

# COMMUNITY UPDATE



November 2025



## Portarlington Harbour – Maintenance dredging

Maintenance dredging is conducted at Portarlington Harbour as part of Parks Victoria's program to ensure safe boating access at key sites within Port Phillip and Western Port.

### Why does Parks Victoria dredge at Portarlington?

As the local port and waterway manager for Port Phillip and Western Port, Parks Victoria is responsible for providing safe access to local port facilities. Over time sand can naturally build up across boating access channels like at Portarlington. Dredging is undertaken to maintain safe access to this, and other local port facilities like boat ramps, piers, jetties, and harbours. Dredging has been occurring at this site for more than 20 years.

### How often does dredging occur?

The decision to undertake dredging is determined by the design depth of the area and minimum depth triggers. Water depths at Portarlington are monitored to determine when dredging is required. Dredging may occur anytime of the year to ensure safe access for vessels in response to sedimentation cycles.

### Where is the dredged material deposited?

The dredged sand is distributed in predetermined areas west of Portarlington Harbour, where it can benefit the beach profile. The natural direction of coastal sand movement is considered when establishing a delivery site for the dredged material. The sand will help to renourish the beach and replace what has been eroded.

### Is the dredged material contaminated?

No. The dredged material is local sand that has washed into the access channel from the adjoining beaches as part of the local coastal processes. Parks Victoria completes testing at all its sites requiring maintenance dredging and follows the testing and environmental requirements outlined in the EPA Best Practice Guidelines for Dredging, and other relevant regulatory standards. The quality of water can sometimes be affected during dredging, ie, it may appear turbid (cloudy) until the sand settles. This is similar to the turbidity experienced when strong wave action stirs up sand and sediments during storms.



Equipment is used to disperse sand

## Why does the dredged sand have a dark colour and smell?

The dredged sand is mobilised with a lot of water which helps with its transport. Wet sand is darker than dry sand, regardless of its natural colour. Also, sand contains decaying aquatic plant material, such as seaweed, which sometimes gives the dredged sand a grey appearance and a mild odour. These characteristics quickly change once it has been exposed to air, sun light and tidal processes.



*Dredged sand is transferred through pipes to the disposal site*

## What are the pipes for?

The pipes are used to transfer a slurry of sand and water from the dredge to the disposal site. As the sand and water flows out onto the site, the sand settles and slowly builds up. Additional pipes may need to be attached in order to progress the sand distribution or deliver the sand to a specific location.

## Can I still use the beach?

Yes, you can still access the beach unless otherwise marked onsite.

Swimmers are advised to use the west end of the beach until these works are complete.

Sections along the beach will be closed to the public during the dredging works for safety reasons. This area may remain closed for a short time after the works until the sand settles and stabilises. All temporary beach closures will be clearly marked.

For safety reasons, visitors should keep away from the closed areas and any machinery operating in the area.

## Can I still use the western berth?

Access to the western berth will not be restricted while dredging takes place. A Notice to Mariners will be in place for these works.

## Can I still use my boat in the harbour during the dredging?

Access to the harbour will not change during these works. Mariners are reminded to obey speed limits, proceed with caution, and be aware of floating or submerged pipelines while the dredge and support vessels are present in the area.

When encountering a dredge, vessel operators should always pass on the non-obstruction side of the dredge. The safe side of passage is indicated by a double black diamond day shape on the dredge. A double black ball day shape indicates the obstruction side to avoid. The top black ball - black diamond - black ball day shape indicates the vessel is restricted in its ability to maneuver.



*The two diamond shapes on the dredger indicate the safe side for vessels to pass*

## How long will the dredging take?

The entire process is expected to take 1 - 2 weeks, depending on weather.

## Further information

Updates can be found on the Parks Victoria website by searching Portarlington Harbour at: [www.parks.vic.gov.au](http://www.parks.vic.gov.au). For further information, please contact the Parks Victoria information centre on 13 1963 or email the Parks Victoria maintenance dredging team at [dredging@parks.vic.gov.au](mailto:dredging@parks.vic.gov.au)