

# Media release



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## Have your say on licence for channel dredging

The community will have the opportunity to comment on the environmental licence application governing dredging of the Outer Harbor shipping channel.

In May, the Minister for Planning approved an application by Flinders Ports to widen the channel in order to accommodate larger vessels.

Environment Protection Authority Director, Regulation, Peter Dolan, said during the previous channel dredging operation in the 2000s, the loss of seagrass was a major issue due to increased turbidity.

“Seagrass is vital to a healthy marine ecosystem, but when water around the dredge site became cloudy and discoloured, it blocked the light and resulted in the loss of large areas of the grass,” he said.

“When the Minister granted approval for this project, it was after extensive consideration and included eight conditions, many of which were recommended by the EPA and focused on protecting seagrass.”

These conditions include a requirement for Flinders Ports to prepare an EPA-approved environmental monitoring program, and a dredging management plan with real-time alarm and halt-work triggers if the water becomes too cloudy.

Mr Dolan said Flinders Ports was now required to apply for a licence from the EPA, and that the EPA was now consulting with the community and seeking feedback on the application.

“Members of the community now have the opportunity to provide feedback on aspects of the licence application that they would like us to consider,” he said.

“Protecting seagrass will be a major consideration, and while some will inevitably be lost in a project of this nature, we will be designing the licence conditions to minimise that as far as possible.

“Our recommendations on this project concentrated on using best-practice dredging methods to reduce turbidity, so this is also where the licence conditions will be focused. For example, they will require that work cease under certain conditions and not start again until conditions improve.

“EPA marine scientists are currently using data and scientific modelling to determine the appropriate trigger points for stopping work.”

Mr Dolan said the mix of sand, silt and clay removed during dredging would be disposed of at sea in the same location as was used during the last widening operation.

Submissions close on 30 November 2018.

For more information, visit [www.epa.sa.gov.au](http://www.epa.sa.gov.au).