Australian Government

Australian Maritime Safety Authority

National Plan to Combat Pollution of the Sea by Oil and Other Noxious and Hazardous Substances

Exercise "VAN DIEMEN"
Devonport, Tasmania
6 September 2006

Exercise Report
Prepared by AMOSC

Australian Government
Australian Maritime Safety Authority

FOREWORD

Exercise *Van Diemen* was conducted under the National Plan to Combat Pollution of the Sea by Oil and Other Noxious and Hazardous Substances (National Plan) in Tasmania with an oil spill scenario situated in the Mersey River in Devonport. In Tasmania the Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment (DTAE) has Statutory Authority in relation to marine pollution response.

The objectives set for the Exercise created the opportunity for numerous Tasmanian as well as interstate agencies and organisations to become involved, thereby testing selected aspects of their respective oil spill contingency plans and sub-plans. A full list of participating agencies is provided.

AMSA and the Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment (Tasmania) wish to record their appreciation to all agencies and organisations that made personnel and material resources available to Exercise *Van Diemen*. It is through their contribution that Exercise *Van Diemen* was successful in testing, practising and evaluating its objectives and identifying further opportunities for improvement, not only with regard to the management and execution of relevant plans in Tasmania, but also in terms of future Exercises.

Sincere thanks are extended to all those who volunteered their services as Umpires during Exercise *Van Diemen*. Their observations, reports, facilitation of "hot debriefs" and presentations allowed a wealth of data regarding incident response to be collected to inform this report. Special thanks are conveyed to Mr Nick Quinn, General Manager Marine Pollution Response Services with Maritime New Zealand for his willingness to fulfil the role of Overall Exercise Umpire and to chair Umpire presentations. His experience from across the Tasman was very much valued.

Mr David Baird
General Manager
Emergency Response
AMSA

Mr Warren Jones
State Chair
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General Manager
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Exercise Director

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Exercise *Van Diemen* was the seventh biennial oil-spill response exercise carried out under the National Plan to Combat Pollution of the Sea by Oil and Other Noxious and Hazardous Substances (National Plan). The purpose of such exercises is to test the operational and administrative arrangements for responding effectively to a major marine oil spill.

Specifically, Exercise *Van Diemen* tested the Tasmanian Marine Oil Pollution Contingency Plan arrangements with a focus on response management utilising the Oil Spill Response Incident Control System (OSRICS) and the Tasmanian Oiled Wildlife Response Plan. Exercise *Van Diemen* involved two complementary elements; an incident management component and a field component.

Collaboration and cooperation were exemplary with response personnel engaging in the task with earnestness and conscientiousness. It was apparent that inter-agency networks and relationships in Tasmania are well established and form a strong foundation for any requirement that might arise for pooling resources and presenting a joint response effort to an emergency situation.

The purpose of staging a simulation was realised in Exercise *Van Diemen* in that the changing nature of the spill scenario and the multi-faceted response required not only brought to light a suite of strengths and positive behaviours amongst response personnel from the various agencies, but also identified specific training needs and opportunities for improvement. This was the case both for agencies and personnel engaged in Exercise *Van Diemen* as well as the Exercise Management Team.

Recommendations are a distillation of comments and observations obtained through a thorough debriefing process effected at the close of Exercise *Van Diemen*. Recommendations also incorporate data captured in written Umpire reports and notes recorded in Exercise emails, log sheets and phone conversations.

Exercise *Van Diemen* was a successful National exercise, not simply because it reflected positively on existing capability, but because it also provided valuable direction for moving forward and furthering the process of continuous improvement.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to introduce Exercise *Van Diemen* and present the significant recommendations to emerge from response operations during the oil spill exercise. Recommendations will be presented using key areas of activity as the framework.

