

Victoria

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The past year provided interesting subjects no less outcomes for the State Committee.

Quarantine inspections on cargo discharged from Roro's created considerable delays forcing operators to seek alternate discharge ports. At one stage it was reported some 25% of the world's PCTB vessels were in Oceania many of which were anchored at Melbourne. Added to the mess a 27-year-old vessel had a generator fire on board and blocked the berth whilst several regulatory and legal actors were seemingly unable to take ownership of the problem adding to the buildup of delays. It took almost the entirety of 2023 for the port to get on top of the backlog created by the quarantine inspections which has since translated to importers having insufficient transport and storage options to clear inventories held at the terminal.

Unrelated to the vessel generator fire the State Committee noted reports of a ferry operator in the Northern Hemisphere placing a ban on the loading of EV's. Equally two incidents elsewhere of vessels loaded with EV's involving fire and abandoned by crew to safety. Suffice older vessels are not equipped to deal with fire caused by EV's so the committee engaged Ports Victoria and Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) to understand process and responsibilities for a vessel on approach to Melbourne which reports an onboard fire. It is unlikely the vessel would be permitted to enter the Port so necessarily two or three established locations where vessels would anchor, and crew removed safely should be established within the frame of risk management.

For some 6 years one of the three terminal operators had cranes enabled to accurately record the gross weight of all containers handled. Following two separate incidents where containers were lost overboard along the New South Wales coastline the lack of a

conclusive report from relevant bodies tasked to investigate left the committee to consider those containers were possibly transhipped at an Asian hub, stowed at inappropriate locations and necessarily lacked sufficient securing.

The data received from two terminal operators highlighted there was a large percentage of mis declared import weights reported and to a lesser degree exports. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) for its part focused on the exports believing they could have jurisdictional input to bring about the required disciplines however this approach whilst appreciated would take time and the terminals having by now the technology have since set about imposing fiscal penalties where containers are mis declared by 1 or more tonnes. Interestingly the groups representing the local road carriers have fully endorsed this development on the basis of safety to its members and more generally other road users. The 1 tonne tolerance at this stage should be regarded as a first step with further refinement likely to be applied.

From a personal point of view when I was involved with ship planning for some 3 years way back in the 70's (no computer assistance) vessels operating between Australia/New Zealand to East Coast North America were often down to their marks at the last port and shortshipping cargo. After much auditing of weights between cargo, stores, lashings, bunkers etc around 600 tonnes was unaccounted for and characterised as "mysterious" weights, significant for a 1300 teu vessel more so for larger vessels deployed today! The terminal's ability to record and provide accurate weights is a welcome development and provides a standard common to the airline industry.

The Port of Melbourne successfully completed the first stage of the Inland Rail Project at Swanston Dock whose purpose was to reduce truck

movements around inner Melbourne. A project estimated to cost \$300 million and funded by a \$10 per teu levy on import containers. Since its completion, planning for a rail connection to Webb Dock has not commenced and information around this has been scant. Import containers at Webb Dock are equally subject to this levy. More to the point we are pressing for transparency failing which the subject gets elevated to the Policy Council to decide whether members should continue or suspend its collection. It is regrettable the operator at Webb Dock views the levy as a tax on their business whilst no firm plans for the rail connection are in sight.

Freight Victoria in conjunction with several other interest groups representing trucking operators and importers introduced a Voluntary Code of Practice (VCOP) to reduce periodic delays encountered at container depots caused through congestion. Freight Victoria sought Shipping Australia's endorsement to the code however with several members operating their own depots consensus could not be reached.

Four committee meetings were held during the year including an AGM. Our State Chair James Kurz was re-elected for 2024 and we are thoroughly delighted with the nomination of Deputy Chair, Ms Olga Coelho Hubert. Olga brings much expertise to the State Committee and we are very much looking forward to her input. Thanks is extended to law firm HFW who provided a room for our meetings.

Three events took place during 2023 namely the Phil Kelly OAM perpetual golf challenge at La Trobe Golf Course won by team Victoria International Container Terminal. A Winter luncheon attended by 160 with guest speaker Hon Melissa Horne, Minister for Ports and Infrastructure and an End of Year Lunch for 120 with guest speaker and dual Olympian Dr Jess Gallagher. ▲