

Media release

From the Office of the Environmental Monitor

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ENVIRONMENTAL MONITOR GIVES THE ALL CLEAR ON TURBIDITY RESULTS

Turbidity in Port Phillip Bay remains safely within operational guidelines as dredging continues, according to the latest monitoring results released today.

The second set of results from turbidity monitoring remain below environmental limits and conform to the Environmental Management Plan (EMP), Mick Bourke, Environmental Monitor, announced today.

Mr Bourke said a preliminary examination of the Port of Melbourne Corporation's (PoMC) turbidity results showed that they complied with the EMP's environmental safeguards.

"Today's results show that after 25 days of dredging, turbidity remains at a safe level and I am satisfied that the Bay's health has not been compromised by the Channel Deepening Project.

"The findings also provide confidence that data is regularly being collected and examined against the environmental standards and controls set out in the EMP, the 'rule book' for the Project," Mr Bourke said.

The results included 21 days of turbidity monitoring in the south of the bay and four days in the north.

Mr Bourke said turbidity levels taken at Capel Sound in the south of the Bay peaked at around 12 nephelometric turbidity units (NTUs) on February 10, well below the limit of 35 NTUs set to protect benthic invertebrates such as sea squirts.

"Today's turbidity results were compared with readings taken during times when the dredge was active, and show that within days, turbidity levels in the south of the Bay returned to natural levels once dredging stopped and the vessel left the area," Mr Bourke said.

He said nine buoys located in the south of the bay and one in the north had monitored turbidity levels continuously since dredging began on February 8.

"As with any dredging activity, a plume is expected and it will be most visible around the dredging site.

"Turbidity levels are not measured at the dredging site itself, but are measured at selected sites around the Bay to monitor the levels and protect important Bay assets such as seagrass, fish and seabirds," Mr Bourke said.

He said turbidity levels naturally fluctuated in the Bay and were affected by tide, weather conditions, such as wind and storms and microscopic plants and animals living in the water.

"The weather over the past four weeks has been relatively benign, but a change such as heavy rain fall or strong winds could naturally increase turbidity levels and this needs to be taken into consideration throughout the Channel Deepening Project," Mr Bourke said.

Earlier this week, the OEM was informed that PoMC would release weekly turbidity results, beginning on March 12.

“The continued release of results on the Project’s environmental performance is expected and necessary and I welcome the news that PoMC will be releasing turbidity monitoring data on a weekly basis,” Mr Bourke said.

The OEM provides an independent and transparent view on the environmental performance of the Channel Deepening Project.

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Media contact: Laura Hill 9637 8235 / 0448 715 455