

Grasping the OPPORTUNITY

The world's top experts in truck technology are going to be in Melbourne next March creating a great chance for the Australian trucking industry to pick their brains.



When the HVTT 11, the International Forum for Road Transport Technology

convenes on 14th March 2010 in the lead up to the International Truck, Trailer and Equipment Show there is an opportunity to see and hear the latest thinking which will take our industry forward, according to Victorian Transport Association CEO Phil Level.

"There are three agendas going on in the road transport industry at the moment," says Phil. "One is productivity and making a dollar, how we can improve the productivity of our businesses. Secondly we have safety, how can we improve the safety equation and the safety outcome? The third one is the environment which is all about reducing our carbon footprint and being a good citizen."

The customers of the road freight industry are also demanding all of these outcomes as they look to improve their own safety and environmental outcomes whilst also looking at the bottom line. Working in this business environment is all about balancing competing needs. Regulators

have to be satisfied the operation is compliant, customers are driving safety and environmental agendas, as well as the ongoing quest for productivity being pursued by the industry as a whole. The HVTT brings together the regulators, the vehicle and component manufacturers, key research bodies and other industry stakeholders from around the globe. They come together and look at the global picture, finding out who is leading the field in terms of issues of safety, environmental outcomes and productivity in relation to heavy vehicle freight.

"It's a very significant conference with some of the leading thinkers from around the world," says Phil. "The people who were the original architects behind what became the B double, for instance, will be coming from Canada."

"Out of this conference we expect to see, amongst other things, a vision for the future for heavy vehicles. We will have the leading thinkers out of Europe, the people who are actually developing the standards for heavy vehicle rules there. These standards will be mirrored around the world in the coming decades. If you want to stay on the leading edge of where things are going and where that thinking

is, this is a very good place to start. It will give operators a clear view of where their fleet may have to go in the future. It's important to make those connections and meet those people.

"If you focus on the day-to-day, only worrying about today's delivery, or whatever, that's fine. But, if you've got a little bit of time in your agenda to really think about the future of your business and the future of the movement of freight, this conference will give you a clear idea of what will influence that future and what you can do as a business person. The strategic ideas that you hear should help you to develop your business."

Fortunately for Australia, many of the problems likely to afflict our road freight industry in the second decade of the 21st century are going to hit other parts of the globe first. As with the development of exhaust emission technology to reduce the levels of both particulate matter and nitrogen oxides, the USA and Europe moved to the lower levels of Euro 1, Euro 2, Euro 3 and Euro 4 well before the changes occurred here in Australia. This gives our smaller transport industry a chance to pick up on the lessons learned by both the equipment manufacturers and the operators in dealing with the lower

emissions and making the right choices to maintain productivity levels. Congestion in the major cities is becoming an issue and is a subject on the horizon of everyone in the transport industry in the next few years in Australia. In Europe, the situation is much worse, the infrastructure used to carry road freight is being stretched to breaking point and productivity is being severely impacted by delays caused by congestion. Many solutions are being sought and tried in various European countries and the results of their endeavours may be able to inform Australian operators and regulators before our traffic congestion reaches these kinds of levels.

The debate in Europe is raging long and hard about using longer, more productive trucks on the crowded motorways of Europe. Those countries with good open motorway infrastructure are pushing for some form of vehicle configuration similar to our B-double or one consisting of a semi trailer pulling a dog trailer. Southern European countries with their small medieval towns and small roads are resisting the push by countries like Holland, Germany and Sweden to change European rules to allow longer multi-combination vehicles.

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New environmental rules see California leading the way in trying to reduce both noxious gases in exhaust as well as carbon emissions. Concern about the environment is very strong among the voters in California and, as a result, the government has a mandate to force the transport industry to reduce its environmental impact. The low emission schemes such as the Long Beach Port Authority's attempt to modernise the fleet of vehicles passing in and out of the port every day has met with stiff resistance including court action by the Teamsters Union. Lessons learned in these schemes will inform any authorities here in Australia wishing to introduce something similar in the future.

"The challenges facing the road freight industry now are unprecedented and new solutions will have to be found," says Phil. "Adapting and developing any transport business to meet these new challenges is going to be vital to the country's future prosperity. It will be

the transport operators, who learn the lessons of future strategic thinking and develop their business to take advantage of technical and regulatory change to improve the environmental, safety and productivity outcomes required, who will win out at the end of the day.

"This is why the VTA has become associated with the HVTT 11 Conference. Our members need to get involved in events like this, as should the industry regulators and the equipment manufacturers. It is relevant to all of them, if they don't, they will not be on the leading edge and could go the way of the blacksmith and the candlestick maker. We have never seen the pace of change we have got in front of us now. It is self evident."

The people who are involved in developing the future of the road freight transport industry globally will be in Melbourne for a week in March which sees the HVTT Conference at the State Library of Victoria, followed by



the International Truck, Trailer and Equipment Show at the Melbourne Showgrounds.

"We've got in excess of 100 significant international visitors from overseas who are experts in this field," says Phil. "It's a highly significant event and the opportunities for both formal and informal discussions will be there over four days. It is also at a good lead-in to the ITTES and we, at the VTA, will be bringing a number of the experts attending the conference down to our pavilion at the show.

"We've made a commitment to set up a full auditorium to run miniature briefings from time to time over the period of the ITTES. We see this as a package, a week-long series of activities with the four days of the HVTT and then three days at the ITTES."

Registrations for the conference are showing a good deal of interest both from overseas and from here in Australia. The mix of delegates between domestic and international is currently around 50/50. This will give anyone attending a well-rounded picture of the situation, both globally and within Australia. Regulators from across Australia will be in attendance, in fact the Department



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of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government along with Vic Roads and the Queensland Government are among the sponsors of the event. Important decision-makers among the Australian regulators will be attending, not only as delegates, but also as participants in

some of the sessions taking place.

The HVTT 11 Conference is scheduled to take place between the 14th and 17th of March 2010 in the State Library of Victoria. Events will also be taking place in the Investment Centre on Collins Street and in the historic Queens Hall, also in the State Library of Victoria.