1.1 Aim of Exercise *Van Diemen*

Exercise *Van Diemen* introduced a hypothetical marine oil spill scenario specifically designed to test various local contingency plans and arrangements under the National Plan. The simulation escalated the incident in order to involve a number of Tasmanian as well as National agencies, authorities and organisations in testing the response. Organisations participating in Exercise *Van Diemen* are listed:

- Tasmanian Ports Corporation
- Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)
- Australian Marine Oil Spill Centre (AMOSC)
- National Response Team
- Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources (Tasmania)
- Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment (Tasmania)
- Department of Primary Industry and Water (Tasmania)
- Tasmanian Fire Service
- State Emergency Service
- Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council

1.2 Exercise *Van Diemen* Planning and Management Team

Exercise *Van Diemen* was prepared by a multi-agency team representing Tasmanian and interstate agencies, AMSA, AMOSC and the oil industry. This team was responsible for the overall planning of Exercise *Van Diemen*. Key elements of planning considered critical to the overall success of the simulation were:

- Developing the detail of inputs to be used during the exercise. The changing scenario had to maintain realism while introducing ever-increasing levels of complexity;
- Creating a format for the exercise. Various roles and activities had to be triggered during the exercise to test effectiveness and allow response practice;
- Integrating support within the format. Each area of activity was allocated nominated umpires who had powers of intervention allowing them to add value to participants' learning and experience during the simulation;
- Utilising observers' time to best advantage. Observers were hosted in three separate groups which avoided overwhelming any one area of activity and allowed observers the opportunity to glean 'snapshots in

time' as they revisited locations. The changes over time added quality to observer feedback;

- Pre-positioning of equipment and people. Significant logistical planning was required to ensure a range of marine oil spill response equipment was available given any number of scenarios which might develop in the course of the simulation. All participating agencies had to have personnel on stand-by for call-out. Port and Airport operations and security had to be maintained while accommodating response activities;
- Informing the exercise process. A risk assessment was carried out for Exercise *Van Diemen* and an OH&S plan was written. Security and safety induction program was conducted for all participants. Also, a communications plan and media plan were developed and implemented for the Exercise;
- Structuring a comprehensive debriefing methodology. Umpires facilitated a "hot debrief" with their respective areas immediately on cessation of the Exercise. They then used the information generated to deliver a five minute presentation to the next level debrief at which the Exercise Management Team (EMT) was present. A third level debrief was conducted by the EMT which was a self-assessment.

Having planned Exercise *Van Diemen*, the Exercise Management Team (EMT) initiated the simulation by contacting Port Control regarding a ship-based incident at the entry to the port of Devonport and continued to manage the exercise, introducing issues designed to generate responses from the Incident Management Team and field personnel.

The Exercise Planning and Management Team for Exercise *Van Diemen* were:

- Mr Charles Black (Chair) - TasPorts
- Mr Keith Brown - Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA)
- Mr Ivan Skibinski - Australian Marine Oil Spill Centre (AMOSC)
- Mr John Isaac - Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment (Tasmania)
- Ms Sharon Sherman - State Emergency Service (Tasmania)
- Mr Stephen Turner - Marine Safety Victoria
- Mr Phil Hickey - Caltex Australia Limited

1.3 Exercise *Van Diemen* Scenario

Devonport is a regional port in northern Tasmania which has approximately 968 ship visits each year including daily arrival and sailings of TT Line passenger vessels from Melbourne. In addition, Patrick Shipping runs a daily roll-on roll-off service between Tasmania and the mainland. Other cargoes include bulk cement exports, imports of fertiliser, gypsum and a variety of fuels for distribution by road tanker State-wide.

At 06:30 on 6 September 2006, a TasPorts pilot boards the *Tasman Provider*, a part-loaded petroleum tanker. It is three hours before high water. The tanker makes an approach to the Mersey River and as she nears the entrance channel, the steering fails without warning. The helmsman failed to notice that the rudder had not responded to changes at the helm. Moments later the bridge team realise there is a steering problem and order the main engine to emergency full astern. The starboard anchor is let go, however at 06:55, the *Tasman Provider* grounds in 4.7 metres of water just south of Fairwell Beacon. At 07:00 the pilot reports the grounding incident to Port Control.

The vessel has one tug in attendance which has not been made fast due to sea-swell conditions. Almost immediately, the *Tasman Provider's* stern swings and under the influence of wind and tide, grounds in the way of the Fairwell Beacon, destroying the beacon in the process. This disables the main engine and steering. At 07:15 the pilot advises Port Control of damage to the vessel and reports there is no sign of leaking oil.

