

VRCA welcomes GrainCorp records at Geelong

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VICTORIAN Regional Channels Authority chief executive Michael Harvey has applauded a record-breaking month by grain handlers GrainCorp at Geelong.

A large harvest and the introduction of leading marine technology have been attributed as helping drive exports and ship cargoes.

Ships carrying the largest tonnages of canola, wheat and barley to be fully loaded in Geelong eclipsed previous February records, with the bulk grain handler reaped its highest recorded month of grain exports at the Port.

Mr Harvey said Dynamic Under Keel Clearance (DUKC) technology had played a key role, after the VRCA introduced it last year.

This allowed ships to safely load to maximum capacity and helped strengthen Geelong's position in a competitive market.

"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," Mr Harvey said.

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

GrainCorp's port manager for Victoria Craig Cochrane said DUKC technology came at a great 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," he said.

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

GrainCorp February records for Geelong:

- Largest single shipment of canola fully loaded in Geelong, with the Nord Pollux sailing with more than **61,900 tonnes**;
- Largest single shipment of wheat fully loaded in Geelong, with the Tomahawk departing carrying almost **61,800 tonnes**;
- Largest shipment of barley fully loaded in Geelong, with the Twinkle Island sailing with **62,500 tonnes** of the grain;
- Exporting the most grain in a month, more than **393,560 tonnes**;
- Recording the largest month of exports – grain and woodchips – **with total shipments exceeding 412,750 tonnes**.

The VRCA introduced the DUKC technology in Corio Bay's shipping lanes last year as part of an effort to boost both productivity and port efficiency.

Since that time, allowable draught has risen from 11.6 metres to 11.9 metres.

The system uses "complex algorithms", according to the VRCA, using information such as 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 in February, said the Authority aimed to increase the maximum allowable draught in Geelong to 12 metres in coming months after extensive verification measurements were successfully completed.

"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."

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