



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.

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‘Sector focused legal experts

Innovators in cargo handling safety celebrated by TT Club and ICHCA

The winners of this year's TT Club Innovation in Safety Awards were announced at a presentation ceremony in London recently, recognising four outstanding innovations that demonstrate the cargo handling industry's continued commitment to protecting workers and improving operational safety.



Independently organised by ICHCA, the TT Innovation in Safety Awards are dedicated to both organisations' missions to promote and improve safety in all operational aspects of the supply chain.

In encouraging innovation, the awards are aimed at showcasing products, processes and services that address safety issues to as wide an audience as possible in an increasingly complex and challenging industry.

Image credit: John Knight Photography (johnknightphotography.co.uk)

Four cutting-edge safety solutions have been honoured for their potential to transform industry practices and save lives. The winners, selected from an impressive field of entries, across four distinct categories, are:

Winner: Turning data into insight

SICK AG – The multiScan100-S is the first safety-certified 3D LiDAR sensor with Safe Multi-Echo Technology that can detect obstacles through rain, fog and dust, enabling automated container handling equipment to maintain full safety-rated detection ranges and high-speed operations without false alarms.

Winner: Learning and engaging

Active Training Team – Thrive is an immersive Safety Leadership Centre that uses live actors, film and realistic scenarios across purpose-built rooms to emotionally engage offshore wind and cargo-handling workers, transforming their understanding of risk and empowering them to intervene and challenge unsafe practices.

Winner: New ways to make operations physically safer

SIBRE – SLP (Snag Load Protection) uses a high-precision sensor and machine-learning algorithms to detect and prevent dangerous snag-load events on Ship-to-Shore cranes before tension develops, while its Guardian add-on provides continuous monitoring of crane motion intensity and 360° impact detection.

Winner: Safety of people/equipment interface

Long Beach Container Terminal – LBCT's Overhead Load Protection System physically restricts cranes from passing over ground personnel in the rail yard, eliminating the risk of falling objects while providing live monitoring of all personnel and vehicle locations throughout the 48,000-foot facility.

The event has been recorded and will be made available soon. See the ICHCA International website for more information and where you can find details of entries and winners:

<https://ichca.com/tt-club-innovation-in-safety-awards>

ITC joins ICHCA Australia

ICHCA Australia welcomes Intermodal Terminal Corporation (ITC) as a new member. ITC is transforming the country's critical infrastructure with state-of-the-art intermodal terminals, with easy access so everyone in the market can reap the many benefits of rail freight. ITC are making a strong contribution to the future of rail freight to empower a stronger economy, sustain a better environment, and give customers greater choice in logistics.



Independently owned and operated, ITC was established in 2022 by industry experts and is wholly owned by Aware Super, one of Australia's largest member-owned superannuation funds. ITC developed and now operates the Melbourne Intermodal Terminal in Somerton.

For further information, see: [Intermodal Terminal Company | Unlocking the future of rail freight for all](#)

Reserve the date

ICHCA SA will be holding its first industry event on 14 May in Adelaide. More details to come soon.

Panama Canal water storage spills

The Panama Canal Authority recently initiated a preventive water discharge through the Gatún Dam, marking an abrupt turnaround from the drought conditions that plagued the waterway and constrained shipping throughout the 2023-2024 strong El Niño weather pattern.

Panama Canal Authority said the preventive discharge was triggered after Gatún Lake reached 88.93 feet, with runoff from tributary rivers remaining elevated following days of heavy rain. As of February 7, the lake stood at 88.9 feet, well above the five-year February average of 85.3 feet.

"This action is being implemented taking into consideration that the Gatún reservoir reached its maximum operational level and the fact that surface runoff from tributary rivers remains elevated, due to the rainfall recorded in recent days," the Panama Canal Authority stated. The Panama Canal is now operating at full capacity.

New US universal port fee proposal

On 13 February 2026, the US government released America's Maritime Action Plan (MAP) pursuant to Executive Order 14269, 'Restoring America's Maritime Dominance'. The stated intention of the MAP is to rejuvenate the nation's maritime sector, from commercial shipbuilding and workforce development to national security and global competitiveness. While the MAP is a policy framework rather than binding legislation, it proposes universal port fees on all foreign-built commercial vessels based on the weight of imported cargo carried to US ports (Universal Fees). The aim, according to President Donald Trump, is to "revitalize our once-great shipyards with hundreds of billions of dollars in new investments and people coming from all around the world...to build ships in America. We want them built in America."

The release of the MAP marks a potential shift away from the existing United States Trade Representative (USTR) port fees announced last year which were set to implement port fees on Chinese-built vessels sailing to US ports. The USTR port fees, which were to commence on 14 October 2025, sparked intense pushback from the global shipping industry and intensified tensions between the world's two largest economies. As a result, China subsequently retaliated with its own port fees on US-linked ships, which ultimately resulted in the two sides striking a deal to postpone the fees for one year, until 10 November 2026.

