



## **Submission...by Western Adelaide Coastal Residents Association Inc.**

Application by Flinders Port Pty. Dredging at Outer Harbor South Australia notification under section 49 -Public Infrastructure.

Dear Secretary State Commission Assessment Panel,

Our 500 members and supporters are located between West beach and Semaphore South along the Adelaide metropolitan coastline.

We have very strong concerns arising from our recollections of the previous dredging operation in 2005 that caused severe turbidity from the Port River as far south as West beach. Flinders Ports advise that their current proposal is expected to produce a plume of turbidity extending a similar distance. Turbidity was so severe following the 2005 operation that at times the surf life saving clubs along this section of the coastline instructed members not to swim in the turbid water for obvious safety reasons. Under current EPA Water Quality Advice warnings, the EPA would be recommending people not to swim. This impacts on tourism and local businesses as well as public safety.

The dredging spreads sediments that eventually settle on the sea floor bottom only to be re mobilised by storm events and the regular afternoon summer sea breeze. This went on for almost two years after the dredging was completed.

The Adelaide Coastal Waters study has shown that this type of material [spoil] in near shore environment is not well dispersed and can remain in shallow waters for very long periods of time. The cumulative impact of discoloured water from dredging is affecting nearshore water quality and eco system protection as well as recreational and aesthetic values. Large scale dredging and nearshore disposal of organic materials pose a significant risk to the coastal environment.

Our other serious concern is the die back of sea meadows due to lack of sun light from turbid water. The cutter suction method used in major dredging projects will cause a significant impact on water quality and a report from the Environment Protection Authority of 2009 "Risk Assessment of Threats to Water Quality in Gulf St Vincent April 2009" page 177 provides research data of the effects of dredging makes specific

references to the 2005-6 operation in Outer Harbor and its short and long term affects. Flinders Ports current Development Application acknowledges the seagrass meadows will be lost, both from the direct effects of dredging and from widespread turbidity, but fails to estimate the extent of destruction.

Discussions our Association has had with two Prawn Fishers raise even greater concerns about the detrimental affects of seagrass dieback causing a reduction in the prawn population and an unuseable catch due to smothering.

It is our understanding that the spoil from the dredging will be loaded onto a barge and shipped out to a site approximately 30 miles distant from shore, however this was similar to the 2005 operation where a lot of dumping took place at a much closer distance due to 'unsafe' weather conditions. This created unknown and unmeasured affects. The current Development Application is silent on how much spoil was dumped closer than the designated site during the 2005 operation.

Previous submissions relating to the 2005 operation warned of the long term affects of dumping out to sea within the Gulf and asked why the spoil could not be dumped on land - a far better method with less impact on the marine environment. On Land dumping seems to be a far more logical way to provide a safer and less harmful affect on the environment at the same time providing a better use for the spoil by building up low level land that is now prone to flooding due to climate change and expected sea level rise .[see Adapt West Report commissioned by SA Government for western Adelaide Local government councils.]

Statements made by the SA Government and Flinders Ports that it is necessary to widen the channel and Outer Harbor to allow larger shipping for economic gain fail to give any recognition or consideration to the economic loss due to environmental damage. It is interesting that the economic gain argument put forward to justify the 2005 dredging such as a significant increase in motor vehicle exports and Blue gum wood chips have not eventuated so it becomes very questionable if the economic research provided to once again deepen and widen the channel and Harbor can be justified.

There are deep harbours around the Australian Coastline and we argue that these harbours should be explored with linkages via rail to South Australia avoiding the impact of significant dredging operations.

The Adelaide Metropolitan coastline is declining as a result of inappropriate development of sea walls, die back of seagrass meadows, boat launching facilities and inappropriate close to coast land use for housing developments. There is a strong connection between uncontained dredging materials and sea grass die back and it is time to undertake a full environmental impact study of the full affects of dredging and its ramifications.

Much greater controls and monitoring of all dredging operations must be put into place under an Act of parliament before any further dredging takes place in this state.

Other less damaging methods must be considered and enforced along with mitigating measures and on-going impact assessments made publicly available. If dredging does proceed, it must be closely monitored with set limits for the intensity and spread of turbidity. If these limits are reached operations should be halted until conditions and/or modified methods can ensure on-going compliance.

Extensive research and investigation must be undertaken of international dredging techniques that are bound by the 1996 London Dumping convention protocol -to reduce impacts of material dumping at sea and in addition for all authorities to examine all other possibilities of best practice principles including disposal on land. The Development Application provides a cursory review of one land disposal option, and dismisses it as too costly without providing any cost breakdown or comparative costing against the environment costs of disposal at sea, such as the restoration of seagrass meadows or the impact on fisheries or tourism. We acknowledge that disposal on land may mean additional short term expense, but this may be negligible compared to the on-going costs to the environment.

The people of South Australia need to be assured that every consideration of methods to reduce unwanted impacts are researched and made public to provide assurances that we will never ever have to experience another environmental and economic disaster as we did in 2005 dredging operation.

Our Association would like the opportunity to make a presentation to the Assessment Panel if that option is made available.

Yours Sincerely

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