

Coop bulker a bold move

CBH leases new bulker in new phase of its joint venture with Hudson, writes NICOLE HOLYER, Brisbane

WESTERN Australian grain cooperative CBH has secured a 22-26-month time lease on a new bulk carrier through its two-year-old shipping venture, United Bulk Carriers (UBC).

The group marked its entry into the trade by inviting a 20-strong contingent of visitors to witness a traditional naming ceremony and launch of the African Kookaburra at the Tamano yard of builder Mitsui Engineering and Shipbuilding yard in Okayama, Japan, on Saturday.

UBC chairman Ken Palmer said the company was committed to becoming a pre-eminent player in the international bulk freight business.

"We're trying to add to the CBH value chain by doing our own transport," he said.

"We plan to expand our dominance in home markets to forge an equally impressive profile in foreign countries."

The vessel is a tangible demonstration of our commitment to achieving our ambitions, enabling us to deliver ex-

panded customer services and build on the customer confidence which we have strived to develop since our inception."

The UBC joint venture grew from a long-term service relationship between CBH and Hudson Shipping Lines.

Competitive

But grain volumes from the African pool were not a guaranteed cargo for UBC, Mr Palmer said.

"CBH still shops work around. The CBH shipping manager will go to UBC and say, 'quote me a price,'" he said.

However, the line needs grain as a base cargo.

The African Kookaburra – estimated to cost \$72m – is a multi-cargo vessel and UBC plans to have a balance of grain – at the right price – and other cargo such as tale, mineral sands or other bulk material on each voyage.

The 22-26-month time lease

on the African Kookaburra is outside of UBC's previous risk management parameters. Its longest charter had been 10 months because of the involvement of the growers and the need to be transparent. "We had to seek permission of the grain pool," Mr Palmer said.

Hudson and operator MUR Shipping Australia will charter the vessel for seven years, with an option to purchase her.

At 196 metres long, the 56,000 dwt African Kookaburra has four cranes, each with a 30-tonne lift capacity and a 12.3-metre draught.

"She can get into certain berths that other ships cannot get into – for example Geraldton," Hudson president Avi Eilon said.

"She's relatively short – but on the other hand she's 56,000 tonnes and she has a draught that allows her to compete with the larger ships."

The charter was flown to the launch of the African Kookaburra at Okayama as a quest of UBC.



CBH AWAY LAUGHING: Amid cheers from the crowd, the African Kookaburra trails ribbons as she slides along the slipway and hits the water for the first time.



PROUD MOMENT: From left, GMA Garnet director Torsten Ketselen, Geraldton Port Authority chairman Ian King, Hudson Shipping Lines president and CBH director Avi Eilon, CBH strategy and business general manager and UBC director Andrew Young.



AT THE PARTY: From left, Hudson Shipping Lines line manager Chad Meade, the wife of Avi Eilon, Elly Wittchow, WA Shipwrighting managing director and international logistics manager Robert Camarda and Hudson Shipping Lines general manager David Draper.