

Media release

From the Office of the Environmental Monitor

Wednesday 29 July, 2009

TURBIDITY BELOW SAFEGUARDS FOR BAY PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Port Phillip Bay turbidity fluctuated last week but remained below the environmental safeguards set to protect sensitive plants and animals, Environmental Monitor Mick Bourke said today.

Commenting on the latest turbidity monitoring program results Mr Bourke said, “turbidity levels recorded last week were all below the Channel Deepening Project’s environmental limits.”

“During the reporting period, the *Queen of the Netherlands* and the *Cornelis Zanen* were dredging clean sand from South Channel East and placing it in the South East Dredge Material Ground,” Mr Bourke said.

“Turbidity did fluctuate around the Capel Sound site, which is near South Channel East. This was expected given two dredge vessels were operating at the same time during strong winds,” he said.

Mr Bourke said the Office of the Environmental Monitor expected to see the intensity of suspended sediment in the Bay’s water reduce over the coming month.

“More than a year and a half of turbidity monitoring data has shown that both dredging and environmental conditions can affect turbidity levels in the Bay.

“The large amount of data generated from the Turbidity Monitoring Program has shown that cloudy water caused by dredging does dissipate once dredging stops. It’s also shown that strong winds and storm water run-off can affect the amount of sediment suspended in the water.

“As dredging nears completion, turbidity levels in the Bay should return to background levels, but could naturally rise and fall with weather conditions.

“As always, the Office will continue to scrutinise turbidity data, because we understand its relevance to the health of important Bay plants and animals,” Mr Bourke said.

-ENDS-