



## Providing essential shipping industry support

By ROD NAIRN

**Throughout this year Shipping Australia has again taken the lead in key international shipping and trade matters and delivered significant benefits to members and the shipping, agency and international trade industry overall.**

At the beginning of January, continuing the fiasco of the previous year, biosecurity levy consultation meetings punctuated the holiday period. SAL continued to question the flawed logic of the concept and corralled opposition to the proposed levy across the import and export supply chain. Throughout the first quarter we led the attack with media statements and, with the facts on our side, criticised the levy proposals at the ALC Conference panel discussion. Ultimately, concerted industry opposition led to Minister Littleproud's appointment of an expert panel to review and report on the proposed levy. While sceptical that the expert panel was merely a smoke screen to divert industry criticism before the Federal election, the diverse panel worked diligently to produce a consensus report. The Bio Levy Report sent to the new Minister for Agriculture, Senator Bridget McKenzie on 31 March, confirmed the industry criticisms and made recommendations to make the levy fairer and less costly to Australian consumers. The assessment process continued until December, and finally we were pleased to see that Government took heed of much of the report. While one fifth of the levy has been identified in higher cost recovery fees on ship arrivals and import processing, the remainder has been removed from the budget,

and the Government has undertaken to consult fully to identify how to implement and resource a system that will improve traceability and accountability of imported products.

For three years, SAL has been supporting the principle of competition in pilotage with representation to the pilots' association, Victoria's Government, maritime safety regulator and port regulator, to ensure that the new entrant to the Melbourne pilotage market was treated fairly and reasonably. This year the Australian Pilotage Group, who commenced the competitive service in Melbourne, was acquired by Boab Investments (the owners of Australian Reef Pilots) and has shown that it is a safe and sustainable operation that will continue to grow and provide both safety improvements and a competitive restraint on price. Since this competitive service was mooted, price rises in Melbourne have been modest and in line with CPI. This is another example of SAL delivering ongoing cost saving to shipping lines.

Brown marmorated stink bugs have been a significant cost burden on imports and shipping lines, particularly break bulk and PCC have borne a substantial burden. SAL has continuously engaged with the Department of Agriculture to apply reasonable protocols and has intervened directly on behalf of members when requested. Potentially, one of the greatest cost saving measures for the PCC/RoRo industry at least, has been the negotiated development of the "BMSB Voluntary Vessel Scheme". While meeting the requirements of

this scheme is not without cost, those vessels approved under the scheme can achieve major cost savings by avoiding mandatory seasonal pest inspections on arrival, thus reducing inspection costs and time delays and loss of berth prioritisation. Unfortunately, as the current season has ramped up it is clear that the Department of Agriculture is not following their own protocols and delays in decisions and unjustified vessel re-inspections have been costly to the shipping industry. This is an area where service levels need to improve substantially.

Hull fouling regulation was introduced this year, and again, through the continuing engagement of SAL at the Marine Pests Sectoral Committee, the regulation took a reasonable approach to the management of hull fouling and the form of regulation that was adopted to manage the risk of introducing marine pests on ships hulls. We have also been pro-active in pushing for cohesive State and Federal Government approvals for in-water cleaning, though at this point approvals have only been granted in Queensland and Western Australia.

The impending change to compulsory low sulphur fuel has been a continuing concern throughout the year and will be a reality by the time you read this. After regular prompting, AMSA has recently published advise of which ports and terminals will have compliant LSF available. Though the questions on compatibility of different variants of LSF remain largely unresolved. Fortunately, the efforts of the fuel supply companies to advertise their products should allow compliance,



MSC Tianjin, 323 meters long, swinging in Fremantle

and have gone some way towards providing information to enable safe operations, but no doubt there will be hiccoughs.

It would be unusual to go through a year without talk of coastal shipping and, after a hiatus, a general election, and some prompting by SAL, yet another review has been announced. This time the scope of the possible changes has been clearly defined in the Deputy Prime Minister's advice letter, and this enables more focus to be placed on the possible. Shipping Australia's submission generally recommends a reduction in unnecessary bureaucracy, that where there is no declared Australian flag shipping to protect, the onerous waiting times and cargo limits be relaxed. At the same time, we have indicated that there should be preferred access to the coast for those shipping companies willing to train Australian deck officer and engineer cadets. The first general consultation session was held in December and a reasonable level of agreement was reached. There might just be some room for optimism this time around.

This year we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the arrival of the *Encounter Bay*, commencing the era of international container trade connecting Australia to the world. Shipping is a vital but virtually invisible industry to the majority of the Australian population, and it has been fantastic to see two landmark activities to promote knowledge of the industry, coincide with this historic year.

The documentary movie *The World in a Box* has been professionally produced by

a group of volunteers (with the support of SAL, industry partners and the ITDF) to highlight the importance of shipping and the critical role that the humble container has played in making world-wide goods available to consumers anywhere on the globe. Read more about it and see the movie at <https://shippingaustralia.com.au/celebrating-50-years-of-international-container-shipping-for-australia/>

*Container – The box that changed the world* – is a continuing static display of containers and their impact on every Australian, conceived and delivered by the Australian National Maritime Museum with the support of industry partners. This display started at Darling Harbour, Sydney and has since moved to Wollongong, Narrabri, Wagga and is now in Fremantle. It has already been seen by more than a quarter of a million people.

I would like to congratulate NSW Ports and successive former New South Wales State Government's on the 40th anniversary of Port Botany container facility. The move from Port Jackson to Botany was contentious in 1979 but has proved visionary and essential to the delivery of efficient container services in the State.

SAL on-line training courses, *Introduction to Shipping, Fundamentals of the Maritime Industry, Reefer Cargo Handling and Chain of Responsibility* are intended to provide concise and essential information to the international shipping industry and continue to be offered to members at discounted rates. Readers are encouraged to utilise SAL's

shipping industry training courses as part of their indoctrination training for new employees, and as career advancement education for the not so new.

SAL has also been active with improvement to communications and messaging, to enhance our influence in policy matters and to keep the public informed. Our use of *Twitter* (@ShippingAus), *Linked-In* and broadcast email through *Signal*, are all focused on improving our public information and member visibility. Meanwhile, our flagship Shipping Australia Magazine continues to attract positive comment and confirm our position as the most influential shipping industry association on the Australian scene. Our most recent innovation to improve member engagement is the release of the SAL App on both Apple IOS and Android. This SAL App provides easy access to SAL Web information as well as introducing the capability for push messaging, and will soon allow Policy Council members to access the members-only documents easily, while on the road. Search for the *Shipping Australia Limited* (SAL App) in the Apple App store or Google Play.

The international shipping industry is the unsung hero of Australia, it provides Australia's economic prosperity through exports and is essential for every Australian's way of life by providing the imported products we all desire. But without the efforts of Shipping Australia Limited it would be an easy target for additional levies and charges. ▲