At 07:30 however, the pilot reports to Port Control that there is oil in the water.

1.4 Objectives for Exercise *Van Diemen*

Exercise *Van Diemen* was structured in such a way as to:

- Test the effectiveness of the National Plan;
- Test the effectiveness of the Tasmanian Marine Oil Spill Contingency Plan;
- Test the effectiveness of the Tasmanian Oiled Wildlife Response Plan;
- Test Place of Refuge requests, including tug availability and Powers of Intervention (POI) arrangements;
- Test availability and activation of aviation resources;
- Test effectiveness of the Tasmanian Tier 2/3 regional equipment stockpile, including equipment availability, mobilisation and transportation arrangements;
- Test the effectiveness of equipment mobilisation from other agencies e.g. AMOSC, AMSA and the Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment (Tasmania);
- Test availability of National and State Response Team Members;
- Evaluate the availability of shoreline assessment teams;
- Practice shoreline assessment and clean-up techniques.

2. KEY ACTIVITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A brief commentary is provided for each category of activity, followed by recommendations stemming from the debrief process.

2.1 Equipment Deployment

Practical deployment of equipment was timely and there appeared to be sufficient familiarity with the assembly and operation of response equipment. An initial toolbox assessment was carried out by the IC with marine personnel. However there was neither an operational nor a safety briefing conducted prior to deployment. There was no observed reference to material safety data sheets (MSDS). Field response personnel demonstrated reasonable levels of competence. They were familiar with their roles and responsibilities if not the overall team structure. Equipment was deployed when verbally instructed by the Marine Unit Coordinator, however there is no recognition that this was on the direction of the Incident Control Centre (ICC).

Personnel were equipped with adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) and generally manual handling practices were good. There were difficulties communicating with the boats once they were active and the absence of a clear communication strategy meant that an uncoordinated mix of VHF, UHF and mobile phones were in use. TasPorts and the State Response Team worked exceptionally well together in supporting the response activity.

The first boom from Bell Bay was deployed and anchored quickly and well. However, deployment of 250 metres of Versatech Zoom Boom and 2 sections of Shoreline boom near Victoria Bridge was flawed as it was placed in an area of relatively high current (approximately 2knots). This predicament occurred because of the lag time between positional inputs with deployment commencing after the tide had turned. The current-induced load made deployment difficult and positioning in such a current would have proved to be ineffective resulting in a failure to contain the oil. Deployment was not driven by an incident action plan indicating where boom was to be set up and the IC did not request positional inputs from the planning team frequently enough.

Recommendation 1:
That TasPorts carry out pre-planning around potential spill scenarios under various weather conditions with a view to identifying preferred sites for deployment of boom within the Mersey River. That TasPorts then consider identifying fixed moorings and anchoring points at various locations along the river to assist with deployment.

Recommendation 2:
That formal pre-deployment safety and operational briefings are reinforced through Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for response activation, along with the use of documentation and checklists such as Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS).

Recommendation 3:
That TasPorts hold smaller-scale field exercises to refine field personnel skills by practising implementation of team structures, communications between shore and workboats and linkages with incident action plans.

2.2 Shoreline Assessment

The two shoreline clean-up assessment teams comprising SES volunteers performed particularly well considering their training was not recent and they had not participated in any subsequent spills or training exercises. They were highly motivated teams of people who showed good initiative by providing their own equipment such as handheld GPS for each team and a digital camera. They were attentive to OH&S, conducting a safety assessment of the beach site before commencing their shoreline assessment. The quality of their shoreline assessment indicated that they had been well briefed on the type of oil in the spill scenario.

While the teams were well trained in the Shoreline Clean-up Assessment Team (SCAT) approach, they were neither trained nor experienced in shoreline cleanup which made it difficult for them to translate their observations into recommendations for the Shoreline Coordinator in terms of gauging the urgency of cleanup or recommending equipment and personnel numbers for the cleanup.

Briefing of the shoreline assessment teams in the Incident Control Centre (ICC) had limitations. The teams were not issued with coastal maps of the areas to be surveyed or with contact details for the ICC. This proved to be an obstacle when radio communications failed because although shoreline assessment team members had personal mobile phones, the lack of a communication strategy/plan meant that they could neither contact the ICC nor be contacted.

