



THE Sharp End

Bouquets & Boofheads

Recent events have shown with magnified intensity the vast extremes of goodwill and greed that exist in this stunningly complex and savagely competitive thing we call Australian road transport.

But where to start? Well, there's certainly no shortage of bad news in the world these days so just to be different, let's start with a bouquet for a wonderfully magnanimous effort by an organisation that continues to exhibit commonsense and practicality in an era when these qualities can occasionally seem as rare as the turd of a Tasmanian tiger. The organisation I speak of is the Commercial Vehicle Industry Association of Queensland, or CVIAQ.

It is, of course, the same outfit that every two years convenes the Queensland Truck & Machinery Show and over the past few years arguably did more to deliver a commonsense and practical solution to the 26 metre B-double debate than any of its contemporaries, without resorting to pious outpourings of noble service and hardwon success. It's also the same outfit that works quietly and diligently on diverse issues to enhance the practical performance of the Queensland road transport industry and those who serve it. So as you might have already gathered, the CVIAQ is an organisation I hold in considerable regard.

That regard, however, stems from far more than just the organisation's direct work on transport-related matters. In what amounts to a marvelous example of goodwill and public service by an industry body looking beyond the boundaries of its own existence, and in the process demonstrating that road transport has a warm and generous heart despite the heat of competitive battle, the CVIAQ has over the past five years raised more than \$500,000 for the Leukaemia Foundation.

As a news item elsewhere in this issue reports, the association runs its President's Charity Dinner to raise funds for worthwhile causes and has made the Leukaemia Foundation its beneficiary for the past five years. This year alone the dinner raised almost \$140,000 which will be directed to a new accommodation village for sufferers and their families of leukaemia and other serious blood diseases.

Full marks should go to the CVIAQ not just for its generosity to a worthwhile cause but also for its contribution to the wider perception of road transport as a vital and socially responsible industry.

On the other side of the fence though, you really have to wonder about the mindsets and motives of those considering the 'importation' of foreign drivers to fill the current void in driving ranks.

As if the reputation of road transport and truck drivers isn't under enough pressure, what will be the public outcry if an 'imported' driver happens to be involved in a serious crash?

And let's face it, there aren't enough good truck drivers around simply because the industry generally has over decades failed to invest in its own future by training enough drivers to meet increased freight volumes.

It has already been reported in the mainstream media that Australia's largest transport company, Toll Holdings, '... is considering importing truck drivers from overseas to help plug a growing labour shortage, sparking renewed concerns about the federal government's contentious skilled labour migration program.'

With considerable justification, the Transport Workers Union has delivered a hostile reaction to the idea of importing drivers, suggesting that such a move is nothing more than an attempt to drive down wages and conditions in the industry. Or in other words, a greedy attempt to make economic mileage from a flawed government policy.

The question we should be asking is, 'Do we really need to import more problems?' I thought this industry already had enough things to worry about.

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