



Gladstone Ports Corporation
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Media Release

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Main dredging works to commence

The cutter suction dredge Al Mahaar is expected to begin work in the Western Basin this weekend.

Gladstone Ports Corporation CEO Leo Zussino said the Western Basin Dredging and Disposal project was on schedule to begin its main dredging works, with the commencement of the main dredging works on Saturday.

“To date we have had two backhoe dredges working on the initial dredging works,” Mr Zussino said.

“These dredges have removed 394,187 cubic metres of material since they have been in operation from May this year.

“Despite claims the dredging project has impacted the marine life in the harbour, these works have not made an identified impact in the harbour.

“Since 1996 maintenance dredging of 100,000 cubic metres each year has occurred in the harbour with no identified impact on marine life.”

Mr Zussino said the significant loss of marine life in the Gladstone area over the past six months has been of concern to many Gladstone residents.

“There is no scientific evidence to suggest the Western Basin Dredging and Disposal Project to date has had any impact that could contribute to this loss of marine life,” Mr Zussino said.

“We started dredging in May this year with two backhoe dredges, with a small grab dredge now in operation.”

“The extensive monitoring program associated with the Western Basin Dredging and Disposal Project shows no visible sign of any negative impact from the project to date.”

The number of marine deaths throughout the state has shown that throughout Queensland 843 turtles have either been stranded or died along the Queensland coast, with 143 of those occurring in the Gladstone region.

Dugongs stranded along the Queensland coast number 129 with eight of those in the Gladstone region, while the number of dolphin deaths along the coast number 31 with five of those from the Gladstone region.

Mr Zussino said the assessment from both the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and DERM indicate the majority of deaths are related to the impact of last summer's floods and extreme weather conditions which destroyed large tracts of the state's seagrass beds.

"We have been advised by the Gladstone Area Water Board that the overflow from the Awoonga Dam this year pushed an estimated 1,093,760 megalitres of fresh water into the harbour," Mr Zussino added.

"That is equivalent to over 220,000 Olympic sized swimming pools.

"As well the Calliope River discharged significantly more water this summer than in previous years."

Seagrass mapping undertaken over the past eight months has revealed a major reduction in the seagrasses particularly in the Gladstone harbour.

Mr Zussino said GPC is committed to ensuring the Western Basin Dredging and Disposal Project is conducted within the strict guidelines set under the Project's approval .

"We want to ensure there is minimum impact on the marine life in Gladstone harbour," Mr Zussino said.

ENDS

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