

Question on Notice

No. 647

Asked on 22 May 2024

MR S O'CONNOR ASKED MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS AND MINISTER FOR DIGITAL SERVICES (HON B MELLISH)—

QUESTION:

With reference to maritime safety in the Pumicestone Passage and the dangerous conditions experienced following the breakthrough event—

Will the Minister detail any plans the department has to stabilise the waterways in this region, specifically if consideration has been given to constructing rock walls, dredging or other related management activities?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Bonney for the question.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads' Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) branch is aware that a natural ocean breakthrough at Bribie Island has occurred. This breakthrough is being used by some vessels (including the Caloundra-based Australian Volunteer Coast Guard) for navigation, with caution. MSQ will continue to monitor this breakthrough.

Given the dynamic nature of the estuary system in trying to re-establish an equilibrium since the breakthrough, any seabed works such as dredging or bed-levelling have a high risk of sand re-filling the works in a short time. For this reason, MSQ has no plans to dredge areas within the Pumicestone Passage, including the breakthrough. Large scale rock wall works are not likely to be viable from a cost and environmental impact perspective, therefore MSQ has no plans to construct rock walls.

The area remains highly dynamic with sand and channels rapidly moving and reforming. On this basis, MSQ's coastal engineers have advised that no works are recommended until a clear understanding of the likely outcome is known. The Pumicestone Passage is a highly sensitive environmental area which is part of a Ramsar-listed Moreton Bay Marine Park. As this area has high environmental value, it would be inappropriate to conduct large scale earthworks within the passage, as the Member is suggesting.

MSQ and other state agencies, including the Department of Environment and Science, will continue to monitor the waterways and shoaling changes using aerial photography, on-water inspections and further surveys. MSQ will move navigational aids as required to mark the best available water for navigation.