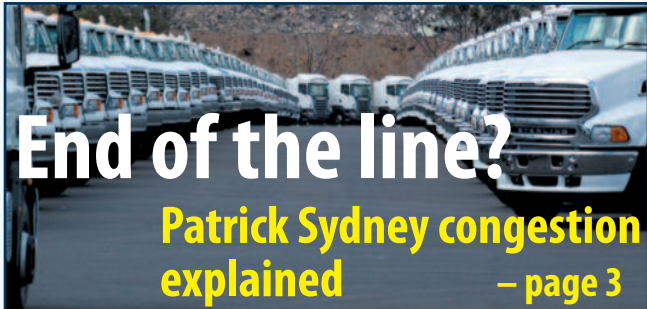


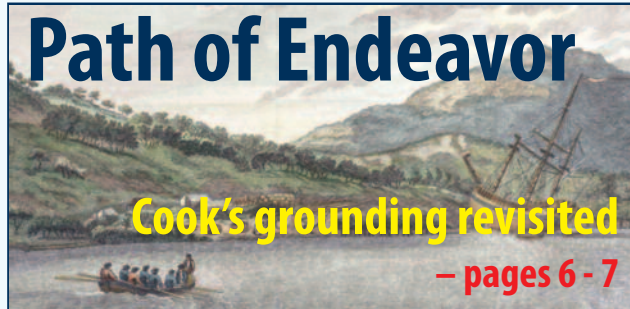
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ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY:
Draught of change to come with under-keel clearance management contract.

OMC set for Torres Strait draught system win

Rob McKay

OMC INTERNATIONAL has been chosen as the preferred supplier for a provisional under-keel clearance management (UKCM) system for the Torres Strait.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) decision comes 14 months after *The Delivery of Coastal Pilotage Services in the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait* review panel report recommended a single UKCM system be used by pilotage providers and coastal pilots to enhance the safety and efficiency of transiting deep draught vessels through the region.

AMSA, which sought public tenders six months ago, expects the system to validate the existing safety margin for deep draught vessels and evaluate the appropriateness of the current draught regime.

"This will further benefit the Australian community and industry and help protect the sensitive marine environment of the Torres Strait," the regulator said.

"This is the first time a UKCM system will be implemented in a complex coastal environment in Australia."

AMSA said that once a contract was signed, the system would be implemented immediately, hoping to have it operational late this year.

A spokeswoman for Melbourne's OMC said the company would comment once the deal was signed.

The news came as icing on a 2009 cake that saw OMC win the *Lloyd's List DCN* 2009 Maritime Services Award, accepted by founder and executive director Dr Kerry O'Brien, for its Dynamic Under Keel Clearance (DUKC) system that is now in use in 14 major Australian ports as well as gaining acceptance by overseas ports and channel authorities.

Additionally, OMC won a contract with the Port of Melbourne Authority in May. The current maximum draught and under

keel clearance (UKC) limitations in the Torres Strait is 12.2 metres.

AMSA secured a report on the issue from consultancy Thompson Clarke Shipping in 2007.

Thompson Clarke had advised that, despite various overseas UKC and pilotage support systems being examined, it was evident that Australia led the field in the development of dedicated UKC systems.

These were the DUKC and that provided by Voyage Management systems (VMS), a subsidiary of Torres Industries the parent company of Australian Reef Pilots based in Brisbane.

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