

Friday November 12, 2004

## **GOVERNMENT DELIVERING ON THE FUTURE OF VICTORIA'S PORTS**

The Bracks Government today unveiled a strategy to ensure Victoria's commercial ports remain the most efficient, productive and competitive in the nation.

Speaking at the Ports Agenda 2004 Breakfast, the Minister for Transport, Peter Batchelor, launched the *Victorian Ports Strategic Framework*, a plan for the future development of the ports of Melbourne, Hastings, Geelong and Portland.

"The health of Victoria's commercial trading ports is vitally important to the well-being of the Victorian economy," Mr Batchelor said.

"Our ports are major contributors to the freight and logistics sector – the State's third largest industry sector – which involves some 16,000 businesses providing employment to 110,000 Victorians.

"The Bracks Government is committed to making Victoria's commercial trading ports the most efficient, productive and competitive in the nation, with world-class land and sea transport links and state-of-the-art intermodal transfer facilities. It is essential that they are equipped to meet the challenges ahead," Mr Batchelor said.

The *Victorian Ports Strategic Framework* is a long-term vision for the State's ports, providing a sense of direction and certainty for industry, local government and neighbouring communities.

The Framework outlines a vision and an approach to dealing with challenges including:

- the increased demands that will be placed on existing infrastructure as a result of expected growth in trade volumes;
- the need to keep costs down to deal with increasing competition between the nation's largest ports;
- the increasing pace of new global shipping and freight handling technologies;
- the drive for increasing efficiencies through intermodal solutions;
- the need to sensitively manage the pressures of urban encroachment; and
- the need to effectively manage environmental, safety and security risks.

Mr Batchelor said the Bracks Government wanted to ensure Victoria's ports exploited their natural and commercial advantages while complementing each other and working as a system.

The Port of Melbourne will continue to be developed as Australia's premier container port. However, with rapid trade growth anticipated, it is likely that container handling facilities additional to those at Melbourne will be needed beyond 2030.

“We will commence planning studies to preserve the necessary land and transport access options to allow for the future development of container handling facilities at the Port of Hastings, once capacity at Melbourne is exhausted,” Mr Batchelor said.

“Of course, any such development at Hastings will need to be in accordance with the highest environmental standards, recognising the special environmental values of Western Port.”

Mr Batchelor said the focus of Victoria’s regional commercial trading ports would continue to be on the bulk trades. Accordingly, he said, the Government would continue to plan and invest in connecting road and rail infrastructure to improve access to these ports.

“The ports are at the forefront of the Bracks Government’s thinking about how to drive our State and regional economies forward for the benefit of all Victorians,” he said.

“Over the last five years, the Government has committed hundreds of millions of dollars to improving infrastructure, planned for the future development of these vital economic gateways and improved the regulatory environment in which they operate.”

“Important projects such as the construction of the Dynon-Port Rail Link, the relocation of the wholesale markets, the development of an \$80 million world-class cargo terminal at Victoria Dock and channel deepening (subject to environmental approvals) are already underway.”

Mr Batchelor said a number of freight transport links at the regional commercial trading ports had either been completed or were underway.

“For example, we have completed the dual gauging of the Geelong Grain Loop, and the Geelong Rail projects, which will provide dual gauge connections into Corio Quay and Lascelles Wharf, are about to commence,” he said.

“The Geelong Road upgrade project is also now complete and the Geelong Bypass project is set to proceed. At Portland we have committed \$15 million to the Cliff Street Overpass to relieve congestion at the entrance to the port.”

Mr Batchelor recognised the lead role played by the Victorian Freight and Logistics Council in championing Victoria’s ports and thanked them for their co-sponsorship of today’s Ports Agenda.

Mr Batchelor’s speech and more information about the *Victorian Ports Strategic Framework* are available on the Department of Infrastructure’s website at [www.doi.vic.gov.au/portsmarine](http://www.doi.vic.gov.au/portsmarine)