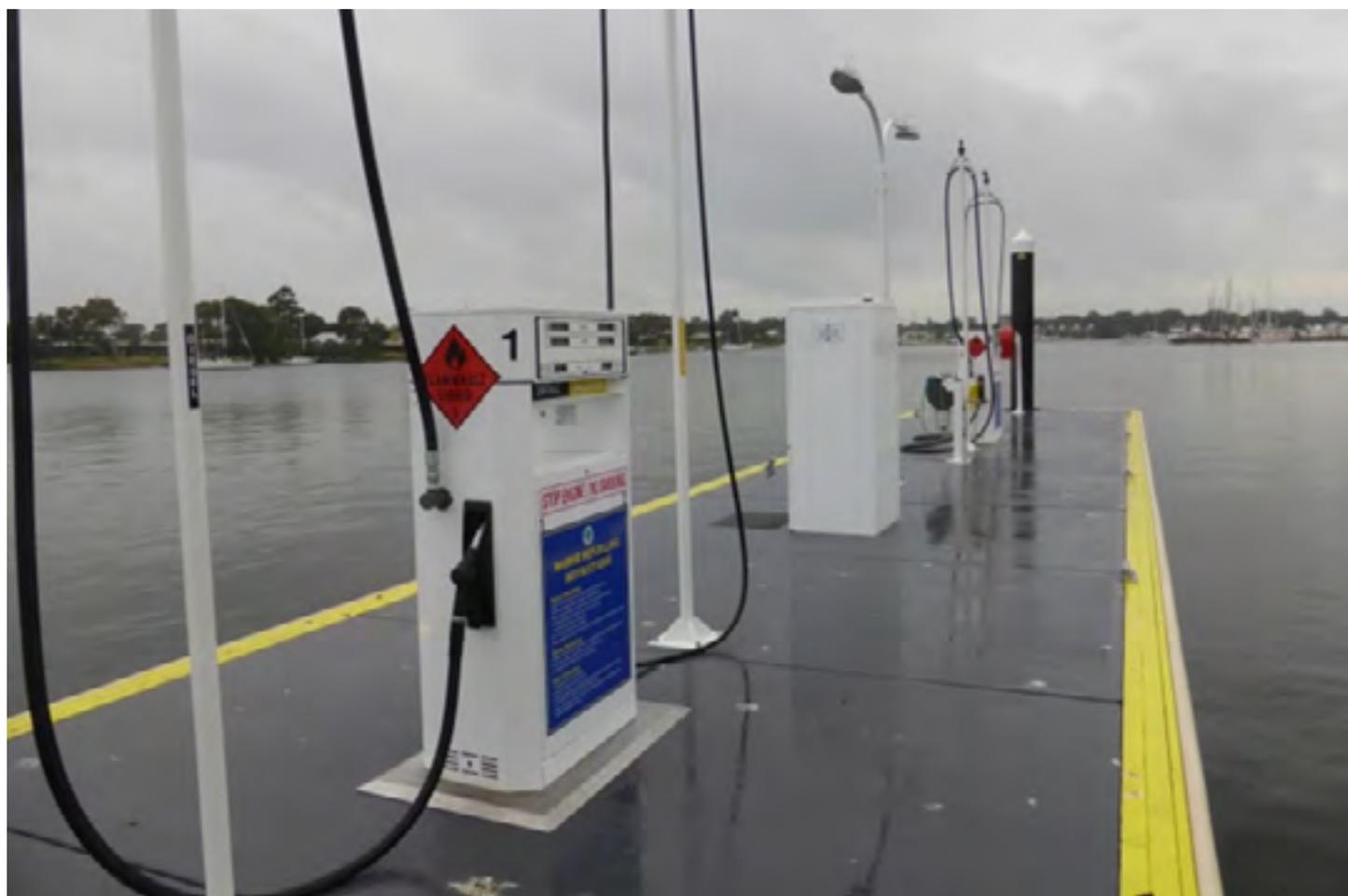
Inter-agency coordination and management

Many agencies have management responsibilities and accountabilities for waterways and adjacent lands and these are sometimes complex, overlapping or unclear.

