



Media Release

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FROM THE OFFICE OF VRFISH – VICTORIA’S RECREATIONAL FISHING PEAK BODY

CDP ASSESSMENT RELEASED....

Minister for Planning, Justin Madden, has released the Port Phillip Bay Channel Deepening Project (CDP) Assessment under *Environment Effects Act 1978*.

Recreational Fishers are expressing alarm at the Brumby Government’s decision to move forward with the Port Phillip Bay Channel Deepening Project (CDP). Chairman of the Victorian Recreational Peak Body (VRFish), Geoff Cramer, said today “...that VRFish has serious concerns with the project”.

Minister Madden found the environmental effects of the proposed CDP in Port Phillip to be acceptable, subject to a number of important management measures. These measures are to ensure effective safeguarding of Port Phillip Bay.

However, Port of Melbourne Corporation will have to post a multi-million dollar bond to the Government as a guarantee against environmental damage from its project to dredge Port Phillip Bay.

“VRFish is concerned with the dumping of toxic material from the lower Yarra River into the Bay”. “It is illegal to dump spoil into Bass Strait for environmental reasons. How can it be safe to dump this material into the bay?” said Cramer

VRFish are also unhappy with some of the sites chosen to dump the toxic waste, as they include important fish habitats!

VRFish has raised concerns about the ecological future of Port Phillip Bay as it is now established that sea grasses and other critical fish habitats will be seriously impacted by dredging related turbidity and dumping of toxic waste. It is now being conceded that fish breeding will also be seriously affected due to habitat damage resulting from CDP based turbidity.

These concerns are reinforced by Minister Madden’s Assessment which specifically mentions the impact on fish stocks and recruitment.

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Cramer also pointed out that the purported economic benefits of the project are doubtful. “The stated economic benefits of the project, assessed at \$2 billion over 28 years, are dubious. Recreational fishing in Port Phillip Bay contributes approximately \$1 billion per annum and is much more important economically than the CDP will ever be. Recreational fishing is a major contributor to the Victorian manufacturing industry, with 70% of boats being manufactured in Victoria for recreational fishing purposes”.

So what happens next?

- Under the *Environmental Effects Act 1978*, the Minister for Planning’s Assessment will now be considered by the Victorian Minister for Roads and Ports and other Government Ministers who have approvals responsibilities.
- Port of Melbourne Corporation will need to seek various approvals including an application to the Victorian Minister for the Environment.
- The Assessment and Inquiry report will also be provided to the Australian Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, and will inform his consideration of the proposal under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

VRFish intends to continue to highlight the problems that the CDP will cause in Port Phillip Bay and will seek further discussion with relevant Ministers within the Brumby Government.

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