

AUSTRALIA'S VOICE IN GLOBAL FREIGHT POLICY

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There are currently 15,000 lobbyists registered in Washington D.C. In 2011, for every congressman there were 23 registered lobbyists. Lucky for us, the political scene in Australia is very different. Politicians are accessible and many of them are, dare I say it, grounded. However, for the last number of years, there has been a major imbalance in Canberra.

Infrastructure owners and operators have had the loudest voice in major policy decisions that affect the movement of freight. In the battlefield of political influence cargo owners, who bear the costs and are most affected by inefficiencies and supply chain failures, have been outgunned and outmanned.

But this isn't the result of some grand conspiracy. It is about visibility and branding. The large infrastructure owners can afford teams of lobbyists, hold grand events and hire PR firms to spread their message.

The infrastructure users (cargo owners and freight forwarders) have not had the same level of political activity and, as a result, to some extent, we have become passengers in the development of freight and international supply chain policy.

The good news is that things are changing. In the last few years, Freight & Trade Alliance (FTA) and the Australian Peak Shippers Association (APSA) have significantly invested in our relationships with the executive branch of politics. We have formed relationships with all relevant ministers, shadow ministers, at both a state and federal level, and their advisors. We have several key supporters in Canberra, on both sides of the chamber, and we are enormously grateful for their support. We have been elected to the National Committee for Trade Facilitation (the national peak committee for trade affairs), as well being admitted



(L-R) James Hookham, Deputy CEO, Freight Transport Association of the UK; Sean Van Dort, Joint Apparel Association Forum; Travis Brooks-Garrett, FTA/APSA.

to major committees facilitated by the border agencies – the Australian Border Force (ABF), the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR), and the Office of Transport Security (OTS).

Our partnership with the Australian Peak Shipper Association (APSA), the largest peak body of containerised exporters in Australia, has only strengthened that voice.

Our political influence is growing but we have a long way to go. It is now up to us to ensure that our engagement with politicians is positive, collaborative and solutions-focused.

But international supply chain affairs do not stop at the border. For real influence we need to establish an international voice.

In October this year, FTA/APSA was proud to represent Australia at the Global Shippers Forum in the Canary Islands, joining major shipper bodies and UN agencies from around the world.

THE ROLE OF THE GLOBAL SHIPPERS FORUM (GSF)

The GSF is the peak body for cargo owners globally, tasked with representing shippers to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Customs Organisation (WCO), the

United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and with official status at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) via a partnership with the International Cargo Handling Coordination Association (ICHCA). Members represent the world's major trading nations including China, the UK, the U.S., Canada, Sri Lanka, Europe and beyond.

Like FTA/APSA, their mission is to ensure that cargo owners have a voice in freight policy.

Over the last few years the GSF has been involved in major advocacy activities that include challenging the concentration of market power in the liner shipping market, challenging unfair and spurious shipping line surcharges, and leading the way in supply chain environmental policy.

APSA is proud to be Australia's representative to the GSF and continues to be an active member of the forum.

GLOBAL SHIPPERS FORUM 2018

To strengthen our voice in international freight policy, FTA/APSA is proud to confirm that we will be hosting next year's Global Shippers Forum annual conference in Melbourne from 8-11 May 2018. This event will cover trade facilitation, supply chain security and other emerging issues, and will be relevant to government stakeholders, importers, exporters and international freight service providers.

We are also proud to be collaborating with the International Cargo Handling Coordination Association (ICHCA), who will be joining us for their international conference.

If you would like to be more involved in the activities of the Global Shippers Forum or if you would like to provide input into any of these policy areas, please email me directly at secretariat@auspsa.com.

Travis Brooks-Garrett is a director of the FTA and a member of the Secretariat of the APSA. ■