About ICHCA – International Cargo Handling Co-ordination Association

The International Cargo Handling Co-ordination Association (ICHCA) is an international, independent, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to improving the safety, security, sustainability, productivity and efficiency of cargo handling and goods movement by all modes and through all phases of national and international supply chains. ICHCA International's privileged non-government organisation (NGO) status enables it to represent its members, and the cargo handling industry at large best, in front of national and international agencies and regulatory bodies. Its Expert Panel provides practice advice and publications on a wide range of practical cargo handling issues. ICHCA Australia Ltd is proud to be part of the ICHCA International Ltd global network (**www.ichca.com**). To access past newsletters and other useful information go to the ICHCA Australia website at **www.ichca.com.au.**

Inside this issue

TT Club Innovation in Safety Awards Ceremony

If you are somewhere near London, UK in late February, please join us at the TT Club Innovation in Safety Awards on 25 February 2026.

This year we received a **record 32 entries**, showing that innovation never stops. The pursuit of safer operations is an ongoing effort for the entire cargo handling industry, and we're excited to be able to shine a light on those getting it right. As well as celebrating our winners, we have a jam-packed afternoon of keynotes and panel sessions, with expert speakers from across the industry.

Speakers include:

- Frans Calje – CEO, PD Ports
- Megan Blundell – Port Skills & Safety Awards Winner, Shoreham Port
- Ana Raposo, Business Applications and Partnerships Officer, and Nil Angli, Space Solutions Maritime Lead – European Space Agency
- Lucy Pritchard – Head of Health & Safety, Shoreham Port
- Michael McKenna – Harbour Master, Dublin Port
- Ray Eagle – Director of Safety, Health, Environment and Quality, Doyle Shipping
- Harry Palmer – Risk Assessment Manager, TT Club

The event will be recorded and made available at a later date.

See the ICHCA International website for more information: **https://ichca.com/tt-club-innovation-in-safety-awards**

Seminar on Safe Ports

Shipping Australia and Colin Biggers & Paisley Lawyers invite you to attend a free lunchtime seminar/ webinar on Safe Ports. Hear from the experts and gain insight from different perspectives as to what constitutes a safe port.

Speakers:

- Captain Melwyn Noronha – CEO, Shipping Australia
- Myron Fernandes – Harbour Master Sydney, Port Authority of New South Wales
- Stephen Thompson – Partner, Head of Transport & Logistics, Colin Biggers & Paisley Lawyers
- Michelle Taylor – Partner, Sparke Helmore Lawyers
- Marcus John – Managing Director, TT Club

When: Thursday 26 March 2026 12:00 for a 12:30 start, concludes at 13:30

Where: Colin Biggers & Paisley Lawyers, Level 42, 2 Park Street, Sydney

Register: https://www.shippingaustralia.com.au/event/safe-ports/

Fatigue plays critical role in collision

A catastrophic collision between two tankers in the South China Sea in 2024 has revealed a troubling chain of failures involving crew fatigue, disabled safety systems, and inadequate watchkeeping – ultimately claiming one life and injuring two others.

At about 6.00 am on 19 July 2024, the Singapore-registered tanker *Hafnia Nile* ploughed into the anchored *Ceres I* east of Malaysia while carrying roughly 300,000 barrels of naphtha bound for Japan. Fires broke out on both ships, fuel and cargo were lost, one crew member was killed and two others were injured. At the time of the incident, the *Ceres I,* an ageing very large crude carrier, was suspected of transporting sanctioned Iranian oil. Singapore's Transport Safety Investigation Bureau released its **final report** on 28 December 2025, calling the accident a "very serious marine casualty." What it found was a textbook case of how small breakdowns can quickly snowball into disaster.

Running on empty

The officer of the watch on *Hafnia Nile* had joined the ship only hours earlier after flying overnight from Colombo via Kuala Lumpur. He boarded at noon, barely had time to settle in, and then took over the midnight-to-6 am watch. Investigators said he had less than two hours of uninterrupted rest over a 38.5-hour stretch before taking the bridge. Even that brief rest was cut short by an unannounced fire alarm test. By the final hour of his watch, when the collision occurred, he was likely operating on fumes. The report concluded that fatigue "may have reduced his alertness and affected his performance and judgement" as the developing close-quarters situation unfolded.

