



INTERNATIONAL  
OIL POLLUTION  
COMPENSATION  
FUND 1992

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
4th session  
Agenda item 4

92FUND/EXC.4/10  
8 October 1999  
Original: ENGLISH

## INCIDENTS INVOLVING THE 1992 FUND

LAURA D'AMATO

Note by the Director

<b>Summary:</b>	The <i>Laura d'Amato</i> spilled approximately 250 tonnes of crude oil into Sydney Harbour. Claims for pollution damage are not expected to exceed the shipowner's limit under the 1992 Civil Liability Convention.
<b>Action to be taken:</b>	Information to be noted.

### 1 The incident

1.1 On 3 August 1999 the Italian tanker *Laura d'Amato* (54 962 GRT) was discharging its cargo of Murban crude oil at an oil terminal on the northern shore of Sydney Harbour (Australia), when approximately 250 tonnes of oil escaped into the sea through an open sea valve.

1.2 The spill took place close to the central business district of Sydney, and the area includes the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House.

1.3 Murban crude is a light crude oil with high sulphur content and its pungent vapour caused widespread public nuisance soon after the spill, including the cancellation of a performance of the Sydney Opera.

1.4 The ship is entered in the Standard Steamship Owners' Protection and Indemnity Association (Bermuda) Ltd (Standard Club).

### 2 Clean-up operations

2.1 Clean-up operations were co-ordinated by the Sydney Port Corporation, the New South Wales Waterways Authority, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, the Victorian Marine Board and the National Response Team, including port staff from Newcastle, Kembla, and Brisbane.

2.2 Booms were deployed by the oil terminal staff and members of Sydney Port's Rapid Response Team. The Royal Australian Navy also assisted with booming. Although the terminal jetty and the ship were quickly surrounded by boom, not all the oil was contained and a wide area of the harbour was polluted, (the heaviest concentrations accumulating at natural collecting points against the shore and piers and jetties). The initial response concentrated on containment and recovery of floating oil. Attempts were made to disperse smaller accumulations of oil with sea water applied from fire monitors. Additional equipment was mobilised from Queensland State stockpiles and an oil industry stockpile in Victoria State.

2.3 One week after the incident, virtually all on-water recovery operations were completed.

2.4 Most shorelines were left to clean naturally. Some sensitive areas with protected shoreline fauna and a few high amenity areas were flushed with seawater from fire hoses to refloat the stranded oil so that it could be recovered using skimmers.

2.5 Oiled debris was disposed of in landfill sites after stabilisation with vermiculite. Liquid wastes were stored temporarily in a barge to allow separation of oil and water. The oil was then transferred to one of the *Laura d'Amato*'s slop tanks for eventual transfer to a shore reception facility.

### **3 Impact of the spill**

3.1 The hulls of over 500 yachts and a large number of commercial vessels were oiled to varying degrees. The Environmental Protection Authority allowed the cleaning of moderately oiled vessels on site but required heavily oiled vessels to be cleaned on slipways.

3.2 In addition to the Sydney Opera, the activities of a number of other public venues such as waterfront restaurants in the affected area were disrupted due to the pungent vapours produced by the oil during the first few hours of the spill.

3.3 A voluntary fishing ban was imposed by the New South Wales Fishing Association following the incident. The ban affected primarily the commercial fin-fish fishery.

### **4 Claims for compensation**

4.1 The Standard Club estimates that claims for clean-up costs and associated claims in respect of oiled vessels and for loss of income incurred by public venues will be in the region of US\$2.8 million (£1.8 million).

4.2 The limitation amount applicable to the *Laura d'Amato* is 24 million SDR (£29 million). It is highly unlikely, therefore, that the 1992 Fund will be called upon to pay any compensation as a result of this incident.

### **5 Action to be taken by the Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee is invited to take note of the information contained in this document.

---