

The 3rd Australasian Regional Branch Meeting

Sydney – 10 May 2007

Held on 10 May 2007 at the Amora Hotel, Sydney, the 3rd COA Australasian Regional Branch Members Meeting was a great success. Some 36 delegates representing many different sectors of the industry attended the conference - and the meeting provided them with a unique insight into the COA, its objectives and achievements.

Attendees gained a greater understanding of trends and developments in the container business from the presentations of the three keynote speaker, while they were also able to investigate a number of industry technological advances, in terms of both equipment and operations.

Phil Rosser, from Sydney Ports, discussed current container trends, including Sydney's container growth projections to 2025 and the growing road and rail needs leading up to 2020. He also discussed the role of Sydney Ports in expanding operations to allow for this growth and left the audience thinking about the implications of such rapid developments in the industry with regards to infrastructure requirements.

Richard Sykes, of SCF Containers, then spoke on inland rail operation trends. He provided a brief overview of the recent infrastructure investments being made in rail, including the new railway to Darwin and the Melbourne to Brisbane rail corridor.

Perhaps surprisingly, there is currently no actual legal definition or conceptualisation of what a container is. This issue was raised by Pierre-Jean Bordahandy, a specialist lawyer from the University of Adelaide, who discussed the legal implications of the concept of containers with respect to the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO). He discussed the consequences of this lack of legal definition, and suggested possible ways forward to resolve this issue, to the benefit of all in the container industry.

Steve Meyrick, of Meyrick and Associates, spoke on the current trends of the shipping and intermodal industry. He provided statistics that showed that the world container traffic will increase by 7.3% per year, to the year 2015 - and that the Australian trade is increasing at similar rates. He provided evidence that the freight task will double in the period 2000-2025, which will require additional infrastructure and re-structuring, to which he offered some suggestions.

The Sydney Members Meeting also provided members with the opportunity to meet Martin Ferriss of IIR NZ and to hear him speak on New Zealand's Association of Professional Container Depot Operators and Suppliers. This organisation's aims are similar to that of the COA and the COA is looking forward to working more closely with them in the future.

Following the first sessions of the Meeting, during which insights into the container industry and the outlook for the future were discussed, a working group forum was held.

A number of relevant issues were discussed in this forum, including: recertification of containers, container specifications and the handling and securing of loads. There was good debate on these issues and it has given the COA a good direction to move forward. One of the tasks of a COA technical director will be to prepare a paper, for submission to Standards Australia, detailing the COA's position on these issues.

Overall, the meeting was a resounding success, and it was very beneficial that Bill Brassington, representing the COA, presented and provided an update on the COA's recent Working Group activities. In addition, the meeting provided a good update to Australasian members and delegates on the work of the COA both domestically and internationally. Further, it is anticipated that membership will increase as a result of this meeting, as a number of delegates were very interested in continuing their professional association through this forum.