

Factsheet: March 2009

Channel Deepening Project Bunding Process

The Channel Deepening Project will involve dredging contaminated materials from the north of the bay and placing it within a specified Dredged Material Ground.

The containment area or 'bund' is located at the existing Port of Melbourne Dredged Material Ground. Construction of this facility began on 1 March 2008, and is scheduled for completion in March 2009.

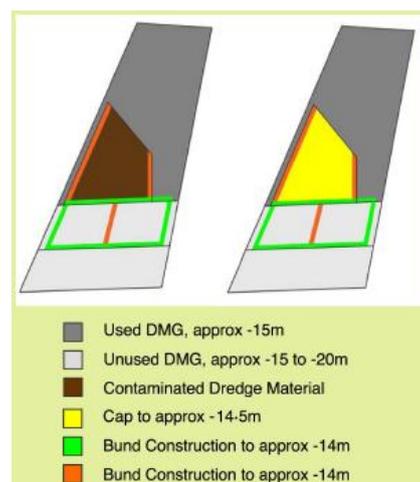
A specialised pipeline fitted to the front of the dredge vessel will lower the contaminated materials directly to the seabed through a diffuser to reduce the potential for dispersion, much like a shower head under water.

The sediment is placed 15 metres under water, and at this depth, wind and currents generally do not affect the sea floor and therefore the sediments are not moved by winds or tides.

Materials placed in the bund will be capped with clean dredged sand. The Supplementary Environment Effects Statement (SEES) says that not capping until sufficient settling of the sediment has occurred (about 140 days) will not pose any additional risks to the environment. Bunding and capping will isolate the material from adversely affecting the environment.

The Port's approach to capping is similar to those used successfully in projects with similar requirements in Boston Harbour, Massachusetts; Providence, Rhode Island, USA; and in Hong Kong.

The site in Port Phillip Bay is within a pre-existing site that has been used for decades.



Expert and independent scientific analysis validate using an underwater containment area to provide a competent barrier and the principles are readily implemented throughout the world.

Importantly, the independent Inquiry into the project's SEES said that the existing Port of Melbourne dredged material ground in the north of Port Phillip Bay "will provide the required level of environment performance, and that the contaminated material can be confined".

A number of studies were conducted as part of the SEES and all showed that heavy metal contamination of the sediments did not pose a health risk to the public, and the potential long-term risk to the environment could be properly managed through dredging and containment as outlined in the SEES.

The integrity of the facility will be ensured through continuous regular monitoring as stated in the project's Environmental Management Plan.

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