

# Stakeholder and Community Consultation Summary

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Port of Grassy Infrastructure Study

June 2025



# Introduction

## About the Port of Grassy

The Port of Grassy is located on the southeast coast of King Island. It is the island's main freight hub, handling most imports and exports. Three shipping services connect King Island to Tasmania and Victoria;

- Bass Island Line's *John Duigan* sails weekly between Grassy and Devonport, with cargo able to continue to Melbourne via SeaRoad Shipping;
- Eastern Line Shipping's *King Islander*, which moves general freight and livestock, often operating via Stanley, or directly to the Port of Welshpool in Victoria depending on demand; and
- Bass Strait Freight's *Matthew Flinders III* provides 'as required' services.

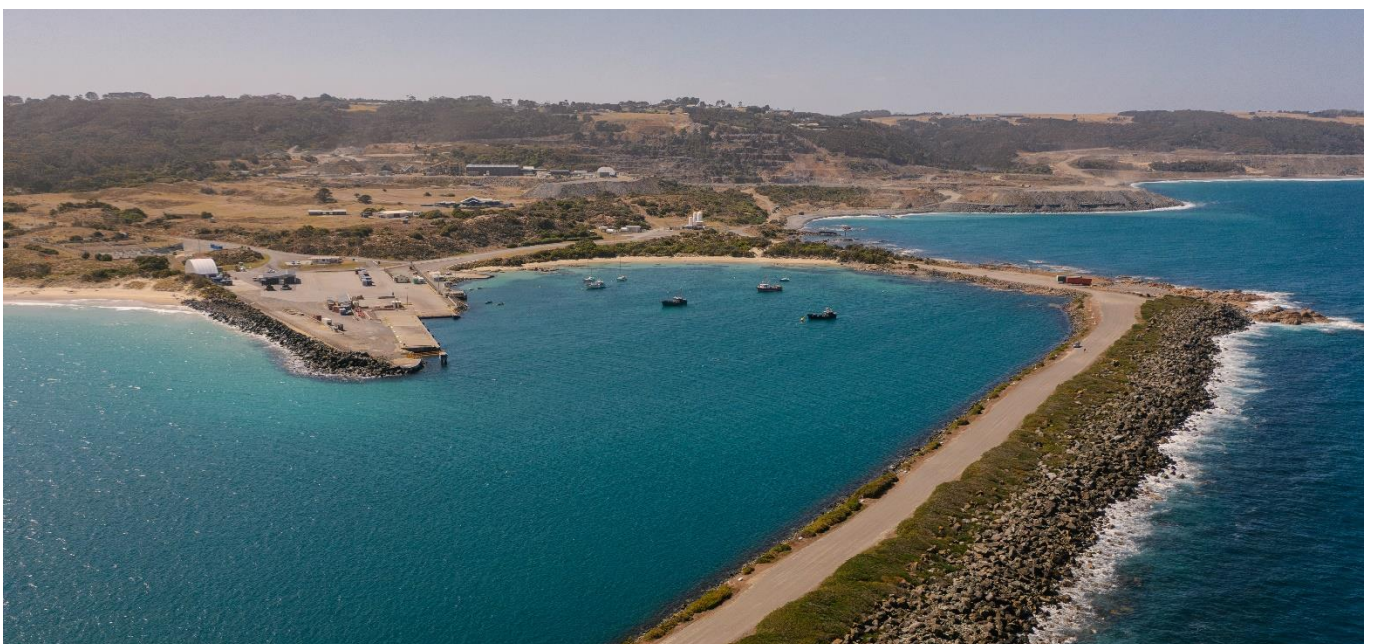
The port handles a steady volume of freight, including building materials, food, fuel, farm supplies, and livestock. Livestock imports and exports, particularly cattle, are a major part of the freight task, with the island contributing over 20% of Tasmania's total beef production.

The Port of Grassy provides important transport links for King Island's residents and industries. It plays a key role in keeping the island supplied and connected, with regular, though weather-dependent, shipping services supporting agriculture, local businesses, and the broader Tasmanian economy.

## About the project

The Department of State Growth engaged Burbury Consulting and ERA Planning and Environment to undertake an infrastructure study on the Port of Grassy, to better understand how King Island's industry and community use the port.

