

PORTO



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The Otago Lower Harbour channel has reached 14m chart datum (pending), allowing Port Otago to accommodate vessels up to 9000 TEU.

Lower Harbour channel reaches 14m

Port Otago reaches a significant milestone this month, with the Lower Harbour channel depth pending 14m chart datum.

Chief Executive Kevin Winders says 14m allows Port Otago to accommodate larger vessels of the future – up to 9000 TEU in the medium term.

The new chart datum is one of the three key infrastructure elements required to be “big ship capable”. The arrival of \$15m Tug Ōtepoti in February provided the second 70t bollard pull tug

required to manoeuvre large vessels in the Port Chalmers Container Terminal basin. And, in conjunction with Napier Port, a new \$36m trailing suction hopper dredge will be delivered later this year. (See story page 5.)

Kevin: “This will strengthen our overall capital dredging programme, while also providing us with in-house capability to clear the harbour entrance and/or channel quickly in response to extreme weather events.”

A separate but related investment

is the Aramoana mole strengthening project. The 1.3km mole defence is integral to keeping the harbour navigation channel open and correctly aligned. It works in conjunction with other groynes and seawalls to direct tidal flow in and out of the harbour, preventing the build-up of sediment that plagued the entrance in shipping’s early years. Work is scheduled to begin later this year and will take up to five years to complete.



Development of Dunedin Bulk Port

The Otago/Southland “wall of wood” will begin coming through Port Otago within two years – and we are ready.

Port Otago Chief Executive Kevin Winders says the port foresaw the significant lift in export log volumes back in 2018 and has been readying its infrastructure for the past eight years.

Export log activity at Port Chalmers’ Beach Street Wharf will remain in place for another five years, while the Leith Wharf at Dunedin Bulk Port will be expanded. In the meantime, log and cruise vessels will continue to compete for use of the Beach Street Wharf during the October-to-April cruise season.

Over the next two years, two new log customers will begin exporting

through Port Otago, further lifting forecasted volumes and throughput.

Kevin says that, in preparation for logs to be stored and exported from Dunedin Bulk Port, there has been significant work both harbour- and landside.

“Simulations at the high-tech FORCE Simulator in Singapore identified exactly what was required harbourside to remove restrictions on movements in and out of the bulk port. As a result, the Upper Harbour channel is at 8.5m and has been widened. The Leith Wharf turning basin was also widened and deepened – to 10m. We have deepened the T/U Wharf basin to 8.5m, so it can be used as a back-up wharf if we need to bring in a log vessel while

there’s an oil tanker on the Oil Wharf.”

Landside, Waste Management on Wickliffe Street is moving and will re-open at a new site at 58-66 Sturdee Street later this year. For the past 20-plus years, Waste Management has leased 1.9 hectares of Port Otago-owned land. The transfer to Sturdee Street, which is also a port-owned site (previously leased by Move Logistics), is strategic, as the new site lies on the periphery of the future gated port area.

This reshuffle allows Port Otago to extend the log yard in town from four hectares to six hectares by the end of this year, in readiness for future Douglas fir volumes from both existing and new customers.



Dunedin Bulk Port.

Southern Link passes major milestone

Our Southern Link inland port passed a major milestone last month, when the Government’s Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) confirmed the project’s Fast-track application

met its completeness test. It will now progress to the next stage – appointment of a review panel – with a final decision expected late October.





Maritime training with police

Earlier this year, we hosted a three-day maritime training session with Dunedin Police and members of the Wellington Police Maritime Team. The day was a low-pressure opportunity for police staff to familiarise themselves with how they might respond to water-based incidents.

Our Port Security Manager Kerri McIvor says the programme combined classroom learning with practical, on-water experience across Port Otago's fleet. "There were sessions on maritime legislation, Harbourmaster powers,

vessel capabilities and operational safety, before police put these foundations into practice on the water."

In total, 25 police staff rotated across *Arihi*, *Taiaroa*, *Potiki*, *Mātai Awa* and the Harbourmaster's vessel *Āwhina*, participating in vessel familiarisation, safety scenarios, ship-to-shore manoeuvres, ladder climbs and man overboard drills. Feedback was universally positive, with police appreciating the opportunity to apply the theory out on the water.



A three-day training session at Port Chalmers provided police with an opportunity to apply classroom learning out on the water.



