

Question on Notice

No. 1188

Asked on 11 October 2023

MR M CRANDON ASKED MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS AND MINISTER FOR DIGITAL SERVICES (HON M BAILEY)—

QUESTION:

With reference to reportable environmental incidents for the Port of Townsville in 2022–23—

Will the Minister advise (a) details including date, location, nature of incident and environmental impact of each of the 19 incidents, (b) the reason for the significant increase from eight incidents in the previous financial year and (c) what action the Minister is taking to address this significant increase in the number of reportable incidents?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Coomera for the question.

(a) The details including date, location, nature of incident and environmental impact of each of the 19 incidents for the Port of Townsville Limited (POTL) in 2022–23 are as follows.

- 19 July 2022 – trade waste quality did not meet acceptance criteria for sulphides at the compliance monitoring location Nexus Park pump station, which is the authorised discharge point to Townsville City Council infrastructure.
- 11 August 2022 – loss of hydrocarbons to water associated with dredging activities for the Townsville Channel Upgrade Project (TCUP) at Townsville Marine Precinct harbour.
- 1 September 2022 – loss of hydrocarbons to water associated with dredging activities for the TCUP at Berth 9 main harbour.
- 3 and 6 September 2022 – loss of hydrocarbons to water associated with dredging activities for the TCUP at the Channel Upgrade dredge location (mid Platypus Channel).
- 15 September 2022 – trade waste quality did not meet acceptance criteria for suspended solids and oil/grease at the compliance monitoring location Nexus Park pump station.
- 26 September 2022 - a notification to authorities relating to a dead turtle observed near the Port's Outer Harbour.
- 30 September 2022 – a loss of small globs of grease to water from the Port's maintenance dredging contractor were observed at beaches in Townsville including the Strand and Pallarenda/Rowes Bay.
- 4 October 2022 – trade waste devices not being serviced at the required frequency in the Trade Waste Approval for port tenants on leased land.
- 19 October 2022 – trade waste quality did not meet acceptance criteria for sulphides at the compliance monitoring location Nexus Park pump station.
- 17 November 2022 – trade waste devices not being serviced at the required frequency in the Trade Waste Approval for port tenants on leased land.
- 17 February 2023 – loss of clean unused oil spill pads to water relating to the Channel Upgrade Project.
- 3 March 2023 – loss of small globs of grease to water at the Channel Upgrade Project Temporary Unloading Facility.

- 20 March 2023 – trade waste quality did not meet acceptance criteria for sulphides at the compliance monitoring location Nexus Park pump station.
- 15 May 2023 – trade waste quality did not meet acceptance criteria for sulphides at the compliance monitoring location Nexus Park pump station.
- 17 May 2023 – two incidents of loss of hydrocarbons to water associated with dredging activities for the Townsville Channel Upgrade Project at the Channel Upgrade Project Temporary Unloading Facility.
- 21 May 2023 – loss of hydrocarbons to water associated with dredging activities for the TCUP at the Channel Upgrade dredge location (mid Platypus Channel).
- 31 July 2023 – trade waste quality did not meet acceptance criteria for sulphides at the compliance monitoring location Nexus Park pump station in June 2022. Delays in laboratory analysis resulted in notification being made on 31 July 2023.

All incidents associated with dredging were notified to the relevant authority. The matters classed as notifiable marine pollution events were assessed as not warranting further investigation. In the Port's assessment, it does not believe environmental harm has occurred because of the incidents. The trade waste events were reported to the relevant authority and the Port is undertaking a detailed investigation with support from a specialist consultant.

- (b) Dredging activities for the \$251 million TCUP commenced in March 2022, and have continued 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with short exceptions for maintenance periods only. Dredging for the project includes the operation of a mechanical dredge and 10 support vessels, with over 3000 barge movements throughout the financial year. Due to the increased activity, there is greater potential for an elevated level of environmental incidents associated with the dredging activity during the life of the project.
- (c) With regards to environmental incidents relating to dredging, I am advised that dredging works for the TCUP are expected to conclude in 2024. POTL has confirmed it is working collaboratively with the contractor to investigate the root cause and implement preventive measures to reduce the likelihood of environmental incidents.

With regard to the environmental incidents relating to trade waste, I can advise POTL has an agreement with Townsville City Council which covers the whole port precinct, which means the Port, as landowner, is responsible for compliance with this approval for all businesses operating within the port. POTL employs administrative measures and conducts routine site inspections for POTL tenants. While POTL facilitates the trade waste infrastructure, it does not exercise operational authority over trade waste management within leased zones, as this responsibility lies with individual tenants.

POTL is currently undertaking a detailed investigation with support from a specialist consultant, with an outcomes report expected by the end of 2023. The findings will inform targeted action across the POTL's entire Trade Waste system.

In the meantime, POTL has undertaken several corrective actions with its tenants including trade waste inspections, issuing letters of non-compliance to port users whose Trade Waste apparatus were found to be improperly maintained and, in two cases, issued an instruction to cease trade waste discharge until corrective action was implemented. Educational pieces are also being conducted with port users to improve understanding and awareness of the Trade Waste system and requirements across the Port.