



MEDIA RELEASE

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OMC launches two new products to help maximise port capacity at Port Hedland

OMC International will deliver two new products to Port Hedland as part of an exciting new 5-year 'Platinum Package' agreement to help maximise port capacity at the world's largest bulk export port, OMC's Executive Director Dr Terry O'Brien OAM announced today.

Under this agreement, Port Hedland Port Authority (PHPA) will upgrade to the latest web-based DUKC[®] Series 5 software navigation technology and be OMC's first client to have these new products, Optimiser and DUKC[®] Chart Overlay, integrated into their DUKC[®] Series 5 system. Roll-out will begin in 2013. The initial DUKC[®] Series 5 system was commissioned as operational in 2011 by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) to ensure shipping safety in Torres Strait.

"This five-year contract will equip Port Hedland with new innovative tools to optimise the number of ships sailing on a tide," said Dr O'Brien, who pioneered DUKC[®] in 1993. "The port authority needs to manage increasing volumes through Port Hedland's inner harbour, further exacerbated by the recent postponement of the Port Hedland Outer Harbour development by BHP Billiton, and these new technological developments will optimise the capacity of their existing channel.

"The growth of our Western Australian iron ore ports and our east coast coal ports will put increasing pressure on the shipping regulators to use tides more efficiently as cargo volumes ramp up.

"There is also great potential for these new DUKC[®] applications to bring significant benefits to not only other Australian ports, such as Dampier and Hay Point, but also to ports overseas such as the major bulk ports in Brazil."

Optimiser allows scheduling of multiple ships on the one tide, subject to priorities, under keel clearance (UKC) constraints and tug and pilot availability, to safely maximise total tide tonnage. It will give ship operators greater flexibility in the timing of port visits and also reduce the workload for schedulers.

The development of Optimiser follows an approach from PHPA in late 2009. Since then, OMC has been working with PHPA on ways to optimise the sailing draughts and times of multiple vessels on each tide. This year, on June 18, six ships leaving Port Hedland set a new port loading record when they carried a combined total cargo of more than a million tonnes of iron ore on the one tide.

"Under this new licence agreement, Optimiser will be further developed to include inbound shipping, as well as departing ships. It will help PHPA to manage the whole marine logistics task to maximise port capacity," Dr O'Brien said.

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DUKC[®] Chart Overlay increases pilot safety by forecasting and showing very clear “go” or “no go” areas within a pilot’s electronic charting package on their laptops taken onboard.

“This is a world-first where “go” or “no go” areas for pilots have been based on dynamic under keel clearance (UKC) calculations and predictions,” Dr O’Brien said.

Last week a team of Melbourne-based OMC engineers and software developers, led by OMC’s Chief Executive Officer Peter O’Brien, flew into Port Hedland to start work on delivery of the Platinum Package. Other tasks include using the upgraded DUKC[®] Series 5 system to help the port authority optimise the annual maintenance dredging requirements for the Inner Harbour, targeting critical UKC spots.

DUKC[®] systems are in some of the largest bulk, container and multi-cargo ports in the world, including the Pilbara iron ore ports in Western Australia. Beneficiaries include BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto. This technology, which was first installed in Queensland’s Hay Point coal terminal in 1993, was introduced to WA (Fremantle Port) in 1994, with strong support from Fremantle’s Captain Eric Atkinson, Australia’s longest serving Harbour Master and now President of the International Harbour Masters Association (IHMA). BHP commissioned a DUKC system at Port Hedland in 1995, and other customised systems were installed at Rio Tinto’s Dampier Port in 1995 and, more recently, in Rio’s Cape Lambert port in 2010. Other WA ports with DUKC[®] systems are Bunbury (1996) and Geraldton (1999).

“DUKC[®] is also in ports and waterways around the world, providing economic benefits totalling more than \$10 billion to the users of these systems at a fraction of the cost and implementation time required for comparable dredging projects,” Dr O’Brien said. “In some cases, at certain stages of the tide, our systems can provide large ships with up to an additional 1 metre of draught. This means a typical container ship can safely load about an extra 600 boxes and a typical bulk carrier can carry more than an extra 10,000 tonnes. DUKC[®] technology is so accurate that, under extreme weather conditions, a 250,000 tonne carrier could negotiate a channel within a metre’s clearance to the seabed.”

Today’s announcement of Port Hedland’s five-year ‘platinum package’ agreement, which features new products Optimiser and DUKC[®] Chart Overlay, comes just three months after OMC launched its new ship motion measurement tool OMC iHeave.

Last Monday night, at an awards ceremony dinner in Hamburg, OMC iHeave won the prestigious 2012 International Bulk Journal Awards ‘Innovative Technology’ (Marine) category.

* In June 2010, in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List, OMC Founder and Executive Director Dr Terry O’Brien, who is a Melbourne engineer and former academic, was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for services to the maritime transport industry.

Interviews and photos can be provided on request.

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