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GRAIN BERTH AWAITS PLANNING NOD

FLINDERS Ports has announced construction of their new grain berth at Outer Harbor is expected to start next January.

But the \$25 million project is yet to receive the approval of the Development Assessment Commission (DAC).

Flinders Ports, in a press release, said the new berth would be located to the north of the existing container terminal.

The new berth will be deepened to 14.2m and a 230m long wharf built. It will be connected to Ausbulk's proposed Outer Harbor grain terminal by an 800m-long conveyer belt.

Flinders Ports chief executive Vincent Tremaine said he was confident the project would be approved by the DAC. "The work is expected to be completed by August 2005," he said.

The berth's extra depth would allow 250m Panamax vessels to load during any tide and sail on a high tide. At present, ships come into the inner harbour to load grain but are restricted in how much grain they can carry because of shallow waters.

"It means we'll have larger ships coming in, carrying a greater volume and the cost per tonne of export falls," Mr Tremaine said.

But while deepening the berth was a cheap way to get Panamax vessels in to load, dredging of Outer Harbor's main channel was still vital to allow for large container ships and even larger grain vessels.

In January, the Portside Messenger reported Port Adelaide Enfield Council wanted extra time before commenting on the project.

It wanted to know what impact dredging of the new berth and building the wharf would have on the environment.

DAC spokeswoman Gabrielle McMahon said the DAC hoped to make a decision "within the next couple of weeks".

Port-Enfield Council director of environmental services Fred Newman said the council had later given its support to the proposal.