Alarms that never sounded

Fatigue alone didn't cause the crash. Both of *Hafnia Nile*'s radars had their collision-avoidance alarms either silenced or completely switched off. The S-band system's CPA and TCPA alerts were muted, while the X-band alarms were disabled altogether. Investigators noted that this removed a key layer of protection that might have warned the bridge team as the tanker closed in on *Ceres I* and another vessel nearby. Then, at exactly the wrong moment, the officer of the watch stepped out of the wheelhouse to work on paperwork in the chartroom, leaving only an able seafarer at the helm. The ship was threading through a gap of just 0.7 nautical miles between the anchored tanker and another vessel on a southwest course.

Warnings that came too late

On board *Ceres I*, the bridge team first spotted *Hafnia Nile* when it was still more than six nautical miles away and judged the risk as low. As the distance shrank, they tried flashing lights and sounding the ship's horn but never attempted to raise the approaching tanker on VHF radio. The investigation found that *Ceres I*'s safety management system didn't clearly spell out how to communicate with an oncoming ship in a close-quarters situation while at anchor.

Aftermath and Charges

In July 2025, Singapore authorities charged two crew members from *Hafnia Nile* under the *Merchant Shipping Act*. The officer in charge is accused of failing to properly assess the risk and maintain situational awareness. The lookout allegedly saw the ships closing in but did not report it. The tanker's operating company has since overhauled its safety practices, including requiring navigation watchkeepers to rest in hotels before joining ships, banning administrative work on the bridge unless a proper lookout is maintained, and rolling out surprise bridge audits throughout the rest of 2025. Singapore also issued three formal safety recommendations: keep radar alarms active, reinforce bridge manning standards, and provide clearer guidance on how to communicate during close-quarters situations.

The crash is a stark reminder that even the most advanced navigation equipment is useless without alert, rested crews, and that something as routine as stepping away to finish paperwork can, under the wrong conditions, prove fatal.

Seaway Intermodal acquired by MEDLOG Oceania

MEDLOG Oceania has signed an agreement to acquire Seaway's Intermodal business. The transaction is expected to close in the first quarter of 2026. Seaway's Intermodal unit provides integrated logistics services across road, rail, and warehousing. It connects regional exporters and importers across key Australian markets.

The acquisition will expand MEDLOG Oceania's footprint in Sunraysia, south-western Victoria, Toowoomba, and Emerald container catchment areas. It also supports MEDLOG'S global sustainability strategy, with rail playing a key role in lowering carbon emissions.

"This acquisition strengthens our ability to deliver value-added and sustainable logistics solutions across Oceania," said Giuseppe Prudente, Chairman of MEDLOG SA. Craig McElvaney, CEO of Seaway Group, said the intermodal business is entering a new growth phase best supported by a larger platform. He added that MEDLOG Oceania brings the scale, resources, and infrastructure needed to expand the business further.

Both companies said they will focus on a smooth transition for customers and partners. Integration will take place over several months after the acquisition is completed, with continuity of service as a priority. Seaway's sea freight forwarding, air freight, and shipping agency divisions are not included in the transaction and will continue to operate as usual.

Shipping lines tentative return to using Suez Canal

As maritime shipping is making a tentative return to the Suez Canal after two years of Red Sea diversions, a dangerous convergence of Houthi warnings and US military escalation threatens to upend the industry’s fragile hopes for stability in one of the world’s most critical waterways. In a video statement, Houthi spokesman Brigadier Yahya Saree reinforced the group’s position amid escalating possibilities of military strikes against Iran. “We affirm our position: our dear Yemeni people, with its great people and its faithful leadership, its mujahideen army, and its stand alongside any Arab or Islamic country exposed to Zionist aggression,” Saree declared.

The latest warnings now carry added weight as US military assets flood into the region. According to reports, the aircraft carrier *USS Abraham Lincoln* and several guided-missile destroyers have crossed into the Middle East region under US Central Command. The military buildup follows escalating tensions after a crackdown on protests across Iran, with Trump having repeatedly threatened intervention if Iran continued to kill protesters. The warships began deploying from the Asia-Pacific region earlier this month.

The escalating security crisis comes just as major carriers were attempting their first sustained return to Red Sea transits. Earlier this month, shipping giant Maersk announced its first structural return to the Suez Canal in over two years. But competitor CMA CGA abruptly reversed its own Red Sea plans, rerouting three major services back around the Cape of Good Hope. “Shippers crave predictability in supply chains,” Xeneta Senior Market Analyst Destine Ozuygur said in analysing CMA CGM’s reversal. “Carriers taking the decision to return to the Red Sea then reversing that decision – even if it is done for important safety reasons – still risks undermining confidence in schedule reliability and eroding trust in partnerships.”

