

THE EFFECTS OF OIL AND
DISPERSED OIL ON THREE
TEMPERATE AUSTRALIAN
SEAGRASSES – SCALING OF
POLLUTION IMPACTS

Kim Wilson

2011

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in The
Department of Environmental Sciences at The
University of Technology, Sydney

Certificate of Authorship

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Acknowledgements

Firstly, thank you to my principle supervisor, Professor Peter Ralph. It was Peter's vision that led to this project being undertaken. The previous work of Peter, and Dr Cate Macinnis-ng, laid a lot of the groundwork for this research. Thank you also to Greg Skilbeck for the valuable review of the final draft.

Thank you to Lisa Crowle, my first point of contact with my industry partner, AMSA, for providing technical advice, pointing me to the right people for further assistance and for all your support. Whilst I thank all of the members of the National Plan Environmental Working Group and AMSA for providing assistance and advice throughout this project, Malcolm Turner, Trevor Gilbert and Shane Wilde are owed a special thank you. Two more 'National Plan' members, David Ball and Bruce Brady, from Victoria DPI provided a great deal of help with the Melbourne fieldwork, and also with technical advice throughout the project. A very big thank you to both of you, and to the staff at Victoria DPI at Queenscliffe.

I was very fortunate to have Toby Shanley as my field assistant for the majority of the fieldwork. Apart from advice on how to keep the equipment from floating away, Toby also provided inspiring conversations to help us get through those chilly (!!) afternoons at Kurnell and those fly-swarmed days in Victoria.

Greg Evans, Paul Fanos and Greg Delsanto from the Mechanical Workshop at UTS were so very helpful with the early field equipment issues. With my hand on my heart, I solemnly promise I will never bring the submersible bilge pumps back to you ever, ever again. Other members of UTS provided help throughout this project including the technical staff for assistance with ...everything - Gemma, Narrelle, Sue, Jordan, Peter and Bill Booth; Richard Lim and the Ecotoxicology Group for use of equipment and help with analytical techniques; statistical advice from Edward Liddums and Paul Gribbon; and Marea for media output.

Thank you to Neil Ralph for the logical and often creative improvements to the field equipment.

Thanks to current and former APG members Rachel, Ross, Isabel, Lucy, Alex, Kat, Martina, Lauren, Penny, Nik, Cliff, Karen, Tsao, John and Vinod; and to all other students and staff whom I've had the pleasure to work with during this time.

Special thank you to Emily and Sarah for their wonderful help in the field, all for the price of a few scallops....and a big thank you to the wonderful Bannatynes for your support, always.

Major thank you to my mum and to my family for being there for me. Also thanks to the late, but ever so great, Midge & Frank. Thank you John for everything - including putting up with me.

To the squalls, sunstroke, hypothermia, sea urchins, unseen marine creatures with big sharp teeth, flies, face-stinging jellyfish and ferociously territorial crabs, I say bye bye ...for now.

Abstract

The thesis is a comprehensive assessment of the effects of oil and dispersed oil on subtidal seagrass using a range of *in situ* and laboratory experiments on whole plants and seagrass leafblade sections. Apart from assessing the effects of oil and dispersed oil on seagrass between seasons, locations, and morphologically different species, the study determines whether laboratory results are indicative of those obtained *in situ* as an initial step in developing a rapid laboratory testing protocol for seagrass assessment. Petrochemical treatments, consisting of a range of concentrations of the water accommodated fraction (WAF) of oil alone (Tapis crude, IFO-380), dispersant alone (Corexit 9527, Ardox, Slickgone, Corexit 9500) and dispersed oil were exposed to whole plants, in both the laboratory and *in situ*, for ten hours followed by a four day recovery period, and for five hours in the leafblade experiments. Photosynthetic health was monitored by assessing the effective quantum yield of photosystem II ($\Delta F/F_m'$) and chlorophyll *a* pigment concentrations, whilst semi-quantitative methods of total petroleum hydrocarbon (TPH) concentration were used to determine the percent TPH remaining in the water column following the exposure period.

In most cases, the non-dispersed oils, Tapis crude oil and IFO-380, had less of an impact to both *Zostera capricorni* and *Halophila ovalis* than the dispersed oil treatments, whilst *Zostera muelleri* did not show any negative impact from either dispersed or non-dispersed Tapis crude oil. Winter *in situ* experiments found slightly greater reductions of $\Delta F/F_m'$ in *Z. capricorni* in most treatments compared with summer *in situ*, but generally there was minimal impact whilst *Z. muelleri* exhibited a stimulatory response to both non-dispersed and dispersed Tapis crude oil in Corio Bay, Victoria (summer *in situ* only). Laboratory whole plant experiments found *Z. capricorni* was for the most part less resilient to Tapis crude oil (non-dispersed and dispersed) treatments than *Halophila ovalis* whereas, with exposure to IFO-380 (non-dispersed and dispersed) *H. ovalis* was less resilient than *Z. capricorni*. Quite severe, and, or prolonged, photosynthetic stress was evident in both *Z. capricorni* and *H. ovalis* when exposed to most of the dispersant alone treatments (Corexit 9527, Ardox and Corexit

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List of Abbreviations

AMSA	Australian Maritime Safety Authority
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
API	American Petroleum Industry
bbl	barrel
BTEX	benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylene
Chl <i>a</i>	Chlorophyll <i>a</i>
cSt	centistoke
$\Delta F/F_m'$	Effective quantum yield of photosystem II
EWG	Environmental Working Group
GC-MS	Gas Chromatography –Mass Spectrometry
HPLC	High Performance Liquid Chromatography
mg L ⁻¹	milligrams per Litre
NEBA	Net Environmental Benefit Analysis
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association...
OSC	Oil Spill Coordinator
PAH	Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbon
PAM	Pulse Amplitude Modulation
ppm	parts per million
ppt	parts per thousand
PSI	Photosystem I
PSII	Photosystem II
psu	percent salinity unit
rmANOVA	repeated measures Analysis of Variance
TPH	Total Petroleum Hydrocarbons
UV	Ultra-Violet
UVF	Ultra-Violet Fluorescence
WAF	Water Accommodated Fraction
WSF	Water Soluble Fraction
µg L ⁻¹	micrograms per Litre