

# Reconnaissance Report Queenscliff Harbour



19<sup>th</sup> October 2008

Mary and I visited Queenscliff this weekend to check out the progress of the new Harbour being constructed. We were very impressed with the facilities and the exceptional location of this new boating paradise.



Visitors' facilities.

Visitors' berths.

Esplanade Hotel.

Town Centre.

The visitors' facilities are complete.

There are four self contained bathrooms with towels provided, and a laundry area with washer and dryer.

There is a kitchen, dining and lounge area (smallish but adequate) looking over the nearby visitors berths. Construction of the berths will be completed in the next month or so. They are on site ready to be installed. All the permanent berths have already been completed.

The combination of fantastic harbour facilities, a thriving and beautiful seaside country town, close proximity to Melbourne, and some of the most interesting and pretty waterways make this one of the premier boating locations in Victoria.

## The Township :

Right behind the harbour is a maritime museum then an expansive foreshore area and lovely beach, ideal for paddling and walking. A large pier with a shelter shed adds to the interest

The Esplanade hotel with a beer garden out the back and bistro is just a two minute stroll. Next door is a fish and chip shop and over the road is a picnic area with tables and seats. 100 metres up the road is the Queenscliff Hotel, a beautiful old building with an up market restaurant and peaceful al fresco dining area.

One street over is the town centre, with more hotels, restaurants, shops and other facilities. The Vue Grand hotel has a formal dining room and also a café area. 40 metres further up the street the Courtyard Nursery Café is a delightful discovery. The bookshop in an old church is also an interesting stop.

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### **The Waterways :**

The Queenscliff Harbour is safe and fully protected on all sides regardless of weather conditions. The tidal movement is quite high but the docks are floating pontoons secured with large pylons so mooring is straight forward.

The predominant prevailing wind on Port Philip Bay is SW, which is offshore at Queenscliff, so even with a breeze the water is not too rough.

Leaving the Harbour and taking the short trip down the channel is fascinating. There are the largest stingrays I have ever seen, about 8 feet across and 14 feet long, nosing up to the channel wall hoping for some fishing scraps from the charter boats that have just returned. The skipper tells me they are quite tame and that in summer he gets into the water and feeds them by hand.

At the end of the channel is the Sorrento ferry holding itself against the landing ramp with its thrusters, making turbulence, which is easily skirted. About 1km directly offshore is the Pope's Eye, an almost fully enclosed stone breakwater wall enclosing a blue safe haven about 40 metres in diameter. Care is required to enter the opening directly and not at an oblique angle. Along the walls are the roosts of maybe 500 gannets, a beautiful and acrobatic diving seabird, and spectacular to see in action.

South of Queenscliff two or three kilometres is Point Lonsdale and The Rip a treacherous piece of water when in full flow but magnificent to visit at slack water.

*Due to the restriction of the tidal range within Port Phillip caused by the relatively narrow entrance, the tidal stream in the vicinity of the Heads does not turn at high and low water.*

*The force of the tidal streams depends upon the relative water levels inside and outside Port Phillip. The greatest difference in levels occurs at about the time of high and low water at Port Phillip Heads. This is when the inward and outward streams run at their strongest, up to six knots under normal conditions and may exceed nine knots in extreme conditions.*

*Slack water at Port Phillip Heads occurs at about three hours before and three hours after high water, which is when the levels inside and outside are the same. The ingoing stream runs from about three hours before to about three hours after high water and the outgoing stream at other times. On the average, it is high water at the Port Phillip Heads three and a quarter hours before that at Williamstown and slack water at the Heads when it is high or low water at Williamstown.*

*The local community magazine 'Rip Rumour', available free in various stores, has at the back a table 'The Rip - Tidal Streams' showing the slack water times for the month.*

North of Queenscliff is a magnificent part of the bay, stretching 20 kilometres to St Leonards, Indented Head and Port Arlington. The channels and sand banks are interesting to navigate and many hours can be lazed away exploring, depth sounding, cruising or fishing.

East of Queenscliff is Portsea, Sorrento and Rye, and further up Dromana and Mt Martha. This part of the world is truly splendid. Anchoring up in one of the many little coves on a hot day and snorkelling, dipping or just lazing around is one of life's absolute pleasures.

### **Melbourne Whittley Cruiser Club – Queenscliff Cruise :**

Our Queenscliff Cruise is planned for the Labour Day long weekend in March 2009. I highly recommend this cruise to all members. It will certainly be one of the most interesting and enjoyable cruises on our calendar. The boating facilities, the proximity to a beautiful seaside town, and the magnificent waterways at the southern end of our bay make this a destination not to be missed.

Regards,  
**JULIET**