The MAP proposes a Universal Fee on all foreign-built commercial vessels from any nation entering US ports, to be assessed on the weight of the imported tonnage arriving on the vessel. The Universal Fee intends to generate revenue that can be reinvested into US shipbuilding. While the policy framework does not provide a dollar amount for the proposed Universal Fee, it does indicate that the Universal Fee may be in the range of US 1 to 25 cents per kilogram of cargo arriving on foreign-built commercial vessels. According to the MAP release, "A fee of 1 cent per kilogram on foreign-built ships would yield roughly \$66 billion in revenue over ten years and a fee of 25 cents per kilogram would yield close to \$1.5 trillion in revenue".

Comparing the proposed Universal Fee to the existing USTR port fees, a Universal Fee of US 1 cent per kilogram could be more manageable for foreign vessels and exporters than the existing USTR port fees. However, if the rate were to be closer to US 25 cents per kilogram, then the resulting fee could be close to three times the USTR port fee equivalent. This would ultimately be a significant new cost faced by any owner or charterer of a foreign-built commercial vessel calling at US ports.

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) has acknowledged the MAP and has provided its support for the intended objective of increasing US shipbuilding capacity and strengthening the US shipbuilding industry through policies that encourage investment. However, ICS remains opposed to any proposed port fees, including the suggested Universal Fee on foreign-built commercial vessels calling at US ports. The ICS states that "the imposition of fees based on the weight of imported tonnage, at levels ranging from 1 cent per kilogram to 25 cents per kilogram, would represent a substantial additional cost burden on maritime transport. Such measures risk distorting trade, increasing costs for US consumers and businesses, disrupting the smooth flow of global commerce and could encourage retaliatory measures".

At this stage, following the release of the MAP and yet another shift in US maritime policy, it remains challenging for market participants to make any strategic commercial decisions, with confidence, in relation to the construction of vessels and trading to the US, particularly given that the MAP is a policy framework rather than binding legislation. However, it is critical that all stakeholders carefully review their contracts and determine where liability would fall and who bears the risk for any fees, such as the proposed Universal Fees, particularly before entering any long-term commitments.

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



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Panama government takes control of container terminals

The Panama government has taken control of operation of container terminals at the Panama Canal, ending more than three decades of management by Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison Holdings Limited. The company said that it had been informed that Panamanian authorities made direct physical entry into the terminals at Balboa and Cristobal operated by subsidiary Panama Ports Company, S.A. (PPC). The state took over administrative and operational control of PPC's terminals at the ports, barring representatives of PPC from the property.

The takeover follows a ruling on 29 January by Panama's Supreme Court that Hutchison's concession was unconstitutional. Maersk's APM Terminals unit had been put in temporary charge of operations at the Pacific terminal of Balboa while the country's port authority prepared to bid a long-term contract. Mediterranean Shipping Co.'s terminal unit is also part of new management, according to published reports, managing Cristobal's Atlantic facility.

In 2025, Hutchison reached agreement to sell dozens of global port facilities to Mediterranean Shipping Co. and US-based investor BlackRock, for US\$23 billion. The deal, which included the Panama terminals, was blocked by China, which demanded a controlling stake for state carrier COSCO. "The takeover of the two terminals reflects the culmination of a campaign by the Panama State against PPC and the concession contract over the past year," Hutchison said in the release. The state wrested formal control with the publication of the recent ruling. "Government representatives arrived without invitation to the ports and informed representatives of PPC that the concession no longer exists and that PPC must cease operations and instructed that PPC employees would be transferred out of PPC, must not communicate with PPC, and must comply with government instructions, under threat of criminal prosecution," Hutchison said. "The state now has control of the terminals."

While the company said it had ceased all operations at Balboa and Cristobal, it considers the entire process unlawful, and that the state's actions "raise serious risks to the operations, health and safety at the Balboa and Cristobal terminals," on which PPC was not consulted. The company said it is considering its legal options.

VICT extends Webb Dock lease until 2066

Victoria International Container Terminal Ltd (VICT), a wholly owned subsidiary of International Container Terminal Services Inc (ICTSI), has signed a 26-year extension of its contract to operate and manage the Webb Dock East terminal at the Port of Melbourne.

Port of Melbourne and VICT announced the extension recently, which will see VICT continue to operate and manage the terminal until 2066. This moves the expiry date from 2040 and results in a remaining contract life of 40 years at Australia's largest general cargo and container port.