MSC launches new Southern Loop service

MSC has introduced a new Southern Loop service for New Zealand customers, replacing the discontinued Wallaby service.

Southern Loop vessels will call at Melbourne before heading south to South Port, then travel up the coast

to Port Chalmers, continuing north along the east coast before returning to Melbourne where cargo is transhipped onward to Asia.

Port Otago GM Customer Craig Usher says the change is expected to improve service reliability by removing some of

the more operationally challenging ports from the network.

"Strategically, the new service sees MSC choosing to transship through Melbourne, which provides strong capacity options for delivering cargo to Asia."



Iwi bless Tug Ōtepoti

Local iwi led by Te Rūnaka o Ōtākou Upoko Edward Ellison blessed the Tug Ōtepoti and welcomed her into the harbour, during a wet but heart-warming ceremony in March.

The early morning occasion included iwi representatives, Otago Regional Councillors and Port Otago Board, Leadership and Marine team members.

Our GM Marine and Infrastructure Grant Bicknell says iwi blessings of vessels are particularly special. "It's about belonging — connecting our team to this harbour, to the traditions of those who have called these waters home for centuries, and to the forces that watch over all who go to sea."

The ceremony included the gifting of a taoka, an artwork by local artist Dana Te Kanawa featuring a traditional food-gathering basket holding cockles.

Grant says the taoka acknowledges the name – Ōtepoti – that was gifted from Te Rūnaka o Ōtākou. "The taoka has been placed in the heart of the vessel – the mess room, the space that belongs to the crew – because, at the heart of any ship are its people. Placing the taoka there creates a

living connection between the crew, the vessel, and the spiritual guardianship it carries. The crew do not simply work aboard this vessel; they are part of it and the taoka honours that bond."



While it was a grey morning for the blessing of Tug Ōtepoti, the weather did not detract from the significance of the occasion.



Mouth guards for the win

In partnership with Otago Rugby, Port Otago is supplying 3500 mouth guards to the region's junior rugby players this year and again next year. That will make for some happy parents, who understandably have a fondness for their children's teeth. When approached by Otago Rugby, we thought the mouth guard sponsorship was an excellent safety initiative and particularly liked that it benefited young people getting out and enjoying their sport. Thanks (from left) Eliano, Sophie and Jack from our local Harbour Hawks rugby club for being such super mouth guard models.



Customer profile: Ernslaw One

Ernslaw One is a New Zealand forestry company and log exporter, supplying international markets from sustainably-managed Douglas fir and Radiata pine forests. Operating across both the North and South Islands, Ernslaw One exports predominantly to China, working with sawmills, wholesale traders and panel mills. Port Otago is a key logistics partner, supporting regular handy-sized shipments from the South Island.

Q: What is your customer looking for in your product?

A: Consistency and reliability in both quality and supply. Douglas fir is typically used in higher-strength structural and engineered applications, while Radiata pine is used across concrete framework, furniture, packaging and plywood. Logs need to meet specifications and perform predictably across processing and manufacturing facilities, enabling customers to plan production with confidence.

Q: What do they value about your products, ahead of the competition?

A: Quality and reliability. Ernslaw One focuses on supplying a premium product, meeting clear specifications that support a range of end uses.

Customers value a supplier that can deliver to specification and maintain continuity, even in changing market conditions. Ernslaw One has a strong name in the market, with long-term

customer relationships that reflect trust, reliability and a consistent approach to doing business.

Q: Your plans for the next 12 months?

A: Ernslaw One expects to maintain strong and stable export volumes over the next 12 months, while navigating ongoing market uncertainty driven by changing demand and geopolitical pressures. The focus will be on maintaining safe, sustainable, efficient operations and continuing to improve shipping patterns through stronger collaborations.

Q: How long have you been working with Port Otago?

A: More than a decade.

Q: Which port services do you use?

A: A range, including log yard storage, marine services and wharf operations supported out of the Dunedin Bulk Port.

Q: What do you care about when it comes to service from the port?

A: Cost competitiveness, safety and clear communication. From an operational perspective, weather resilience, sufficient log storage capacity, port draft and reliable berth windows are all critical to ensuring vessels load efficiently and export shipments remain on schedule.

Q: What has been your experience of Port Otago?

A: Positive and collaborative. The team has a strong understanding of log export



Ernslaw One has been exporting logs through Port Otago for the past 10-plus years and values the port's operational capability, experienced workforce and reliable export shipments.

operations and works closely with us to support safe, efficient vessel loading and consistent performance.

