

The year completed has been marked by continued growth in the State economy and a consequent increase in volumes of freight moved into, across and out of Tasmania, seen as a very positive outcome compared to the rest of Australia.

On the other hand, there has been no less turmoil than in other years with major industry concerns such as that precipitated by the threat of losing rail services for container freight in October 2005. As yet unresolved despite efforts on the part of both governments, this uncertainty has hung like a cloud over the State for 8 of the past 12 months.

The Tasmanian Freight Logistics Council (TFLC) sought during this time to ensure shippers needs for certainty and reliability from service providers was not lost in the considerations that ensued of Pacific National's request for support and briefed Tasmania's Federal political representatives and the media as the situation unfolded.

The dramatic rise in oil prices continued from the previous year, capturing everyone's attention and thinking about the implications for businesses seeking to remain market competitive. Transport and logistics costs have risen as a consequence and the Council has sought to use this situation as an opportunity to focus on businesses achieving better productivity outcomes by taking different approaches to communication and relationships with service providers along their respective supply-chains. Media presentations, involvement in Agfest 2005, the TCCI Trade Outlook Conference and the implementation of a key program; Australian Logistics Assured, launched in May 2005 are reflective of TFLC's leadership effort in this area.

On another global front, continued terrorist activity has heightened concerns by governments about protecting movements of export and import freight across borders. This has resulted in a tightening of security measures at ports (both sea and air) in Australia, affecting the speed with which products can be cleared for shipment through to market. Tasmanian shippers have been equally impacted and the Council's role has been one of ensuring businesses (especially via their respective Industry associations) are aware of changing controls, regulations and reporting requirements of both Australian and other national governments. TFLC has engaged with Australian government regulators on industry's behalf, for example in the coordination of meetings between exporters of highly time-sensitive agricultural and seafood products and Federal representatives about new air cargo security measures. This was to ensure concerns about potential delays of consignments are minimised in any new scrutiny procedures to be introduced.

District community forums were undertaken during the year on the West Coast and in Circular Head. The intent was to indicate a TFLC presence and gauge community concerns about freight logistics among these small but highly productive areas of the State. These activities, together with completion of the annual state-wide survey of freight community stakeholders for a third time helped to keep the Council informed of issues confronting shippers and service providers and verified the increased level of awareness about the Council and its activities that now exists.

A further survey was commenced to review logistics associated with movement of live and fresh-chilled seafood following infrastructural and services changes since a similar study was undertaken in 2000. The consultant was engaged and completed the data gathering phase at year's end with a final report to be completed in July 2006.

In response to emerging concerns about a forecast skill shortage in the transport and logistics industries over the next decade, TFLC participated in the 2005 Careers and Employment Expo as a significant effort to promote career options in logistics-related industries, especially among prospective school leavers starting to think about their participation in the work-force. The success of this event in raising awareness about the industry prompted a commitment to again participate in a similar event in mid-2006.

Information services remained an important TFLC function throughout the year with ad hoc requests, mainly for direction to specific service providers or sources of detailed information being a regular weekly activity. More than 140 such requests were received although the introduction at last annual general meeting of a charging schedule for requests taking up more than 2 hours of response time was not invoked, all enquiries attracting such charges being from members or businesses choosing to join the Council rather than pay the charge.

TFLC maintained contacts with other freight councils interstate and participated in this national network as well as others of state and federal government transport agencies as a source of valuable information relevant to Tasmania and also to combine resources in support of projects yielding benefit to more than one jurisdiction.

The Council can only continue its operations with support from industry and respective governments at Federal and State level. Industry support takes the form of memberships, of which there were some 70-80 during the year, non-remunerated time of Directors in serving on the Board and most importantly of all, a significant in-kind contribution of office space and support services from the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce & Industry that is also invaluable as a key public promoter of the Council and its work.

On behalf of members, the Board also acknowledges with thanks, funding contributions made by the Tasmanian Government's Department of Infrastructure Energy and Resources (DIER) and that of the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services. DIER in particular has by always paying its commitment earlier than required, enabled the Council's cash-flow to be easily managed throughout the year.

Recurrent government funding commitments are in place for the next two years during which time the Board looks forward to further involvement with the freight community and improved outcomes from its actions on their behalf.