

Media release

From the Office of the Environmental Monitor

Wednesday, June 18, 2008

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITOR'S QUARTERLY REVIEW OUT SOON

A review on the Office of the Environmental Monitor's (the Office) activities, including its findings and recommendations on the first quarter of the Channel Deepening Project (the Project) will be released within the next week, Environmental Monitor, Mick Bourke said today.

Mr Bourke said the Office's first quarter review would provide an independent and transparent view on the Project's environmental performance during the first quarter of dredging operations.

"The quarterly review will provide a stock take of the Office's findings and recommendations for the period between the start of dredging on 8 February to 31 May 2008," Mr Bourke said.

"It will also outline the Office's progress against its three objectives: to be accessible to stakeholders and the community; scrutinise, report and advise on the Project's environmental performance; and communicate meaningful information in a timely way."

Mr Bourke said the review would provide the community with information on whether the Project had met the stringent environmental conditions set out in the Environmental Management Plan or rule book.

"The Office takes its responsibility to continuously scrutinise the Project and provide regulators, stakeholders and the Victorian community with advice on how it is tracking against the rule book seriously," Mr Bourke said.

"The Office is required to report quarterly to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and at the same time will make its quarterly reviews available to the Victorian community.

"Regular reporting such as this demonstrates the Office's commitment to communicating all information on the Project in a meaningful and timely way."

Today Mr Bourke also announced that the latest turbidity monitoring results from the Project continued to remain below the environmental safeguards set to protect sensitive fish, sea birds and seagrass species.

"A preliminary examination of the turbidity monitoring results indicates that dredging of sand in the South Channel by the *Queen of the Netherlands* did affect turbidity levels at Capel Sound over the weekend, Mr Bourke said.

"However, the turbidity level peaked at around five nephelometric turbidity units (NTUs), well below the limit of 35 NTUs.

"In the north of the bay, the turbidity level increase recorded on the 13 to 14 June coincided with increased flows from the Yarra River due to rainfall," Mr Bourke said.

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

-ENDS