

Keel system now in Europe

Melbourne firm also hoping to attract customers through E-Maritime research project, reports ROB McKAY

AUSTRALIAN underwater clearance specialist OMC International is hoping to develop its position in the European market with a demonstration of its services in Portugal this week.

The creation of a UK-based satellite office is also a mark of confidence for the Melbourne-based company following contracts signed for its Dynamic Under Keel Clearance software system with the Port of Lisbon in Portugal last year and the Federal Waterways Administration in Germany for installation in four ports on the Weser River this year.

"Other interested ports and waterway authorities are awaiting the operational advantages of sailing under DUKC advice for the Weser River ports when the system becomes operational in mid-

December this year," the company said. Before then, OMC hopes to impress the market as part of the European Commission's four-year Maritime Navigation and Information Services research project, now nearing completion.

Live demonstration

As part of the E-Maritime initiative, MarNIS was aimed at harmonising maritime telecommunication and navigation under EU Framework Program Six and, as the only non-European firm involved, OMC had to set up a European subsidiary for the purpose.

A key component is a new portable pilotage unit, in which the underwater clearance software has been incorporated.

This week an official live demonstration will take place of the portable unit on a ship in the port of Lisbon, where it is already operational.

The firm said DUKC was in 19 ports worldwide - 11 in Australia, three in New Zealand and five in Europe.

"There was no doubt that, with our growing workload in Europe, we needed to establish a permanent base," managing director Peter O'Brien said.

The new office at Howbery, headquarters of hydraulics research institute HR Wallingford, will be headed by Anglo-New Zealand pilotage expert Captain Jonathon Pearce, supported initially by an engineer who is currently in Bremerhaven.

"I see a huge potential in Europe for DUKC," Capt Pearce said.

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