In particular, there are shared and overlapping responsibilities for marine infrastructure, boat launching and retrieval, provision and licensing of berths and moorings, incident response, maritime safety, and other areas of shared Gippsland Ports' responsibility.

Gippsland Ports has a role and interest in brokering more effective waterway management, where this can contribute to clearer accountabilities and improved safety and environmental outcomes.

6   Priorities and Strategies to Address Significant Risks

Taking into account the Objectives of the Port Management Act, the Safety and Environmental Management objectives adopted by Gippsland Ports, and substantial input from waterway users and stakeholders, the following strategies have been developed to address significant risks.

These strategies give rise to a series of actions to continue or commence risk management to maintain safe and sustainable port and waterway activities.

Risk Theme	Strategies	Actions
Waterway Management	Reduce the risks associated with conflicting waterway use. Establish formal engagement and consultation processes with waterway users to obtain input on waterway management issues. Provide relevant and timely information on port and waterway safety and environmental management to stakeholders and waterway users. Improve waterway users' knowledge and awareness of safety and environmental risks. Reduce the incidence of excessive boat wake in confined waterways.	Maintain regular monitoring of waterway user conflict and identify actions for reducing conflicts through waterway zoning, compliance education and enforcement. Maintain and improve communication and feedback processes for engagement with waterway users, including boater surveys, forums and information programs. Enhance the provision of a range of information (e.g. boating guides, educational materials, webcams) including the methods for information delivery and promote greater uptake of information by waterway users. Work with MSV, GWP and other agencies to promote greater awareness of waterway rules and responsible boating in support of the Victorian Waterways Boating Safety Action Plan 2015-2018. Participate in educational programs for users of non-motorised vessels, including paddling safety programs. Develop and implement education campaigns for "watch your wake". Investigate the creation of "minimum wake" zones in priority areas and the appropriate public education and management mechanisms.

Risk Theme	Strategies	Actions
Boating Infrastructure	Develop strategic plans and priorities for new and upgraded infrastructure to meet future demand. Maintain assets in acceptable condition against established standards to minimise incidents. Reduce the potential for user conflict on jetties and wharves. Promote the enhancement of recreational fishing infrastructure (fishing platforms, jetties and fish cleaning facilities) to reduce conflicts with boating activity. Increase investment in boating infrastructure to meet current and future demand.	Work with regional bodies and relevant agencies to establish agreement on regional boating infrastructure priorities. Undertake asset audits and inspections to identify maintenance needs. Ensure that access to sub-standard assets is restricted to minimise risk and notify users of access limitations and safety risks. Review information signage on jetties and wharves to provide clear, consistent multilingual messaging. Advocate for recreational fishing facilities to reduce conflicts arising from recreational fishing (failure to give way to vessels, fish cleaning tables attracting birds and wildlife). Develop business cases for new infrastructure investment and maintain advocacy for appropriate levels of funding.
Access and navigability	Maintain appropriate levels of port access and navigable channels for all waterways. Ensure the effective deployment of AToNs.	Establish an agreed position with stakeholders on appropriate levels of access and navigability. Communication to manage user expectations on levels of navigability. Undertake regular port and waterway risk assessments and AtoN risk assessments. Undertake port and waterway hydrographic surveys. Encourage waterway users to report AtoN difficulties or faults.

Risk Theme	Strategies	Actions
Commercial Vessels	Maintain optimum availability of commercial vessel berths and moorings to support economic activity associated with ports. Manage public access to commercial wharves and jetties. Monitor, manage and mitigate conflict between commercial and recreational vessels.	Monitor current and predicted demand for commercial vessel berths. Work towards a commercial fisherman berth precinct at lakes Entrance. Maintain controls on public access to commercial wharves and jetties to reduce public safety risk. Review access to wharves and jetties as risk profile changes. Undertake education of waterway users to increase awareness in relation to risk of conflict with commercial vessels.
Operations Health and Safety	Eliminate work-related injuries and illness arising from operations. Consult with employees and contractors on safety risk management. Provide safe plant, and equipment. Ensure procedures and systems of work. Monitor workers and their work environment.	Maintain an organisational focus on workplace health and safety, through appropriate employee training, education and communications. Maintain processes to ensure that work place safety hazards are reported and addressed. Maintain plant and equipment audits and inspections and continually improve procedures for equipment handling. Implement and monitor work place safety procedures, including support for improved procedures, job safety assessments and incident reporting, and work methods and procedures that can be assisted or managed with new technologies or equipment. Continue to develop a positive culture towards work place safety and appropriate supervision of staff and contractors.