2025 ACCC Stevedoring Monitoring Report review

Summary

In December 2025, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) released its annual report on container stevedoring operations at Fremantle, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane. Containerised trade is a $185-billion-industry upon which the Australian economy heavily relies. Despite challenges in supply chain predictability, the industry has continued profitability, and stable volume throughput at the major Australian terminals.

Three key takeaways for the logistics industry are: (a) sustained profitability, (b) continued deterioration in supply chain predictability, and (c) renewed suggestions of regulatory response from the Australian Government.

Profits boom despite stable volume

The profitability of the stevedoring industry outstrips the domestic benchmarks in Industrials and Transportation with EBIT (Earnings Before Interest and Tax) returns reaching the highest levels in the past 10-year period, with a rate of return of 28.2%. This compares to 21.4% returns in Industrials and 15.8% returns in Transportation. The ACCC highlighted the continued investment into stevedoring operations across Australia and the growth in container throughput at Fremantle, Sydney, and Melbourne, with a 4% decrease in throughput at Brisbane.

Notably, there has been a large shift in how revenue is collected by stevedores. Since 2017–18, stevedores have collected $3.19 billion in terminal access charges to transport operators, which is 2.5 times more than stevedores’ aggregate investment over the same period ($1.25 billion). In 2009–10, the stevedoring industry collected over 88% of its revenue from charges to shipping lines with a relatively small proportion coming from incentive-based charges to transport operators. In 2024–25, the stevedoring industry collected almost half (49.5% or $1.15 billion) of its revenue from landside charges and ‘other’ sources, most of which was derived from charges to transport operators. The ACCC views this as a market failure and recommends that the Australian Government should take regulatory measures against it. We discuss this further below.

Deterioration in supply chain predictability

Localised weather events

Tropical cyclone Alfred had a significant impact on the operations at Port of Brisbane. The increase in severe weather events led to further closures of port operations at ports across Australia. Heavy rain and winds generally lead to difficulties in berthing, and weather events such as lightning and high temperatures lead to decreased terminal productivity.

Patrick Terminals reported that weather events contributed to a 165% increase in days lost compared to 2023-24. Hutchison reported that bad weather stopped terminal operations around 25 times. Further, a shipping line reported to the ACCC that weather events in Sydney and Fremantle led to sustained congestion and difficulty in providing a consistent shipping service.

Vessel schedule reliability

Despite a global uptick in vessel schedule reliability, Australian data indicates a further deterioration in on-time performance, and an increase in blank sailing, i.e., not calling at a port. Poor reliability can have significant flow-on effects to supply chains, with stevedores reporting to the ACCC that congestion at the ports meant ships regularly skipped the Port of Brisbane and Port Botany.

Ocean freight rates

As has been much discussed, tariff-related decisions in the USA and China have led to significant fluctuation in demand for containerised shipping across transpacific lanes. During the tariff pause, container charges reached US$5400, before falling to US$1900. In Australia, freight rates rose as high as US$3200 compared to pre-COVID where container rates averaged US$1000 per for 40-foot unit. The effect of the fluctuations has led to difficulties in freight forwarders quoting accurately and having to spend more time managing customer expectations.

ACCC recommends regulatory response

The ACCC concludes that there has been market failure in the stevedoring industry, which it puts down to two key drivers: a lack of countervailing power from cargo owners and transport operators, and the elevated landside charges. In the ACCC's own words:

> The ACCC considers that these factors allow stevedores to increase landside charges with limited risk, irrespective of changes in demand, terminal capacity, costs or quality of service. This means that the current elevated stevedoring profit levels are unlikely to be transient. Where this results in higher total prices and reduced efficiency, this has the potential to be detrimental to Australian businesses and consumers.

As such, the ACCC has recommended that the Australian Government take measures to address market failures relating to fixed landside charges, addressing incentive-based charges, and take steps to scrutinise empty container parks. It remains to be seen how the Government will respond.

This article was supplied by Owen Webb (Owen.webb@hfw.com) and Stephen Thompson (Stephen.thompson@hfw.com) of HFW, sponsors of Inside ICHCA.

Container stack collapse

A cargo ship transporting containers along the coast between Portugal and Spain was forced to take refuge after it experienced a stack collapse last week. The ship *Maria Francisca* arrived at the Port of Vigo with two rows of boxes toppled over and several crushed boxes hanging over the side of the vessel.

The 30,000-dwt vessel departed Lisbon, Portugal, on 14 January and overnight it encountered the heavy winter weather that has been disrupting operations across parts of Europe. The ship reportedly encountered a heavy swell and was listing.