A 2008 study proposed significant investment to extend the harbour and increase port capacity, which was not progressed at the time. The Tasmanian Government has committed to revisiting and completing this study by engaging with key stakeholders and the King Island community to identify potential improvements to port infrastructure and operations. This report provides a summary of the project's consultation process and key findings.



# Consultation promotion and activities

Consultation with the community and key stakeholders occurred from Monday 14 April to Monday 12 May 2025 (a four-week period). The consultation process aimed to generate feedback from shipping operators, port users and local residents and businesses serviced by the port.

Key stakeholders were consulted through dedicated workshops and one-on-one meetings, while the broader community were consulted via local drop-in sessions and an online survey. Stakeholders were also able to provide feedback through a dedicated project phone line and email address. A summary of consultation promotion and activities is provided in Figures 1 and 2.



Figure 1: Consultation promotion



Figure 2: Consultation reach

# Consultation themes and key topics

Feedback received from the community and stakeholders has been summarised under a range of key themes, outlined below. These findings will be used to inform recommendations for the infrastructure study and future projects associated with the King Island supply chain, the local economy and the community.

The findings show the importance of viewing the King Island supply chain as a complete process, rather than focusing only on the Port of Grassy. In the same way, key stakeholders and the King Island community see shipping as an interconnected issue, recognising its direct and indirect effects on the local economy, important industries, community well-being, and the island's future.

## **Vessel suitability**

Some stakeholders and community members believe that open, barge-style vessels are not appropriate for transporting freight to King Island, given the challenging weather conditions in Bass Strait. While there is some acknowledgment that smaller vessels can adapt better to changing conditions, others expressed a preference for a vessel that offers better protection for freight, has a larger capacity, and can make the crossing more efficiently.

## **Route suitability**

There is currently a shipping service connecting King Island to the Port of Welshpool in Victoria (via Eastern Line Shipping), however, direct shipping to the Port of Melbourne is considered by some as more advantageous. Melbourne is considered to offer several benefits, including improved market access and a more efficient supply chain. Despite these advantages, stakeholders have noted that high berthing costs at the Port of Melbourne might make this route commercially unviable. Apollo Bay and Geelong were noted as potential alternatives due to their proximity to King Island, however, both the community and stakeholders recognise that there are challenges to implementing these routes.

## **Port and shipping operations**

Residents and businesses reported delays in receiving freight, partly due to factors like weather conditions and shipping availability. Some stakeholders and shipping operators believe that better utilisation of good weather windows will improve the reliability of freight operations. Suggestions included evening sailings or ensuring two vessels can call at the port in a single day.

## **Port infrastructure**

Access to an all-weather port is seen as essential for the long-term sustainability of King Island's economy. Service disruptions due to adverse weather make freight movement less reliable, posing risks to livestock, equipment, and produce. Stakeholders have called for investments in port infrastructure such as dredging a deeper port and the construction of a new or extended break-wall. There is mixed sentiment towards the costs associated with such works and whether that level of investment can be justified and or would indeed provide a solution.

## **Governance and partnerships**

Federal support is seen as essential by all stakeholders, particularly in infrastructure investment and freight equalisation schemes. Stakeholders and the community indicated infrastructure delivery needs to be better aligned with on-island operations, and that government should take a long-term view to investment and economic sustainability.

## **The King Island brand**

The King Island brand (as it relates to beef, cheese, tourism and general narrative) is seen as premium and vital to maintain, especially to justify the high cost of shipping. Any decline in product quality or freight reliability threatens this carefully cultivated reputation. This highlights that any operational decisions at the port should consider animal welfare outcomes to ensure there isn't an impact upon the King Island brand.

## **Local community and economy**

Local business and industry stakeholders and community stressed the need for a long-term investment vision, particularly in port infrastructure that supports not just existing needs, but future industry and population growth. There is a desire to prioritise strong advocacy and policy, to ensure the island's interests are well regarded and considered by decision-makers.

## **Community access and equity**

The community acknowledged that without improved infrastructure, it was hard to attract industry; without industry, it was hard to justify the infrastructure. There is a view that this cycle needs to be broken through proactive investment and clear long-term planning.

Ensuring that the King Island community can easily get on and off the island was seen as equally important as freight logistics. Local business and industry stakeholders and community view the freight task as being one of equity and basic accessibility.



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