

# Media release

From the Office of the Environmental Monitor

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## **ENVIRONMENTAL MONITOR REQUESTS MORE TURBIDITY DATA**

The release of turbidity monitoring results by the Port of Melbourne Corporation will be stepped up, Mick Bourke, Environmental Monitor, said today.

Mr Bourke said the Office of the Environmental Monitor had requested the Port release turbidity monitoring information from a further nine locations across Port Phillip Bay.

“While the Port has met its commitment to release weekly turbidity data, the Office believes the community will benefit from the release of further turbidity monitoring data,” Mr Bourke said.

“Across the Bay there is a network of monitoring meters that day-in and day-out collect information on turbidity levels and the behaviour of the dredging plume.

“The rulebook or Environmental Management Plan requires data from the meter network to be continuously tracked by the Port, and the Office believes it is appropriate that data from the entire network be released.

“The additional data will provide broad geographic coverage of the Bay and will help develop an overall picture of the behaviour of the plume,” Mr Bourke said.

Director of the Office of the Environmental Monitor, Don Hough, said turbidity meters attached to 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, 2007.

“Ten turbidity meters located across the Bay are conformance meters and processing of meter data includes a set of levels to trigger a warning system, which is designed to alert the Port to any unusual turbidity readings,” Mr Hough said.

“The Office has requested the Port release turbidity monitoring data from the other nine non-conformance meters, particularly the seven located in the north of the Bay, including three in the Yarra River.

“These meters also continuously collect turbidity data, but they do not include automatically set turbidity limits, unlike the conformance meters, which are in place to protect sensitive Bay assets such as seagrass and fish,” Mr Hough said.

The Office anticipates the Port will give effect to its request in the coming days, meaning monitoring data from the network of turbidity meters could be released as early as April 9, 2007.

Today the Office also announced turbidity results released by the Port continue to remain within required levels, despite recent rain affecting the clarity of Port Phillip Bay water.

Mr Bourke said a preliminary examination of the latest monitoring results showed that turbidity from dredging and recent rainfalls had affected water clarity in the north of the Bay, but together the results were still well below the limits set out in the rule book.

“The heavy rainfall recorded on March 26 and 27 affected turbidity levels because of storm flows into the Bay,” he said.

Turbidity results released today by the Port of Melbourne Corporation cover a seven day period from March 24 to 31.

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

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

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