

Media release

Deepest container ship to sail from Port Chalmers

The departure of Maersk's Southern Star service vessel, *Laust Maersk*, today (Monday 29 February) will be an especially significant one; at 13.5 metres draft it will be the deepest container vessel to sail from New Zealand waters since the first container ships started arriving in Port Chalmers 35 years ago.

The sailing comes only a few weeks after Port Otago completed the first stage of its *Next Generation* harbour deepening programme, to 13.5 metres, allowing large container ships like the *Laust Maersk* to make full use of the extra channel depth to carry more cargo.

Thirteen and a half metres will be the deepest draft that any container ship has ever sailed from a New Zealand port and it continues Port Chalmers' unique record of shipping firsts, dating back to 1882 with the first shipment of frozen meat to Europe.

Port Chalmers is already the deepest container port in New Zealand and there have been several sailings of vessels at 13 metres over the last two years.

"The fact that a shipping line is able to make use of the extra channel depth so quickly shows there is demand for ships to sail deeper from Port Chalmers as the last port on their New Zealand rotation", said Geoff Plunket, Port Otago Chief Executive.

"Our new channel depth gives container lines the flexibility to add more cargo and improve their efficiency as they call down the coast because they can arrive deeper at Port Chalmers and then sail deeper too," he added.

"This is a significant development as it allows for the larger size vessels Maersk Line currently deploys in the New Zealand market to be fully utilised. It's only when our vessels are filled to capacity that we can start to create efficiencies across the entire supply chain," said Gerard Morrison, managing director of Maersk Line New Zealand.

Port Otago's channel deepening is part of a suite of projects designed to prepare the port for the next generation of bigger ships on the New Zealand coast. It includes deepening the shipping channel to 14 metres, berth sheet-piling, construction of two new warehouses adding an additional 12,800m² to capacity and the purchase of a new tug and split-hopper barge.

These projects have a total cost of about \$30 million.

- Ends -

For further information go to: www.nextgenerationportotago.nz

Media enquiries to Geoff Plunket, 021 229 8886