ICTSI has made long-term investments in VICT since the original lease was agreed in 2014 and is currently implementing a new investment program scheduled for completion in late 2027. This includes a new neo Panamax ship-to-shore quay crane, four hybrid automated straddle carriers and the extension of two container stacking blocks.

VICT CEO Bruno Porchietto said the expansion of the contract term reinforced the company's long-standing commitment to the Port of Melbourne and to the Victorian economy. "The extension allows us to continue investing in capacity, systems and people to support the State's trade requirements over the long term, while providing shipping lines and cargo owners with greater operating continuity and certainty," he said.

Port of Melbourne CEO Saul Cannon welcomed the agreement. "We see VICT's decision to extend its lease at the Port of Melbourne as a sign of great confidence in our future," he said. "We welcome the investment

VICT is making in the terminal and its shared commitment to keeping our port as the freight capital of Australia.”

DP World CEO resigns

The head of global ports operator DP World has left the company after mounting pressure over his links to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem's exit as chairman and chief executive comes after newly released files showed the Emirati mogul appears to have exchanged hundreds of emails with Epstein over a decade. The documents reveal what appears to have been a close and wide-ranging relationship between one of the Gulf's most influential business figures and Epstein.

DP World announced his resignation recently, naming Essa Kazim as chairman and Yuvraj Narayan as chief executive. Earlier this week, the UK development finance agency and Canada's second-largest pension fund La Caisse said they were suspending new investment into the firm.

Qube deal to go ahead

The Qube Board is unanimously recommending that shareholders vote in favour of the proposed Scheme of Arrangement (Scheme) in the absence of a superior proposal and subject to an independent expert concluding that the Scheme is in the best interests of Qube shareholders (other than UniSuper). Macquarie Asset Management (MAM), together with its managed funds and co-investors recently announced the signing of a Scheme Implementation Deed (SID) to acquire all shares in Qube Holdings Limited (Qube) by way of the Scheme.

The consortium comprises MAM managed funds and co-investors including UniSuper and Pontegadea. The cash consideration of \$5.20 per share represents a 28% premium to the last closing share price of Qube of \$4.07 per share on 21 November 2025, and values Qube at approximately A\$11.7 billion. Qube is Australia's largest provider of ports and terminal infrastructure assets, supported by a 10,000-strong workforce.

Together with its co-investors, MAM will support Qube's management team to drive further growth and resilience in the business, with a focus on investing across Qube's 200 sites in Australia, New Zealand and South-East Asia, as well as new opportunities across the Asia Pacific region. Qube has a strong track record of investment in supply chain infrastructure, security and resilience, including at Moorebank Logistics Park and Patrick Terminals.

The Scheme is subject to customary conditions and regulatory approvals, including from the Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB) and the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC).

NQBP establishes a container depot at the Port of Mackay

North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation (NQBP) has commenced construction of a multi-million-dollar container depot at the Port of Mackay, to enable regular containerised imports and exports directly through the region for the first time. Announced recently, the 1.3-hectare facility will be the first container depot of its kind in central Queensland and is expected to strengthen regional supply chain resilience, improve freight turnaround times and reduce logistics costs for exporters and importers.

NQBP says the development will allow businesses to send and receive goods through Mackay without routing freight through larger ports such as Brisbane, reducing long-haul transport requirements and supporting more efficient trade flows.

NQBP CEO Brendan Webb says Mackay's location near major mining and agricultural hubs positions it as a strategic logistics point for regional industries. "Mackay's strategic location, close to major mining and agricultural hubs, means industries can rely on a more robust and flexible logistics network with a dedicated container facility at the port," Webb says.

Transport & Logistics Sector Women's Leadership Scholarships

Partial scholarships valued at \$700 to \$3,000 are now available for each of four leadership development programs. These programs are designed to help women increase their impact, progress their careers, and step into leadership roles. Registrations close Friday 10 April 2026.

Apply here: <https://www.wla.edu.au/industry/transport/>

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 that can have an impact on trade and logistics, such as container cleanliness, 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](#).

The next meeting will be held on 30 April 2026. Please contact Peter van Duyn if you wish to have any issues raised at the meeting.

Changes to Department's email address

All biosecurity industry participants currently receiving notifications from the Biosecurity Integrated Information System (BIIS) Approved Arrangements System (AA) via noreply@aff.gov.au must note an important change to the email address. From 27 February 2026, BIIS system-generated emails will come from a new email address. If your organisation does not update its systems, rules, or whitelists immediately, you may stop receiving critical biosecurity communications.

All BIIS system-generated emails that currently come from noreply@aff.gov.au will instead be sent from biis.noreply@aff.gov.au.

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IAL's Privacy Policy details are available by contacting the Company Secretary, Peter van Duyn, via e-mail peter.van-duyn@ichca.com or telephone 0419 370 332.

Our contact with you

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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.