



PUBLIC NOTICE

CONSULTATION TIME EXTENDED

Due to the level of public interest, Gippsland Ports have extended the consultation period for the proposed zoning amendment in Cunninghame Arm (details below).

A walk in information session will be held at the Gippsland Lakes Fishing club rooms from 9:00am to 12pm on Wednesday January 10th. Gippsland Ports staff members will be in attendance to answer questions, inform members of the public about the process and record feedback for inclusion in the submission to Safe Transport Victoria.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

Gippsland Ports (GP) has identified potential safety risks with the 'Special Purpose' zone, commonly referred to as the 'Water Ski Zone' in Cunninghame Arm, Lakes Entrance.

The zone is situated in an area marked by yellow buoys and in the summer is a popular area for towed water sports. In recent years GP has received numerous public feedback items relating to speed, noise and wake issues created by high speed vessel use in the 'Ski Zone'.

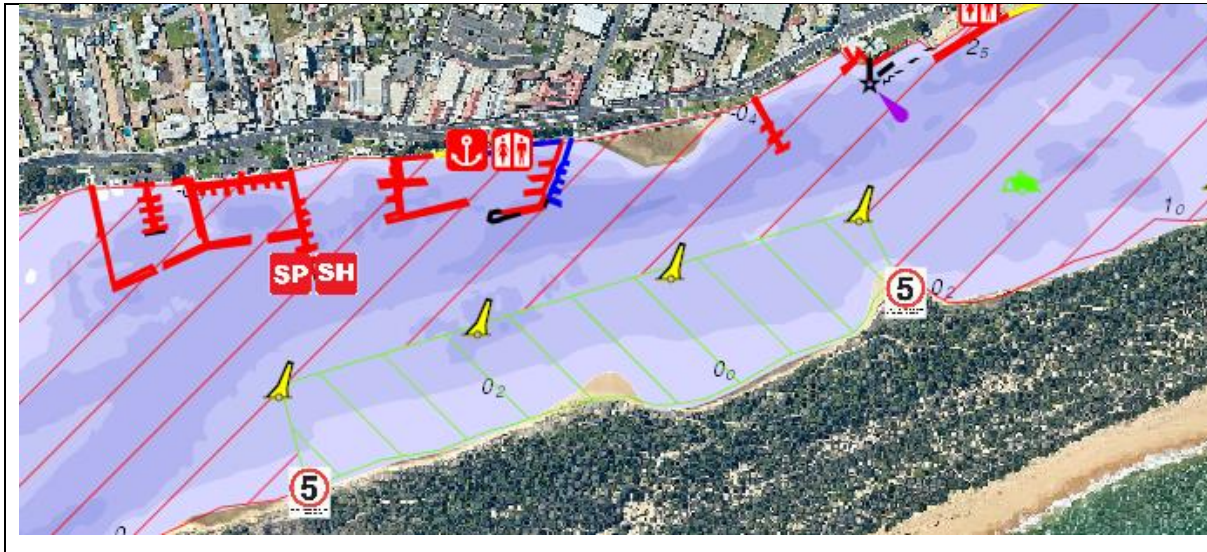
There has been an increase in the use of Cunninghame Arm by PWCs, paddle craft, vessels engaging in towed water sports and general recreational boating, particularly during the warmer months.

Cunninghame Arm is restricted in both area and depth, and with the increase in competing users, GP determined that a review of the zoning was required to ensure that a balance between user amenity and waterway safety is maintained.

Schedule 104.2 (p) of the Vessel Operating and Zoning Rules (VOZR) restricts the speed limit of all vessels in Cunninghame Arm to 5 knots.

Schedule 104.6 (ii) of the VOZR establishes a 'Special Purpose Zone' within the yellow buoys. This allows vessels to exceed the 5 knot speed limit 'during the period commencing one hour before sunrise and ending one hour after the sunset on any day' (VOZR 104.6 (a).)

This exemption to the speed limit has encouraged towed water sports in the area and led to the area being referred to as the 'Ski Zone'.



GP in conjunction with Gippsland Water Police and Safe Transport Victoria, conducted a risk assessment on the current and historical use of the 'Ski Zone'. This assessment considered the safety risk, the local economy, environmental implications, and social implications to examine the ongoing viability of the zone in its current form.

A key finding of this risk assessment is the fact that with the increased numbers of vessels utilising the 'Ski Zone', it is becoming increasingly difficult for users to maintain a safe distance between vessels due to the restricted width of the zone.

The VOZR makes it an offence to operate a vessel at a speed exceeding 5 knots within 50 metres of another vessel. When safe water depth is considered, a significant portion of the 'Ski Zone' is too narrow to allow multiple vessels to maintain this distance while using the zone simultaneously.

When combined with vessels utilising the zone to transit Cunninghame Arm at speed, PWC use, and the increasing prevalence of paddle craft in the area, the risk increases significantly.

Gippsland Ports has determined that the current zoning arrangement is unsuitable going forward and is proposing that the Special Purpose ('Ski') Zone be removed. This would bring a five knot speed limit into effect for the entirety of Cunninghame Arm.

Gippsland Ports must apply to Safe Transport Victoria (STV) for any changes to the Vessel Operating and Zoning Rules. Prior to this application being made, Gippsland Ports is inviting feedback on the proposed removal of the Special Purpose Zone. All submissions must be in writing and will be forwarded to STV for consideration before a final decision is handed down by the Safety Director.

Please forward all submissions via email to: feedback@gippslandports.vic.gov.au

Submissions will close at midnight on Wednesday 31st January 2024