Recommendation 4:
That training for personnel involved in Shoreline Assessment is reviewed by the Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment. Training needs to include a component on shoreline cleanup so that shoreline assessment data can more readily be translated into realistic recommendations for cleanup.

Recommendation 5:
That briefings for volunteers and other personnel not familiar with marine oil spill response are expanded to include information on OSRICS and the organisation of an oil spill response.

Recommendation 6:
That in planning the next National Plan exercise, EMT considers setting up the Shoreline Assessment Umpire in the ICC at the start of the exercise. By observing the complete process from establishment of the Operations Unit and delegation to the Shoreline Coordinator, as well as the mobilisation and briefing of the shoreline assessment teams, the Umpire will be better placed to intervene as required.

2.3 Wildlife Response

The activation of Wildlife response personnel/teams went well and was soundly resourced. All Oiled Wildlife Response (OWR) team members knew their role and responsibilities which were modified by the Wildlife Coordinator from the ICC to suit the changing demands of the response. Everyone worked as a team and knew each other's skills from previous initiatives. In the ICC, wildlife planning benefited from good local knowledge as with the anticipation of an influx of seasonal migratory birds.

Although the State Committee believed requests from the OWR team for boat/air surveillance were being made, it was not forthcoming. This meant that there was no accurate data for OWR personnel regarding where the oil contamination was, what oiled wildlife could be spotted from the water/air or further potential threats to wildlife from the spill. No consideration was given to developing strategies or mechanisms for keeping wildlife away from oil and clean-up operations.

A rehabilitation centre was identified and established on paper with the OWR team following the procedure of requesting and securing a lease as well as power and water. They also requested advice on whether to deploy their oiled wildlife kit brought from Launceston but were directed not to set up that equipment. As a rehabilitation centre was not established in real measure, there was no accurate testing of the time and resources needed to set up a facility and manage it.

The OWR team initially received advice from ICC that RSPCA help and veterinary assistance would be available. Their own liaison with RSPCA established that there would be no such assistance which prompted them to proceed with organising a facility.

Recommendation 7:
That boat or aerial surveillance involves an OWR member or that observers are trained for the purpose of determining impacted wildlife, assisting in capture, identifying means of keeping wildlife away from oil/clean-up and recording potential wildlife under threat.

Recommendation 8:
That OWR is extended in future exercises to include the actual setup and operation of an oiled wildlife treatment centre and the development of strategies and procedures for keeping wildlife away from oil and clean-up operations.

2.4 Aviation

The aviation activities for Exercise *Van Diemen* were pre-planned. Upon arrival at the Devonport Airport a general safety and activity briefing was conducted, outlining the equipment and aircraft to be used and related safety and PPE requirements.

With the arrival of the fixed wing aeroplane, specific dispersant loading briefings were conducted with the pilot and ground crew. Safety and communication issues around the aircraft were discussed and a dry run for dispersant filling was conducted. When the two helicopters became available, a helicopter spray bucket loading and hook-up briefing was conducted. Again, safety and communications were discussed followed by a dry run.

The result was a punctual and well executed activity using a clear chain of command which saw communication and air movements fully controlled and performed safely.

2.5 OH&S

There were no reported injuries, incidents or near misses during Exercise *Van Diemen*. There were good examples of risk assessments being carried out and safe work practices being observed. PPE was issued and used in most but not all instances.

Opportunities for improvement were identified. An exercise risk assessment process had been carried out using the AS/NZS 4360:2004 Risk Management. An OH&S Plan was developed by the Exercise Management Team specifically for Exercise *Van Diemen*. An OH&S plan was not developed by anyone within the ICC however. While there was a dedicated OH&S person in the ICC and they were effective in picking up minor issues, the roles and duties for that person need to be expanded to better support the Incident Controller.

While pre-briefings were held concerning inductions, OH&S, PPE, and oil type, they were not consistent. There were instances with some groups being more focused on their function and tasks rather than on OH&S.

