

Media release

From the Office of the Environmental Monitor

Wednesday, 23 July, 2008

MONITOR AND AUDITOR TO DIG DEEPER ON DREDGING

Independent auditing of Port Phillip Bay dredging will be up and running by September, the Office of the Environmental Monitor (the Office) announced today.

Environmental Monitor, Mick Bourke, said the Office today advertised a Request for Tender, following Victorian and Commonwealth Government and Port of Melbourne Corporation (PoMC) approval of the Office's recommendation in last month's Quarterly Review.

Mr Bourke welcomed the support for the Office's recommendation to manage the independent audit process, a condition of the Channel Deepening Project's Environmental Management Plan or rule book.

"An independent examination of PoMC's documentation and activities by a fresh set of eyes will be extremely useful in assessing whether or not PoMC and its Project have followed the rules that are in place to protect the long-term health of Port Phillip Bay," Mr Bourke said.

"Independent audits are an additional function in verifying PoMC's compliance with the rulebook's 58 Project Delivery Standards, which are rules about where, when and how the Project can be delivered."

The Office is seeking a suitably qualified and experienced auditor to run a total of 11 environmental compliance audits on dredging activities to assess the Project's compliance with the rulebook.

Mr Bourke said the independent audits existed to ensure no corners were cut.

"From September the Office will ask the auditor to conduct four audits to assess PoMC's implementation of the rulebook and seven audits to examine the environmental compliance of key parts of the Project, including ensuring that no over-dredging has happened in the Entrance and that the bund has been built exactly as was planned," Mr Bourke said.

He said that since the Project began in February, the Office had conducted its own audits of bay dredging.

"Dredging operations are always under close examination by the Office to assess the Project's compliance with the rulebook and to judge its environmental performance," Mr Bourke said.

"The community has a right to know if the Project is toeing the line and the independent audits will add another level of scrutiny to the Project.

"Having the Office directly manage the independent audit process will also strengthen the Project's transparency," Mr Bourke said.

Today the Office also announced turbidity levels in the bay continued to remain below environmental limits.

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