

Spotlight: Interview with Scott McKay, Chair of ICHCA International



In this series of interviews with ICHCA Members, Spotlight is in conversation with Scott McKay, Chair of ICHCA International.

Spotlight: Scott, many thanks for taking the time to talk to Spotlight today. May we start by discussing your involvement with ICHCA and your widespread experience in the supply chain sector. How long have you been involved with the organisation and what first drew you to being part of it in Australia.

Scott: Thanks for this opportunity to share some of my thoughts with the ICHCA Membership. Yes, I joined the South Australia state chapter of ICHCA some eight years ago and joined the Board of ICHCA Australia as its Chair back in 2023.

ICHCA's defining difference from other industry bodies is that it is completely dedicated to safety. Many other representative organisations at state, national, and international levels have safety on their agendas but may also have many other concerns. Companies concerned with the handling of cargo throughout the global supply chain need a forum to discuss the crucial issue of personal safety and asset protection, and to communicate advice to regulators and governments. This has been my fundamental attraction to ICHCA.

Spotlight: And what are the particular skills and experience you feel you have that can help the organisation in its primary pursuit?

Scott: I've had a far-reaching career covering many aspects of functionality that power the transport and handling across all modes and types of cargo. My various hats have been worn in warehousing, road transport, container, rail as well as intermodal and bulk port operations. Many of these have been at C-level in Europe, Asia and, of course Australia. But above all, in each role I have positioned safety at the core of the operation in which I've been active. I'm determined to bring the lessons I've learned in this multimodal world to my work with ICHCA.

Spotlight: Do you feel the same aspects of ICHCA membership that appealed to you are applicable to a range of cargo handling operators around the world?

Scott: Undoubtedly. Those, like myself who have spent time in the sector and feel passionately about the crucial need for safety to be paramount will appreciate ICHCA's impartiality. Indeed, as a forum for innovative thinking, communicating shared experiences and initiatives on best operational practises, ICHCA is unique. But for these activities are allowed to be carried out with complete impartiality is not replicated elsewhere. There is no commercial or political bias imposed on ICHCA's discussions, guidance or technical research. This refreshing aspect, I'm sure has global appeal to those genuinely concerned for a greater focus on safety.

Spotlight: Do you think the aims of ICHCA, and aspects of its work changed and developed over the time of your involvement?

Scott: As I have already emphasised the aims of ICHCA are firmly planted in promoting the growth in safety awareness. The last two decades have seen phenomenal growth in the size and complexity of global supply chains. Add to this the ever-increasing dynamic effects that we are seeing that alter trades, sourcing patterns and freight bottlenecks, so of course ICHCA and its members have faced, and are continually challenged by pressures on safety regimes.

The march of globalisation continues. The manner of its step and the pace of its progress will always vary over time and so will the operators that enable it. No one transport mode, region of development or type of service, be it software, automation or data technology can be the primary influencer of globalisation's direction.

Spotlight: So what do you see as the major safety issues facing the global maritime supply chain amidst all this dynamic complexity?

Scott: ICHCA must increasingly focus on the source of the cargo, the initial supplier who is the start of the process, and is the originator of information and data surrounding the cargo. These inputs are critical to ensure a safe and secure transit.

Much risk in the supply chain is driven by poor information and the inaccurate communication. While challenged by the complexities of the global supply chain those responsible must take greater care in providing data input on the nature and properties of their cargo. Those wishing to ship hazardous materials for instance must be educated, informed and motivated to ensure the correct information is fed into the transportation process at source.

Undeclared or wrongly declared dangerous cargoes are the primary cause of damaging fires throughout the supply chain, particular in container transport. Whether in an effort to cut costs of packaging or carrier charges. Just so with bulk commodities, badly secured or irresponsibly loaded cargo cause serious incidents costing human life. The proliferation of electric batteries in many products, not just EVs is moving so quickly as to outpace the safety regulations and industry methods of handling them.

ICHCA has a primary role to play in mitigating these factors and has traditionally excelled in disseminating best practice throughout the operator community. But it must increase these efforts to help suppliers communicate more effectively with cargo handlers on the nature and properties of their products and cargoes.

Spotlight: What would you say is the primary reason a cargo handling operator should consider becoming a member of ICHCA?

Scott: Primarily to be part of this conversation between supplier and operators; to influence the development of a more relevant safety regime in whatever part of the supply chain they are involved. ICHCA gives Members unique access to safety research, advancing technologies, innovations in the safer handling and transport of goods, and a forum in which the mutual trust of customers and competitors can be assured when sharing experiences and solutions surrounding the greater safety good.

Spotlight: Thinking of ICHCA's influence within the IMO, what would you say is the priority issue that the Association should be concentrating on?

Scott: The IMO is the foremost regulatory of safety for the carriage of goods internationally. As such ICHCA is well placed to help industry, and Members in particular to influence the specific wording of regulations coming into force to help ensure safety. The IMO administration however moves slowly, as any multinational organisation is likely to when trying to represent all interests and seeking majority agreement on issues. The process of regulatory enactment takes place over multi-year cycles and ICHCA endeavours to have relevant input at each stage.

However, the slow pace of regulations coming into force requires ICHCA to also assist the industry in reaching consensus on issues and the implementation of best practice more efficiently, and in advance of regulation. This is especially true when reacting to such dangers as misdeclared dangerous cargoes and the fast-moving necessities of handling EVs. ICHCA's knowledge of the IMO's reflections on these issues can of course help it in moving the industry (more quickly) in a positive direction.

Spotlight: In closing, we can't help but note the picture on the wall behind you, as we speak online, of an Australian sports arena, an indication perhaps of your sporting interests and allegiances.

Scott: Aaah yes, a painting given to me by a friend, and of which I'm very proud. It is of a cricket test match at the Adelaide Oval. I'm a big fan of many sports, as most Australians are. Our cricket team is having mixed success now. A memorable triumph over England in the latest test series but a less than impressive display in the shorter form of the game at the recent T20 World Cup.

But 'footie' is my biggest passion. That is Australian Rules Football, which is also played at my local ground (the same Adelaide Oval). I played myself when I was younger and am a life-long supporter of Carleton. Sadly 'The Blues' are not quite as successful now as we have been during our famous past triumphs....but our time will come again!

Spotlight: Many thanks Scott for your time and providing ICHCA Members with such tremendous insight into your thoughts and passion for both ICHCA and our far-reaching industry.