It is being suggested that the vessel went into a very dangerous situation known as a parametric roll. Many organisations have been studying this phenomenon and how to predict it after it was blamed for container losses on larger vessels sailing in the Pacific. The World Shipping Council highlights that efforts to better understand and manage parametric rolling have helped to reduce the number of containers lost overboard each year.

Source: Port of Vigo

The ship was heading toward Vigo and Leixões and was south of Aveiro, Portugal, when it encountered a severe storm. It reported to the authorities that containers holding granite, cocoa and palm oil shifted. An unspecified number went overboard, while others collapsed in what appears to be two midship stacks. The ship has a capacity of 1,829 containers, including 150 reefers, with a maximum of 786 deck loaded.

The Port Authority for the Port of Vigo coordinated the arrival of the ship on Thursday, January 15. Two tugs were sent to escort the ship to the entrance of the estuary, with a pilot aboard to help navigate into the port. A helicopter and the Coast Guard vessel *Valentin Paz de Andrade* were also involved in the operation to ensure safety during the delicate docking operation. The port also used anti-pollution barriers as a precaution. The ship was successfully docked without incident. No crew members were injured, and there was no pollution reported in the port during the docking.

Executive Director to depart Freight Victoria

Praveen Reddy has resigned as Executive Director of Freight Victoria within the Department of Transport and Planning to join AMES Australia as Chief Strategy and Partnerships Officer. AMES Australia is a Victorian public entity, accountable to the Victorian Minister for Skills and TAFE under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*. It was originally founded in 1951, teaching English to new arrivals in makeshift classrooms in Nissen Huts in northern Victoria. Reddy, who held the role since 2020, will be moving to the non-profit settlement agency to support new arrivals to Australia.

During his tenure at Freight Victoria, Reddy oversaw significant expansions to the heavy vehicle network and conducted a comprehensive review of Victorian ports. Reddy has extensive experience in complex transport policy, governance, and infrastructure from his previous roles at VicRoads and the National Transport Commission.

Updates from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

DCCC meeting

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Cargo Consultative Committee (DCCC) brings together DAFF and industry representatives (including ICHCA) to address biosecurity issues, such as container cleanliness, that can have an impact on trade and logistics, with the purpose of ensuring effective biosecurity regulation without unnecessary trade barriers. The latest DCCC meeting was held on 27 November 2025. A communique of the meeting can be found **here.**

FSMC heightened surveillance

The Department has commenced its annual heightened vessel surveillance window for managing the risks posed by Flighted Spongy Moth Complex (FSMC), formally/also known as Asian Gypsy Moth, on vessels from 1 January 2026.

Upon submission of pre-arrival reporting by vessel masters or shipping agents, the Maritime and Aircraft Reporting System (MARS) automatically emails a FSMC Questionnaire to targeted vessels.

The Department’s National Maritime Centre (NMC) officers will advise, through the Biosecurity Status Document (BSD) issued from MARS, if a FSMC inspection or any specific biosecurity risk mitigation measures are required. **FSMC surveillance is expected to conclude on 31 May 2026.**

Traceability grants available

The ***Traceability Grant Program - Round 4*** is now open for applications, closing 11:00 pm AEDT on 18 February 2026. The launch was announced by Minister Collins on 13 January 2026 on the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website.

The Traceability Grants Program (the program) is a part of the ***Modernising Agricultural Trade – Protecting Australia's Clean, Green Brand*** initiative and has the following objectives, to:

- Enhance our agricultural supply chain traceability systems
- Provide an advantage for our exporters to maintain a competitive edge in overseas markets
- Increase opportunities to export Australian commodities.

The purpose of the program is to support collaborative traceability projects that will assist implementation activities under the ***National Agricultural Traceability Strategy 2023 to 2033*** (the strategy), building on the outcomes of earlier traceability grant rounds. The funding for this grant round will provide the opportunity for successful applicants to contribute to developing, implementing, and improving traceability systems for Australian agricultural industries.

The program will award grants to successful applicants totalling $4 million (exclusive of GST) with projects able to run up to 30 June 2028. The minimum grant is $50,000 and the maximum grant is $500,000, excluding GST.

The grant round opened for applications on 13 January 2026 and will close at 11:00 pm AEDT on 18 February 2026.

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Do you have a story to tell?

If you have any news you would like to be considered for inclusion in future editions of *Inside ICHCA*, please contact Peter at peter.van-duyn@ichca.com. We hope you find this edition of interest.