

**Paper 8: ROLE OF THE SCIENTIFIC SCIENTIFIC
SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR IN THE TASMANIAN
SUPPLEMENT TO THE NATIONAL PLAN TO
COMBAT POLLUTION OF THE SEA BY OIL**

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The organisation of the Tasmanian **response** group for a marine sourced oil spill is consistent with that for the National Plan as outlined elsewhere in **these** proceedings.

The Scientific Support Co-ordinator (SSC) is identified as performing a key role within that organisation as he is required to directly advise **the** Operations Controller (On Scene Co-ordinator).

The 'real-time' response functions of the SSC, as stated in the Tasmanian Supplement, are as follows:

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1. **Co-ordinate input from all environment centres**
 2. Prove balanced assessment of relevant **environment priorities** and sensitive areas
 3. General liaison with all **environment** sources
 4. Advise on the selection, application and use of **clean-up** equipment and materials
 5. Provide assistance and interpretation of computer predictions of the likely track of oil slicks.
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All harbour authorities in this State are encouraged to prepare and update as necessary port contingency plans to facilitate an effective **response** to an oil spill **incident**. The SSC (who is also the Manager, Scientific Support in the Department of **the Environment**) is available as required to advise the harbour authorities on such matters.

Tasmania has been fortunate to date in having **very few** ship sourced oil pollution incidents. At **approximately** 2000 hours on Saturday 18 December 1976 the 28,000 tonne tanker Bethouia grounded in the Tamar River and 350 tonnes of the cargo of 20,000 tonnes of petrol leaked into the river. The greatest risk in this case was that of **explosion and fire** and **the** long term environmental impact was minimal. The ship was eventually refloated and **the** cargo discharged. On the 3 December 1987 the mv. **Nella** Dan grounded at Macquarie Island. Initial estimates were that 5 **tonnes** of lubricating oil and 90 tonnes of diesel oil had been **spilled**. Although **this** area is a very important wildlife reserve, the weather conditions fortunately **encouraged** the off shore dispersal of the oil. The ship was finally scuttled in over 2,000 **metres** of **water** far off the west coast of the island.

Key personnel have been identified in the Tasmanian Department of Sea Fisheries, and Lands, **Parks** and Wildlife, also in the Tasmanian Inland Fisheries commission, to assist **with the provision of** information relating to the impact of oil on the environment. The Department of Sea Fisheries is also represented on the State Committee and the Department of Lands, Parks and Wildlife has previously been invited to nominate an observer to attend those meetings.

An important objective from the State Committee point of view is the preparation of an atlas of environmentally sensitive areas for Tasmania. It is **recognised** that **in** order to undertake an environmentally effective response to a pollution incident, information must be readily available on sensitive marine organisms and sensitive coastline structures.

Ideally such atlases should **include** the following information:

Coastal geomorphology

Important estuarine habitat and coastal lagoons

Marine reserves

Areas of high aesthetic value or tourist significance

Seabird rookeries

Marine mammal habitats

Aquaculture farms

Important wild fish habitats

Industrial water **intakes**

Areas of **seagrass** and kelp **beds**

Details of road access and shipping lanes

Areas acceptable for the use of chemical dispersants

Approved land disposal sites for oil spill debris.