

Media release

From the Office of the Environmental Monitor

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CHANNEL DEEPENING MONITOR KEEPS A CLOSE EYE ON PROJECT

After 25 days, dredging operations remain within environmental safeguards, Environmental Monitor, Mick Bourke announced today.

Mr Bourke said the Channel Deepening Project had not breached any environmental limits and that the Office of the Environmental Monitor was monitoring the Port of Melbourne Corporation's (PoMC's) channel deepening activities to ensure all work conformed to the Environmental Management Plan.

"As of yesterday, the Channel Deepening Project had not triggered any environmental alert levels or broken any of the limits set out in the Environmental Management Plan or 'rule book'.

"The Office has scrutinised Project updates provided by the Port, as well as recent turbidity monitoring results and is satisfied that the Bay's health has not been compromised by the Channel Deepening Project," Mr Bourke said.

Mr Bourke said he expected PoMC to release further turbidity and plume behaviour monitoring results later this week.

"New results from turbidity and plume monitoring should be available soon and once the Office has made a preliminary assessment it will issue a public statement," Mr Bourke said.

He said more results from Port Phillip Bay monitoring programs would be available soon.

"There is a wide range of monitoring programs running to keep a close watch on the Bay's 'vital signs' including programs that monitor fish health and seagrass.

"Over the next couple of weeks the Office expects to examine several sets of data including algal bloom and nutrient cycling monitoring findings," Mr Bourke said.

Mr Bourke said the Office of the Environmental Monitor aimed to release baseline water quality testing data later this week. The data would provide valuable historical information on the Bay's water health and would be used to compare future water quality results and to help detect any changes.

Mr Bourke said the Office's role as the environmental monitor for the Channel Deepening Project meant it had the responsibility to advise the Regulator and Ministers of any unpredicted environmental changes to the Bay or underperformances by PoMC.

"As the independent monitor on Channel Deepening our role is to consult, scrutinise, advise and report publicly any failure of the Project to meet the environmental conditions agreed in the Environmental Management Plan.

"We take our duty to provide an independent opinion of environmental impacts on the Bay from the Channel Deepening Project seriously and will do this by alerting key decision-makers of any major incidents or breaches," Mr Bourke said.

Mr Bourke said that if an underperformance or breach was detected the Office had the ability to provide advice to decision-makers and to evaluate remedial action.

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