



Collaboration is the silver lining

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2020 has been a year like no other, a phrase that's been repeated time and time again over the past few months, while cliché its sentiment rings true for the team at MIRRAT.

Without stating the obvious, the COVID-19 pandemic has indeed hijacked our focus, and the majority of our energy. The goals we set out to achieve as an organisation back in 2019 were promptly sidelined, as responding to the COVID situation took center stage. Rapidly shifting priorities meant non-essential capital works, fleet investment, and outsourced services made way for procuring and securing PPE and temperature guns, hunting for hand sanitiser and toilet paper, while transitioning our administration team to remote working. These measures aimed to protect and provide our operational staff and terminal users with the safest possible environment, enabling them to continue to provide services and support the automotive and RoRo markets.

In hindsight, our proactive approach and decision to take early action has held us in good stead. The proof lies within the fact that all staff and terminal users have remained safe, and not a single vessel has been delayed, even during the height of the Melbourne lockdown. For a facility that averages over 200 visitors a day, this has been no easy task.

The economic impacts have been just as testing. Despite COVID, 2020 was shaping up to be relatively weak following on from the trends of 2019. COVID compounded these forecasts. Factory closures in Europe, Asia, and the US turned the tap off across all our major trade lanes for several months, reducing supply chains to a trickle, and creating an oversupply of tonnage, resulting in vessel layups and, in some cases, early recycling. These measures by governments, OEM's and vessel operators, while absolutely appropriate, translated to a 54 per cent reduction in vessel calls and a 50 per cent fall in volumes during May, June, and July at MIRRAT.

Vessel calls have improved as volumes slowly recover from the low water mark of Q2. However, uncertainty remains in our forward projections as we consider the question - are we shifting from an issue with supply to one of demand?, as Government stimulus and support rolls back over the coming months.

Churchill said, "never let a good crisis go to waste," and despite the challenges 2020 has presented, it has also provided opportunities, partially around process improvement and product development.

Social distancing guidelines forced us into reengineering manual processes, which has supercharged our digital transition. Tools and concepts we had been trialing, have been fast-tracked and are now part of our everyday operations. Self-services and contactless deliveries are two examples of innovative change, designed to reduce person-to-person interaction, drive efficiency, and improve our customer's ease of doing business.

Reflecting on 2020, the most positive thing to have come out of these unique circumstances has been a pronounced shift in mindset, and perhaps a resetting of priorities across our small industry segment. A real sense of community has evolved, driving a willingness to collaborate and find solutions that benefit the industry as a whole.

We have long advocated that working together will create efficiency, and we are excited to build on the relationships forged over the past 12 months, to develop opportunities and realise the possibilities they represent for our customers, terminal users, and the industry as a whole.

Bring on 2021. ▲

SAL VOTING MEMBERS