Risk Theme	Strategies	Actions
Waste and Pollution	Reduce environmental impacts arising from Gippsland Ports operations. Develop environmental plans and waste management plans for ports and waterways. Reduce the incidence of illegal waste discharge from vessels into waterways. Improve capacity to respond effectively to marine pollution incidents. Establish more effective control over derelict or unseaworthy vessels	Finalise draft environmental management plans for GP sites. Incorporate waste and pollution reduction measures into site management and procedures and systems of work. Work with EPA, DELWP and local government to identify priority environmental objectives relating to waterway use. Conduct an investigation into the extent of the problem and identify options for enforcement and education on waste, chemical and sewage discharge. Undertake a review of existing resources and equipment and update processes and procedures. Advocate for greater investment in pollution response capability. Increase OSR equipment storage instrategic places such as Mallacoota, Inverloch and Paynesville. Develop and implement revised procedures for assessment and enforcement to remove derelict or unseaworthy vessels. Undertake stakeholder engagement and information on responsibilities for derelict and unseaworthy vessels.
Bio-security, Animal Welfare and Marine Pests	Minimise the risk of disease, livestock and wildlife injury and invasive pests from vessel movements.	Undertake a risk assessment in conjunction with AQIS, DEDJTR and other agencies to determine level of risk and appropriate controls and risk management responsibilities. Include ballast water management protocol in HM Directions. Develop and disseminate Information on voluntary controls for vessels travelling around the coast (e.g. commercial fishing vessels) or trailerable vessels travelling between waterways. Provide operational support to agencies responsible for monitoring and managing invasive pest species. Develop and distribute educational material regarding avoidance of damage to wildlife and habitat.

Risk Theme	Strategies	Actions
Climate Change	Incorporate climate change considerations into risk assessment and the planning and design of boating infrastructure. Participate in regional climate change adaptation planning.	Develop criteria for assessment of climate change risks in the design of new or upgraded infrastructure.
Coordinated management of waterways and land-based facilities	Improve integrated planning and management of the land-water interface to improve the safety and functionality of facilities. Reduce duplication and overlap of management roles to provide more effective waterway and facilities management. Ensure that leases, licenses and permits provide for the safe, effective and equitable use of land and waterway assets.	Strengthen partnerships and relationships with responsible agencies for waterway and facility management. Identify waterway and facility "hot-spots" where safety, functionality or capacity is compromised by multiple management regimes. Identify opportunities to rationalise management roles in key locations where management conflicts or gaps arise. Review and rationalise facility signage to reduce visual clutter and provide more effective and coordinated information. Establish and implement policies and procedures for the review and renewal of leases, licenses and permits.

7   Availability of the SEMP

A copy of the Safety and Environmental Management Plan will be available for viewing at all Gippsland Port offices and depots;
Gippsland Ports Head Office
97 Main Street
(PO Box 388)
Bairnsdale Victoria 3875
Telephone: (03) 5150 0500

Lakes Entrance Depot
Bullock Island
Lakes Entrance Victoria 3909
Telephone: (03) 5155 1588

Paynesville Boatyard
Slip Road
Paynesville Victoria 3880
Telephone: (03) 5156 6352

Port Welshpool Depot
84 Lewis Street
Port Welshpool Victoria 3965
Telephone: (03) 5688 1303; and

The Plan is also available to download on the Gippsland Ports website – www.gippslandports.vic.gov.au