Q: What do you believe are the strengths of Port Otago?

A: Operational capability, experienced workforce and ability to support log export volumes in a diversified commodity port. Infrastructure, marine access, and open communication are key factors that enable reliable export shipments.

Q: Any other comments?

A: Port Otago is an important partner in our South Island supply chain. The strength of the relationship and the willingness to work together to find solutions add real value to our operations.



Dredge on track for December

Port Otago and Napier Port's new \$36m trailing suction hopper dredge (TSHD-1000) is on target to arrive in New Zealand by the end of this year.

Last month, Port Otago's GM Marine and Infrastructure Grant Bicknell and Marine Maintenance Manager Clinton D'Souza, along with Napier Port Marine Manager Robbie Jensen, travelled to Hai Phong in Vietnam to ship builder Damen's 189 Shipyard to inspect progress on the 59.7m-long, 12.2m beam dredge.

Grant: "Walking the length of the vessel, it quickly becomes apparent just how substantial she is going to be."

He says the standard of build is high. "Significant care and expertise is going into bringing this vessel to completion. Throughout the ship, the outfitting work is progressing well with the engine rooms — both aft and forward — well advanced. The hull is structurally complete, all major modules have been installed, and the main machinery is in place. At the time of our visit, the wheelhouse was having its

cabling and pipework installed."

The dredge's sea trial is scheduled for mid-September. Napier and Otago ports take delivery on 23 October in Vietnam. It will then be a 32 to 38 day voyage south, with an estimated mid-December arrival into Port Chalmers.



Photo essay:

Cruise wrap

The season's first vessel berthed on 26 October, with a total of 74 vessels hosted over the season: 62 at Port Chalmers and 12 at Dunedin town wharves, including two superyachts. There were six maiden vessels, including a residential apartment ship. In total, 110,000 passengers and 47,000 crew came across our wharves.

Regional value

The New Zealand Cruise Association's 2024/25 economic impact study quantified the cruise sector's value to Otago at \$129m, as well as supporting 893 jobs. Retail, food and drinks, and onshore excursion experiences account for the bulk of the spend.

Port Otago Cruise Manager Carolyn Bennett says the \$129m figure is well down on the 2023/24 figure of \$187m. "This is a direct reflection of the 2023/24 season totalling 118 vessels, compared to only 91 in 2024/25."

Looking ahead

We have 85 bookings for the 2026/27



Discovery Princess departing Otago Harbour for the last time this season (24 February 2026). Photo courtesy Andrew Taylor

season – up 8% on the 79 booked for 2025/26.

Carolyn: "While we're a long way off our peak season – 118 vessels in 2023/24 – it's a solid start. New Zealand has addressed two of the three factors limiting cruise growth in recent years. The threat of a cruise ship ban in Fiordland has been lifted, and there is

now a niche biofouling cleaning option at Port of Auckland. That leaves only the final factor, which is addressing the high cost of government levies that cruise lines absorb if they include New Zealand on their schedule. As a sector, we'll continue working alongside our government to rebuild New Zealand's brand as a cruise-friendly nation."

Popularity of cruise continues to grow

Two of our team were in Miami during April for the 2026 Seatrade Cruise Global trade show. The four-day expo is the international cruise sector's annual opportunity to connect, pick up on emerging trends, and gather future insights from industry leaders. It attracted people from more than 125 countries – 11,500 attendees, 650 exhibitors and 80 cruise line brands.

Our GM Customer Craig Usher and Cruise Manager Carolyn Bennett were part of the consolidated New Zealand stand, showcasing our country as a cruise destination. The stand's representatives included Minister Louise Upston, the New Zealand Cruise Association, other New Zealand ports, Tourism New Zealand and Air New Zealand. Craig and Carolyn were buoyed by what they saw and heard. We asked them for some insights.



Q: What was the general feeling re the health of the cruise sector, internationally?

A: The sector continues to grow in almost all regions of the world, with every cruise line having an order book of new-build vessels.

Q: What were cruise lines saying about New Zealand in terms of future schedules?

A: They were pleased that we've listened and progressed a number of

challenges – specifically, lifting the threat of a cruise ship ban in Fiordland, and the on-shore niche biofouling cleaning option. Cruise lines are looking forward to bringing more vessels to New Zealand in the future, however they need to increase the number of passengers from Oceania and are also targeting the US.

