

Geelong to install Dynamic Under Keel Clearance

Port to accept visiting ships at full capacity, and larger vessels too

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Photo: Jim Wilson and Hema Maps

Installation of OMC's International Dynamic Under Keel Clearance (DUKC) system will soon allow larger vessels to enter the port at Geelong.

And vessels that already visit will be able to carry additional cargo into the port.

Captain Peter McGovern of the Victorian Regional Channels Authority (VRCA) said in the right circumstances, ships may be allowed up to 12-metres draught and that means a cargo uplift of 1350 to 3000 tonnes per vessel.

DUKC is a computer algorithm that assesses real-time conditions to advise whether a channel can cater for each ship's draft, as well as the depth of water needed to float a ship at a given time.

Information about the tides and weather is fed into the system, which calculates the available under keel clearance and advises pilots to adjust speed accordingly.

Captain McGovern told Lloyd's List Australia that the system should be operational within two to three months.

"This includes implementing the hardware, training for people to operate the system, and checking that everything works," Capt. McGovern said.

"We signed the contract [last] week and now the whole thing is gathering momentum."

Capt. McGovern said that, as a bulk port, Geelong will benefit from technology that allows pilots to gauge with pinpoint accuracy the maximum draught at which ships can operate within the port of Geelong.

"DUKC will mean companies can fill a bulk carrier to maximum draught and still safely navigate the Geelong channel," Capt. McGovern said.

Shell licensee and operator of Geelong Refinery, Viva Energy, has welcomed the announcement, saying DUKC will help the company operate sustainably.

Viva general manager of refining Thys Heyns said vessels visiting Geelong last year, particularly those carrying fluids, did not bring in maximum cargo.

"For Viva Energy, each additional 10cm in vessel draught will result in saving of over \$1m per annum," Mr Heyns said.

"Full ships are a far better use of resources and Geelong port will become a more desirable destination for importers," he said.

Installation of the DUKC system will not require any changes to the dimensions of the access channel and will, in fact, render unnecessary some capital dredging.

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