

## Report and Advice on Environmental Incident - Oil spill at the Entrance on 30 August 2008

### Background

The Environmental Management Plan (EMP) contains 58 Project Delivery Standards (PDS), which are rules about where, when and how the Channel Deepening Project (the Project) must be delivered.

The Office of the Environmental Monitor's (the Office) terms of reference outlines the arrangements to be adopted in the event of an incident. They include:

- In the event of non-conformance with the Plan, the Monitor will seek access to the Port of Melbourne Corporation's (PoMC) remedy plan as soon as practicable;
- The Monitor will scrutinise implementation of PoMC's remedy plan to see that it meets the Plan requirements. When necessary, the Monitor can also provide appropriate advice to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, or his delegate, for consideration; and
- In the first instance, it will be the Secretary of the Department of Sustainability and Environment who will, if required, provide direction to PoMC to amend the Plan or take action in relation to Plan.

### Incident

On the afternoon (approximately 3.00pm) of Saturday 30 August 2008, an underwater hydraulic hose on the Queen of the Netherlands ruptured while it was dredging on Rip Bank at the Entrance, releasing 800 to 900 litres of hydraulic oil.

The EMP (Table 6) requires the Office to be notified in the event of such an incidence. The EMP (PDS No. 8) sets out arrangement for emergency response preparedness.

### Sequence of events

- 30 August 2008 (approximately 6.00 pm) PoMC advised the Office of the incident.
- 1 September 2008 PoMC provided an incident report.
- 5 September 2008 PoMC provided an investigation report that outlined the results of investigations that had been concluded by that date.
- 10 September 2008 PoMC provided further advice on its investigation in response to requests from the Office.

### Office findings

Noting:

- Modelling from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) on the weathering rate of the hydraulic oil (Mobil DTE 13M). AMSA calculated that within 12 hours of the incident, the remaining oil spill volume had reduced to approximately 20 litres (two percent of the initial spill volume);
- Modelling from AMSA that shows the rapidly weathering oil spill was carried from Rip Bank (the spill location) by the ebb tide and currents into Bass Strait, away from environmentally sensitive areas;

- Advice from PoMC that the hose had been replaced on 11 January 2008, when the associated hydraulic cylinder unit last underwent maintenance; and
- Advice from PoMC that the maintenance schedule for this hose is for annual inspection and replacement as required at the time of inspection.
- Advice from PoMC that the expected life of the ruptured hose was in the order of six years;

The Office is satisfied that with respect to the EMP requirements PoMC reported the incident as required, including the provision of an incident report.

### **Opportunities for improvement**

A foundation of the EMP, and PoMC's implementation of it as part of its Environmental Management System, is the concept of continuous improvement. The EMP makes it explicit that opportunities for improvement will be identified, see sections 4.1 (CDP management review meetings) and 4.2 (Management review for environmental monitoring) of the EMP for example.

In response to this incident, and the three prior minor oil spill incidents arising from the Project, one recommendation is provided to the Project's regulators for consideration. (The three prior spills totalled approximately 30 litres, and arose from the operation of different vessels in different locations of the Bay.)

While no non-conformances arose in relation to the EMP, oil spills in marine environments are unacceptable. The following recommendation aims to ensure that the level of environmental performance expected of the Project is maintained. The recommendation relates to the conduct of an incident debrief.

#### **1. Incident debrief and implementation of debrief recommendations**

EMP - PDS No. 8 requires the development and testing of emergency response procedures, integrated with the Melbourne Port Emergency Management Plan, including provision for fuel, oil and chemical spills. Furthermore it requires that all dredge vessels have oil spill response kits on board, and those relevant personnel to be trained in its use.

Victoria's response to oil spill is managed in accordance with Victorian Marine Pollution Contingency Plan (VICPLAN). VICPLAN is an integral component of the Victorian State Emergency Management Arrangements, which identifies the Director of Marine Safety as the Control Agency for marine pollution incidents in Victorian State waters.

To ensure effective implementation of PDS No. 8 the following recommendation is made.

#### ***Recommendation***

That in conducting the incident debrief in accordance with VICPLAN requirements, emphasis be given to communications. Furthermore the Office recommends that Marine Safety Victoria facilitates the incident debrief between the relevant agencies.

### **Conclusion**

The recommendation made in this report formalises what has been learnt from this incident, in relation to the EMP. The Office considers that adoption of the abovementioned recommendation will support the continued level of environmental performance expected of the Project.