

Media release

From the Office of the Environmental Monitor

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LATEST TURBIDITY RESULTS CONFORM TO THE RULE BOOK

Turbidity levels in the north and south of Port Phillip Bay (the bay) remain below the environmental safeguards set to protect sensitive bay assets, despite a malfunction affecting one of 20 monitoring meters.

Mr Bourke said the Office of the Environmental Monitor (the Office) was informed that one of nine turbidity monitoring support meters stopped working between 19 and 23 May 2008.

“A support meter located west of the Port Melbourne Channel suffered a leak, which lead to salt water affecting its sensor,” Mr Bourke said.

“The faulty sensor was replaced and despite the data loss, the Port of Melbourne Corporation (PoMC) have demonstrated that turbidity levels remained well below the limits set out in the Channel Deepening Project’s rule book, the Environmental Management Plan.”

“In this instance the malfunction did not critically affect the overall turbidity data and the Office is satisfied the problem was properly resolved,” Mr Bourke said.

Mr Bourke said the affected turbidity monitoring meter was one of nine support meters that provided data to support the interpretation of information from the 11 conformance meters.

“Unlike the conformance meters that have response levels and a trigger warning system to alert PoMC to any unusual turbidity readings, the support meters exist to provide further information on the bay’s water quality and the behaviour of the dredged plume,” Mr Bourke said.

He said turbidity results released today included data recorded by 11 conformance meters from 26 May to 1 June and a summary of the turbidity levels recorded by nine support meters for the period of 1 May to 1 June 2008.

“Information recorded by the entire network indicates that turbidity levels remain consistent with past results,” Mr Bourke said.

“While the results remain well below the limits set out in the rule book, the recent malfunction emphasises the need to remain vigilant in monitoring and assessing turbidity in the bay, particularly now that dredging of contaminated material has begun,” Mr Bourke said.

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

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