Recommendation 9:
That every activity has a pre-start briefing before the task is commenced. The briefing needs to step through what is going to be done; carry out a hazard analysis; distribute PPE and reinforce the importance of using it at all times; and talk through the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for response equipment.

Recommendation 10:
That skilled personnel who are competent in managing safety are allocated to field operations with representation in each area of activity.

2.6 Media

The pressure that an Incident Controller (IC) and his team would be put under by media in a real marine oil spill was not effectively replicated in Exercise *Van Diemen*. A media release was prepared and hypothetically released within 30minutes of the Chair of the SMPC being notified of the incident. However it took several hours for the media release to be made available with the result that it contained too much information with inaccuracies creeping in. There was confusion over whether to seek approval for media releases from the IC in Devonport or the Tasmanian Marine Pollution Controller (TMPC) in Hobart. A relationship with the media was established over time however liaison with them was not controlled through a central point such as a nominated Media Liaison Officer (MLO) within the ICC. Establishing such a position within the OSRICS structure would remove pressure from the IC/TMPC, streamlining contact and eliminating contradictory information.

Media briefings were not held at regular intervals throughout the Exercise and neither were journalists asked what questions they intended to pose which again would offer more control.

Recommendation 11:
That the MLO role is better integrated with the ICC Incident Management Team (IMT) and that the MLO carries full responsibility for media liaison. Allocate a dedicated "hotline" for media enquiries.

Recommendation 12:
That media contact becomes proactive during incidents. This is important for the purpose of control and management of public perception.

2.7 Incident Command Centre (ICC)

Exercise *Van Diemen* brought many agencies together on the day and yet individuals were quick to settle in and work well together. Local knowledge was a strength throughout the ICC team. The ICC was well resourced and that extended to the availability of technology. Although the network had been pre-positioned, initial setup time for networked computers, printers and a photocopier detracted from the task at hand and reliance on technology in many ways slowed the response and made information hosting and dissemination inefficient. There were high levels of industriousness with a proliferation of Emails, however inputs weren't being harnessed and focussed towards an outcome.

UHF/VHF radios had been made available for Exercise *Van Diemen*, yet most personnel reverted to the use of personal mobile phones. This meant that information was neither available for all to hear nor captured in a communications log.

The approach to resourcing the ICC was to fill every position within the OSRICS structure in an effort to capture the full range of competencies and cater for any event that might arise during the course of the Exercise, thereby maximising the learning opportunities for all participants. This resulted in a very busy and noisy ICC with too many people (40) for the size of the incident, especially at the start of the Exercise. Consequently the exercise was overwhelmed with the volume of people which compounded inefficiencies and contributed to confusion. Decision-making and tasking were absent and an Incident Action Plan (IAP) failed to emerge. Better understanding of the requirements and functions of various roles within OSRICS were needed.

Equally, given the overcrowding within the ICC, neither the whiteboards nor the walls were used with effect to capture data about the incident and the status of the response. The result was a poor situational awareness overall, confirmed by the fact that it took some hours for the first Situation Report (SITREP) to be released.

Briefings for Team Leaders would have been improved if they had been held in a separate and quieter room. This would have sharpened the focus on issues and increased the likelihood of information being cascaded down through divisions and sections within the ICC. The volume of people was a further deterrent to this happening.

Recommendation 13:
That both Statutory and Combat authorities are mindful of using the OSRICS structure in a flexible way to meet the specific needs of a marine oil spill incident. Personnel filling roles within the OSRICS structure need better training to ensure they have the necessary competencies as well as a good understanding of the contribution required of them towards the overall response.

Recommendation 14:
That a pre-planning activity is run at the beginning of any response/exercise to clarify roles and responsibilities of positions within OSRICS and mechanisms for information-sharing and decision-making.

Recommendation 15:
That the space within the ICC is better managed to allow for visual data capture which better informs the development of strategies and tactics for the IAP.

2.8 State Committee (SC)

The Tasmanian Marine Pollution Controller (TMPC) responded to the incident in a timely and authoritative manner, maintaining a sense of calm and conveying the same sense of measured and considered response to stakeholders.

