

2017 WAMSI RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Dredging Science Node

Perth 22-24 Nov 2017

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- 1. The NT EPA**
- 2. Major dredging program assessments**
- 3. Could WAMSI DSN research outputs benefited assessments?**
- 4. Quo Vadis?**

- 1. A relatively 'new' EPA**
- 2. Independent statutory authority with Chairman and 4 members plus the Chair, NT Planning Commission**
- 3. Independence derives from:**
 - a) Members not public servants
 - b) Cannot be directed
 - c) Public reporting
- 4. Responsibilities for EIA, ongoing environmental regulation, waste/pollution management, compliance etc but this will change...**
 - a) EIA
 - b) Strategic advice
 - c) Environmental assurance role
- 5. Major environmental legislative and regulatory reform program underway**

Major Dredging Program Assessments

1. **INPEX - Ichthys LNG Project**

- a) Duration: Aug 2012 – July 2014
- b) 16 million cubic metres dredging in Darwin Harbour for shipping channel and berth pockets
- c) Offshore disposal (approx. 12 km) in CW waters

2. Referred Mar 2008; Assessment Report released May 2011 by department responsible

3. 17 EMPs to monitor and adaptively manage

4. **Conclusion:** *'...there remains a high level of uncertainty in terms of the precise nature and extent of impacts and changes, particularly to the ecology of Darwin harbour...'*

5. Post-dredging monitoring did not detect significant impacts to critical habitats

6. Maintenance dredging proposal in May 2017 not assessed (with a SoR)

- Little doubt availability of current DSN research outputs at time of assessment would have:
 - ✓ Reduced predictive uncertainty that can lead to onerous and costly management measures
 - ✓ Improved assessment timelines
 - ✓ Enhanced confidence to reduce impacts ALARP
 - ✓ Led to less onerous conditions including post-development monitoring
 - ✓ Reduced the zone of indirect impact

1. Sharing data:

- a) DSN synthesis projects great start and essential
- b) We MUST do something with monitoring data to inform future decision-making and management → continuous learning and path to adoption
- c) Benefits across northern Australia – ports, oil & gas and resources sector, govts, sea bed mining??
- d) Central repository and resourcing issues → how to fund?
- e) INPEX to be commended for sharing data – no compelling argument not to do so
- f) Investment v cost

2. Regulator response:

- a) Ensure proponents and assessment staff aware of DSN research and engage with WAMSI
- b) Require monitoring reports to be publicly available & post development impact v prediction report
- c) INPEX maintenance dredging In Darwin Harbour – not assess decision but cumulative impacts potential require long term biological monitoring program by govt and industry informed by DSN
- d) Early engagement of experts and panels
- e) Caution on adaptive management - J Lee paper
- f) DSN 'Compendium of Best Practice' - eagerly awaited!
- g) Spatial representation of direct and indirect impacts useful
- h) NOPSEMA Reference Case approach - any utility ?

Thank you

To all the scientists and staff at WAMSI and especially to my friend Dr Ray Masini, whose foresight, persistence and resilience played such a large part in establishing the DSN at WAMSI