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Ship-Shape Direct Service

A NEW era for the state's export market began last night with a US container ship making its first voyage from Outer Harbor. The Columbus Coromandel - loaded with SouthCorp, Orlando Beringer Blass and Hardy wines, Castalloy motorcycle wheels, Holden vehicle parts and meat - was due to leave Flinders Ports at 11pm.

It is the start of South Australia's first direct container shipping service to the US.

Flinders Ports chief executive Vincent Tremaine said the service was one of the biggest breakthroughs for SA since the introduction of containerisation more than 30 years ago.

"The decision to include Outer Harbor is not only significant for us but reflects the growth of South Australia's major exporters," he said.

Cargo previously had to be sent to Melbourne or Sydney by road or rail before being shipped overseas.

Now, with the Outer Harbor initiative, 30,000 containers destined for interstate ports have been taken from the overland transport systems.

It is hoped the new service - which took two years to negotiate - will bring a marked increase in SA exports, generating additional employment opportunities and further expansion into new and existing markets.

"Industries will be able to consolidate here in Adelaide," said Mark Hales, Flinders Ports' manager of shipping services and logistics. "SouthCorp has dedicated a warehouse and plans are in place for Hardy's to build a warehouse by the port."

Geographically, Adelaide was not previously considered a viable market.

With overheads of \$39,000 a day, the cost of the new Columbus shipping service completing the Adelaide leg leaps to an additional \$117,000.

"The ship will come to Adelaide because the cargo is here now to support it," Columbus Line state manager Ian Henderson said. "We've had strong support from the main customer base which will increase now with the better utilisation."

The Columbus Line will employ eight cargo vessels on the route from Adelaide to Los Angeles and ports in New Zealand, Fiji, Tahiti, Vancouver, the US and Mexico.

Each full voyage takes about eight weeks.

Cargo will be exported from Outer Harbor on the new line every week.