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PORT COMPLETES DREDGING WORKS AT ENTRANCE

Dredging works at the Entrance to Port Phillip Bay as part of the Channel Deepening Project have been completed, heralding a milestone achievement for Port of Melbourne Corporation (PoMC).

It is the first time in the port’s history the Entrance has been deepened without the use of explosives, a practice ceased in 1986.

“The dredging operations are technically complete subject to final sign-off by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change,” said Mr Stephen Bradford, CEO of PoMC.

“To carry out this work at the Entrance on schedule and within budget is a significant achievement when you consider that prior to this project it was not known technically whether the dredging could actually be done.”

Deepening at the Entrance represented the most technically challenging aspect of the project, mainly because it is one of the most turbulent and potentially dangerous stretches of water in Bass Strait.

“The strategic decisions we have made over the past four years have contributed to this outcome,” said Mr Bradford. “In terms of world-wide dredging projects this is an achievement on a major scale.

“The world class expertise of international dredging contractor Royal Boskalis Westminster is to be recognised for its contribution in the efficient and technical completion of work at the Entrance.”

The deepening was the culmination of PoMC’s unprecedented scientific research at the Entrance, coinciding with the rigorous refinement of dredging technology and work methods to reduce environmental impacts.

Mr Bradford said the completion of dredging works did not mean work at the Entrance would cease.

“In line with the requirements of the project’s Environmental Management Plan, clean-up operations of residual material have occurred to appropriately manage the potential for rockfall at the Entrance.

“We have conducted underwater video surveillance at the Entrance and further monitoring activities are scheduled. In fact, surveying at the Entrance is scheduled to be on-going for 10 years.

“Assessments of deep reef habitats are outlined in the EMP using diver-operated video as well as a remotely operated vehicle. Tides at specific locations will also be monitored.”

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In recognising the involvement of Royal Boskalis Westminster, Mr Bradford said the deepening works at the Entrance had established a new benchmark for dredging projects worldwide.

“The Entrance is a naturally dynamic body of water that required specialised dredging techniques,” said Mr Bradford.

“Boskalis completed the works most professionally and is to be acknowledged for the extra lengths it went to in developing the appropriate work methods. This included scale model testing and refinement of the dredge head in the Netherlands in order to reduce rock spillage.”

Mr Bradford said the efficiency of work at the Entrance was indicative of the management strategies put in place by PoMC to minimise the effects on the environment.

“We are pleased modifications made to the technology and work methods were effective, and that turbidity levels continued to remain well below environmental limits,” he said.

“We also were able to minimise disruption to commercial shipping which was an important outcome for our exporters and importers.”

Mr Bradford said as a result of the project a vast amount of scientific information had been gathered on the Entrance and a great deal had been learned since a trial dredge was conducted in 2005.

“A considerable legacy gained is that we now know more about the Entrance than ever before which means we are better placed to preserve and protect it,” he said. “This knowledge base will continue through on-going monitoring of the Entrance area.”

Dredging at the Entrance started on 5 April 2008. Work involved the removal of hardened material from the top of rocky banks and was carried out by the vessel, Queen of the Netherlands, one of the world’s most advanced dredgers.

To date, approximately 40% of the overall total dredging volume has been completed and the project remains on schedule to be completed by 31 December 2009.

Dredging is ongoing in other sections of the bay and there are other works involving navigation aids, berths and underwater services.

The Channel Deepening Project is a vital infrastructure project for Victoria as trade volumes are forecast to increase as the population grows. Economic modeling indicates the project will generate immediate economic benefits, create jobs and boost Victorian industry.

TV broadcast vision available: Available is video footage of historical blasting at the Entrance, vision of the dredge vessel Queen of the Netherlands and aerial footage of the Port of Melbourne.