

Media release

March 14, 2017

VRCA welcomes GrainCorp's fleet of new records at Geelong's port

Victorian Regional Channels Authority's Michael Harvey has applauded a record-breaking month by GrainCorp at Geelong's port, with Australia's bumper harvest and the introduction of cutting-edge marine technology helping drive exports and ship cargoes to new highs.

Ships carrying the largest tonnages ever of canola, wheat and barley to be fully loaded in Geelong left records in their wake in February, and the bulk grain handler reaped its highest month ever of grain exports at the busy shipping hub.

Mr Harvey, Chief Executive Officer at the VRCA, welcomed GrainCorp's results and said Dynamic Under Keel Clearance (DUKC) technology had played a key role in helping achieve the Geelong-based records.

Mr Harvey said the authority introduced the sophisticated monitoring system in 2016 to allow ships to safely load to their maximum capacity with pin-point accuracy and help hone the port's competitive edge.

"It's all about allowing ships to carry larger cargoes to and from Geelong's port and that's just what GrainCorp has achieved with its fleet of records in February," he said.

"It's a great start to the year for GrainCorp and the port in general."

GrainCorp's Victorian Ports Manager Craig Cochrane said the DUKC technology recently introduced by the VRCA could not have come at a better time.

"Victoria has experienced a record harvest, more than three times bigger than last year and we are seeing strong international demand for Victorian grain," Mr Cochrane said.

"The DUKC technology has enabled us to load larger ships which improves the global competitiveness of Victorian grain as well as our operational efficiency. We expect to load a further 15 – 20 vessels in Geelong over the next two months subject to demand.

"It has been great working with the VRCA and we have had very positive feedback from our international customers on the technology."

GrainCorp's February fall of records for its Geelong operations:

- Its biggest single shipment of canola fully loaded in Geelong, with the Nord Pollux sailing with more than 61,900 tonnes;

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- Its biggest single shipment of wheat fully loaded in Geelong, with the Tomahawk departing carrying almost 61,800 tonnes;
- Its largest shipment of barley fully loaded in Geelong, with the Twinkle Island sailing with about 62,500 tonnes of the grain;
- Exporting the most grain ever in a month, more than 393,560 tonnes;
- And recording the largest month of exports – grain and woodchips – with total shipments topping 412,750 tonnes.

The VRCA introduced the DUKC technology in Corio Bay's shipping lanes early last year as part of its ongoing commitment to boost productivity and efficiency in the port. Since then the maximum allowable draught has increased from 11.6 metres to 11.9 metres. The system uses complex algorithms that draw on information including tides, vessel dynamics and channel dimensions to determine maximum draughts at which ships can safely carry cargo into and out of the port.

Mr Harvey, who started with the VRCA last month, said the authority aimed to increase the maximum allowable draught to 12 metres in Geelong in the coming months after extensive verification measurements were successfully completed. The increase would pave the way for further increases in cargo volume.

“Geelong is Victoria's biggest and most important bulk port and it's vital it stays competitive and prosperous now and in the future,” he said.

“DUKC technology can play a strong part in helping achieve those goals. And, as we face a future of bigger ships to achieve economies of scale, DUKC will be more important than ever for vessels to load to their maximum draught without compromising on safety.”

For more information, please contact VRCA Chief Executive Officer Michael Harvey on 5225 3500.