



## PTTEP Australasia TIMOR SEA OPERATIONS

**Att: Radio Editors – audio grab attached**

***Date: 29 October 2009 11.00 WST***

As part of PTTEP Australasia's (PTTEP) commitment to the recently announced environmental monitoring program, a survey of key sites has been undertaken.

As part of operational monitoring, the Australian Government with the company has conducted shoreline and ground surveys in addition to environmental assessments and sampling.

No visual evidence of oil has been found during shoreline and ground surveys of Ashmore Reef and Cartier and Hibernia Islands following the Montara oil spill in the Timor Sea.

Representatives from the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA), Geoscience Australia and PTTEP conducted the environmental assessments and collected samples of tidal, inter-tidal and shoreline sediments for further analysis.

PTTEP is funding the scientific and operational environmental monitoring program which is being carried out by relevant experts and managed by the company in conjunction with DEWHA. Some elements of the scientific studies are expected to continue for up to six to seven years.

"PTTEP is committed to working with Commonwealth and State government authorities to support the joint efforts to protect the marine environment," Mr José Martins, Director and Chief Financial Officer of PTTEP Australasia, said.

"Our agreement with the Australian Government allows a scientifically robust and comprehensive monitoring program to help us better understand what is actually happening in the marine environment in this type of incident. This will allow the development of actions to safeguard the local ecology and marine species now and into the future."

Leading Australian environmental scientist John A. Wardrop has been appointed by PTTEP to lead and manage the implementation of immediate and long term monitoring programs.

Mr Wardrop has more than 28 years' experience in Australia and internationally working for the private sector and governments in oil spill response planning, environmental impact and ecological assessment, and biological monitoring.

His previous work for private sector operators has included environmental risk assessments and management plans for the Timor Sea and for the Ashmore-Cartier island territories. He has also been involved in the post-spill clean up of high profile incidents in Australia.

Comprehensive long-term scientific monitoring studies will be triggered (as required by spill monitoring, modelling and aerial observations). These studies include:

- **Assessment of fish catch for the presence of oil.** Launched to determine whether commercial fish have acquired a taint or other characteristics through contact with spilt oil.
- **Assessment of current effects on Timor Sea fish and fisheries.** This study, to be conducted by Associate Professor Monique Gagnon, Ecotoxicology in Environmental and Aquatic Sciences, Curtin University, will assess any effects on fish species of impacted waters.
- **Assessment of current effects on Timor Sea fish and fisheries.** A proposal is being developed to conduct a study to evaluate any geographical effects on fish health, including reproductive health, from the spilt oil.



- **Shoreline ecological ground survey.** This study will quantify any effects on coastal fauna or flora including the mainland, seabirds, sea snakes, turtles and corals. As a priority the study will look at identified sensitive areas.
- **Shoreline ecological assessment aerial surveys.** These surveys will assess any disturbance or harm to habitats between Darwin and Broome.
- **Marine megafauna assessment survey.** Once triggered, this study will determine and assess any disturbance to megafauna in the open waters of the Timor Sea.
- **Offshore banks assessment survey.** When triggered, this study will determine whether there has been any impact or effect on the marine banks in the region.

Preliminary studies have commenced to assess long term effects on Timor Sea fish and fisheries.

When each monitoring study is completed, individual reports will be submitted to DEWHA. Copies will also be supplied to other relevant Australian and State Government agencies.

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