Q: Any other insights?

A: The two key topics of discussion were geopolitical challenges and the price and access to fuel. The fuel scenario changes the voyage profile, because speeding up a vessel is now double the cost. There were continued talks on new fuel sources, including the option of nuclear creating fuel for low carbon sailing.

Video: A 3-minute video showcasing Otago as a cruise destination was compiled for the Miami event. Watch at portotago.co.nz/cruise-ships



On-board familiarisation for brigade

During this past cruise season, we welcomed two residential vessels into Port Chalmers. The Port Chalmers Volunteer Fire Brigade asked if the brigade could visit one of these vessels while in port, to familiarise themselves with the firefighting facilities on board. Port Chalmers Brigade Chief Fire Officer Stephen Hill explains: "Any emergency that happens while vessels are in port is likely to require assistance from shore-based emergency services, so familiarisation with visiting ships is important, in case we are ever required to assist." The *Villa Vie Odyssey* was happy to facilitate this visit, so a group of volunteer brigade members headed on board during her March visit. Stephen says the visit was thorough and very worthwhile. An excellent proactive exercise that benefits all parties.



Stakeholder tours showcase cruise

During the season, we invited key stakeholders on tours and Q&A sessions on board cruise vessels. Across three tours, we hosted 24 people, including new regional and city councillors, cruise action group members and cruise partners. The purpose of the visits was to show firsthand why Otago – our port and our region – is known for delivering a quality experience for cruise passengers and cruise lines. The visits included Q&A sessions with senior managers from Port, so attendees could ask all and any questions they've ever had about "cruise".



First Crew Cares Day hosted

Together with Royal Caribbean Cruise Line, we organised the first "Crew Cares Day" in Australasia. Twenty crew members from the *Anthem of the Seas* - Royal Caribbean 19 February call to Port Chalmers spent the day at Orokonui Ecosanctuary - Te Korowai o Mihiwaka. They planted more than 110 trees, toured the sanctuary and enjoyed some Kiwi hospitality over lunch. We now have 20 crew ambassadors on board the Royal Caribbean vessels, raving about Ōtepoti and Orokonui.





Team Q&A: New cargo handler



Danielle Hansen



Danielle Hansen joined our Operations team as a cargo handler earlier this year. While it was the salary package that initially caught her eye, she realised that her skills would align well with the role's requirements. The more Danielle saw and learned during the application process, the more she found that Port Otago was a place she would like to work and a team she'd like to be a part of.

What did you do before you came to Port Otago?

I was working for Vulcan Steel in Mosgiel, specifically in the store where I was operating the gantry crane to move steel plates, and loading trucks to send out products. Prior to Vulcan, I was a 2IC at the Wellington New World supermarket.

What attracted you to Port?

I'd be lying if I said the salary and benefits package wasn't impressive and motivated me to apply. Once I started moving through the application process, I realised there was a lot more to the role

than I initially thought. There were many parts to the process, which helped paint a clear picture of what was involved.

It started with a phone screening when any questions I had were answered. I then came on site for a three-part process: a Dover* assessment, followed by a terminal assessment, concluding with an interview. The terminal assessment was my favourite part, getting to climb the straddle ladder for the first time and seeing the port from up high was really memorable. While the process was long, it pays off because you get to experience a lot before you even start.

I'm really glad I got this job. I wasn't sure what my chances were, given I had no prior port experience, but my machinery operation history helped me get ahead. There is also a drive to get more females into the industry, which is really awesome to see and be a part of.

What does your role involve?

Depending on what rotation/shift you're on, you either spend your time in the

yard, lashing, or operating the straddles. I've just been signed off to drive the straddles on my own, which feels great and like I'm progressing well.

What skills and attributes do you need for the job?

You need a "can do" attitude, especially on the days that are a bit slower, when there are no vessels and you have to want to keep yourself busy. Quick thinking and decision making skills with good reflexes help, as well as being cautious and having health and safety awareness, plus attention to detail.

A bit of flexibility when it comes to the rostering^ is also necessary. It wouldn't be the best fit for somebody who has a lot of commitments outside of work.

* Computer-based psychomotor assessment tool.

^ Each Friday, the cargo handlers receive an indicative weekly roster that includes: confirmed shifts for Saturday, Sunday and Monday; and indicative shifts (confirmed the day prior) for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. They have one guaranteed day off that cannot be changed.

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