

# Office of the Environmental Monitor

## Fact Sheet: Port Phillip Bay monitoring

### Background

Port Phillip Bay (the Bay) attracts more than 40 million visits a year and is home to more than 3.5 million people; making it Australia's most intensively used coastal water body. The Bay is of significant social, economic and environmental value to Victoria. Therefore, the Bay's health is important to the communities and businesses living and operating along its shoreline and to the marine life that rely on its health to survive.



Photo: Port Phillip Bay

The [Channel Deepening Project](#) (the Project) will be implemented by the Port of Melbourne Corporation (PoMC) between 2008 and 2009.

To avoid, minimise and control the environmental effects to the Bay from the Channel Deepening Project, a set of rules were developed to control when, where and how dredging could be delivered.

Supporting these rules is a suite of more than 20 environmental monitoring programs that will collect information on the Bay's health and potential threats from 2008 to 2012.

### Port Phillip Bay monitoring

Twenty one monitoring programs will collect information on the Bay's health from 2008 to 2012. The programs aim to keep a close watch on the Bay's 'vital signs' and each program will examine different aspects of the Bay's health. These programs include ongoing monitoring of Port Phillip Bay and monitoring that is specifically designed to minimise and manage the effects of the Project.

More than 200 'vital sign' indicators will be monitored on timescales ranging from every minute for indicators that respond quickly, through to daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually, for changes that happen more slowly.

Twelve programs in the Bay are ongoing and will collect information on the Bay's health including beach water quality and fish population health. These programs are conducted by a number of government department and agencies.

Nine Baywide Monitoring Programs managed by PoMC will collect information to be used to manage the Project. These programs will run during and after the Project to monitor the health of the Bay and its recovery process.

The programs focus on detecting changes outside those predicted in the Supplementary Environmental Effects Statement and will monitor key species, habitats and ecological processes across the Bay such as seagrass, fish, Little Penguins and wetlands. Many of the programs have

operated for a number of years and contain valuable historical data that will help interpret any changes detected in the Bay.

### **Considering the results**

The [Office of the Environmental Monitor](#) (the Office) will have access to the results of all Port Phillip Bay monitoring, as they become available. The Environmental Management Plan specifies that results from the Baywide Monitoring Programs will be published quarterly.

The Office will scrutinise and consider the findings from the Baywide Monitoring Programs, and other programs operating in Bay. The Office may also conduct other studies or monitoring programs as required.

If necessary, the Office will provide advice to Ministers, regulators and PoMC on the Project's environmental performance and/or its environmental effects on the Bay. All relevant issues and advice will be reported publicly in the Office's quarterly and annual reports, or as required.

### **Accessing results**

The Office of the Environmental Monitor will report relevant and useful information on all monitoring happening in the Bay on its [website](#) as results or reports become available.

The website will house all the results, updates and reports on the Channel Deepening Project, the Baywide Monitoring Programs and other monitoring programs operating in the Bay.

In time, it will also provide the community with weekly updates on the water quality at the Bay's beaches, with daily forecasts on swimming conditions during the summer months.

For more information on the monitoring programs running in the Bay visit [www.oem.vic.gov.au/Monitoringprogramsandresults](http://www.oem.vic.gov.au/Monitoringprogramsandresults).