



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

PG/4

20 December 2007

PORT PHILLIP BAY PROJECT APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

An application by the Port of Melbourne Corporation to deepen the main shipping channels in Port Phillip Bay was approved today by the Australian Government, after the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett, imposed 16 additional environmental conditions.

“Under the Commonwealth’s *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, my powers are confined to matters of National Environmental Significance. To safeguard migratory birds, the Australian grayling and the Western Port Ramsar site, I have insisted on strong new protection measures on top of those required by the Victorian Government,” Mr Garrett said.

“First, I must see and approve the Port’s Environment Management Plan, with these 16 additional protection measures, before the project can proceed.

“In addition, the Port must set aside at least \$500,000 for protection of the Ramsar wetland areas, at least \$100,000 for migratory bird monitoring and at least \$300,000 for protection of the Australian grayling.

“I have also insisted on stringent monitoring and reporting, and an independent audit every year. The audit findings will be published to ensure that the public has confidence in this process.”

Mr Garrett said his Department would work closely with the Victorian Government to manage the impacts of the project.

“This is an important project for Victoria, with the Port of Melbourne handling \$68 billion in trade each year and supporting 80,000 jobs. However I appreciate it has been highly contentious with some industry, community and conservation groups.

“I want to assure them that the Port’s proposal has been subjected to rigorous assessment and testing, involving careful consideration of the potential environmental impacts involved and the environmental safeguards that need to be set in place,” Mr Garrett said. “I intend to make sure that the impacts on the matters of National Environmental Significance are at or below the levels predicted in the assessment.”

On 14 December the Victorian Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, Gavin Jennings, approved the project under the *Coastal Management Act 1995*, subject to the Port of Melbourne Corporation adhering to the comprehensive Environmental Management Plan, backed up by a \$100 million environmental bond and overseen by an Independent Environmental Monitor.

The Port of Melbourne Corporation will also invest \$6.65 million in the environmental initiatives recommended by the Victorian Minister for Planning in his assessment.

The approval decision and conditions are available at: www.environment.gov.au/epbc