The State Committee(SC) worked well as a group with high levels of cooperation and understanding between participants. They were issued excellent briefings by the TMPC which unfortunately had to be repeated as SC members arrived at different times throughout the morning. The constant stream of people arriving created a situation where security and access were not as tight as they might have been. The TMPC became caught up in activities that would better have been delegated and this detracted from managing the incident at times.

The SC regularly referred to the Tasmanian Marine Oil Pollution Contingency Plan for guidance during the incident. Some SC members were not as familiar with the plan as they should be. All members had the appropriate level of authority to make prompt decisions within their areas of jurisdiction. Relevant incident checklists were used by SC to underpin decisions, however the infrequent release of written SITREPS negatively impacted this process.

Key events were projected for all to see and allowed corrections and updates to be made easily. However key issues and actions required were noted but not recorded or displayed on a whiteboard which would have improved clarity and helped SC focus on priorities.

Recommendation 16:
That all members of the State Committee be inducted into the Tasmanian Marine Oil Pollution Contingency Plan.

Recommendation 17:
That additional administrative support is made available to the State Committee during an incident.

Appendix 1

REGISTER OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Equipment Deployment

Recommendation 1:
That TasPorts carry out pre-planning around potential spill scenarios under various weather conditions with a view to identifying preferred sites for deployment of boom within the Mersey River. That TasPorts then consider identifying fixed moorings and anchoring points at various locations along the river to assist with deployment.

Recommendation 2:
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Recommendation 3:
That TasPorts hold smaller-scale field exercises to refine field personnel skills by practising implementation of team structures, communications between shore and workboats and linkages with initial action plans.

Shoreline Assessment

Recommendation 4:
That training for personnel involved in Shoreline Assessment is reviewed by the Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment. Training needs to include a component on shoreline cleanup so that shoreline assessment data can more readily be translated into realistic recommendations for cleanup.

Recommendation 5:
That briefings for volunteers and other personnel not familiar with marine oil spill response are expanded to include information on OSRICS and the organisation of an oil spill response.

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Wildlife Response

Recommendation 7:
That boat or aerial surveillance involves an OWR member for the purpose of determining impacted wildlife, assisting in capture, identifying means of keeping wildlife away from oil/clean-up and recording potential wildlife under threat.

Recommendation 8:
That OWR is extended in future National Plan exercises to include the actual setup and operation of an oiled wildlife treatment centre and the development of strategies and procedures for keeping wildlife away from oil and clean-up operations.

Aviation

No recommendations.

OH&S

Recommendation 9:
That every activity has a pre-start briefing before the task is commenced. The briefing needs to step through what is going to be done; carry out a hazard analysis; distribute PPE and reinforce the importance of using it at all times; and talk through the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for response equipment.

Recommendation 10:
That skilled personnel who are competent in managing safety are allocated to field operations with representation in each area of activity.

Media

Recommendation 11:
That the MLO role is better integrated with the ICC Incident Management Team (IMT) and that the MLO carries full responsibility for media liaison. Allocate a dedicated "hotline" for media enquiries.

Recommendation 12:
That media contact becomes proactive during incidents. This is important for the purpose of control and management of public perception.

Incident Command Centre (ICC)

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State Committee (SC)

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Recommendation 17:
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Appendix 2

LIST OF ACRONYMS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE IN THE REPORT

National Plan	- National Plan to Combat Pollution of the Sea by Oil and Other Noxious and Hazardous Substances
AMSA	- Australian Maritime Safety Authority
DTAE	- Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment
AMOSC	- Australian Marine Oil Spill Centre
OH&S	- Occupation Health and Safety
OSRICS	- Oil Spill Response Incident Control System
EMT	- Exercise Management Team
MSDS	- Material Safety Data Sheet
ICC	- Incident Control Centre
POI	- Powers of Intervention
SCAT	- Shoreline Cleanup Assessment Team
SES	- State Emergency Services
GPS	- Global Positioning System
OWR	- Oiled Wildlife Response
PPE	- Personal Protective Equipment
SOP	- Standard Operating Procedure
IC	- Incident Controller
TMPC	- Tasmanian Marine Pollution Controller
MLO	- Media Liaison Officer
IAP	- Incident Action Plan
SITREPS	- Situation Reports
SC	- State Committee