



Rise to the challenge

With the road freight task in Australia predicted to double by 2020 it is not only the transport associations that need to think about how our roads will handle this extra burden.

Manufacturers also need to focus on the future and start building the required skills now. Managing Director of O'Phee Trailers and President of the CVIAQ, Sharon O'Phee, fills us in on what needs to be done to manage the task.

One issue clearly looms above all others in the world of manufacturing. The problem being experienced at O'Phee's, and other manufacturers around Australia, is one of production.

The CVIAQ TIC Paper *"Trucks to meet the Future Road Freight Task"* clearly identified the potential doubling of Australia's Road Freight Task and the National Transport Commission has begun a study on Australia's Land Freight Task that predicts doubling by 2020.

From our perspective, as trailer manufacturers, we need to look closely

at what this really means for our business. It is common knowledge in the industry that we are in a boom period. Everyone in the industry is busy building product as fast as it can be manufactured and moved out the door. In some cases, lead-time for many specialist products is out to 8 months.

The products we build are also changing at an unprecedented rate, with new technology such as EBS and similar products achieving a greater market penetration all the time. The adoption of Performance Based Standards and the general

push towards innovative combination designs mean that we need to keep up with technology and ensure that we are capable of producing what our customers demand and need in this very competitive environment.

Add the freight task to this and it becomes clear that the already strained production facilities are going to have to cope with even greater demand for new vehicles. At this point in time I doubt there are any local manufacturers who could handle doubling their output.

If we examine what is needed to

Managing Director of O'Phee Trailers and President of the CVIAQ, Sharon O'Phee, says that in order to grow the transport industry needs to train staff that are capable of manufacturing sophisticated products.

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O'Phee Co-Owners, husband and wife team, Sharon & Mick O'Phee.



achieve this increase in production we are faced with a formidable list of requirements. Floor space, new welding technology, steel cutting technology that is straight out of the space age and innovations in computer technology that makes you dizzy with potential.

All of this can be achieved with the resources available in the marketplace today, and an understanding Bank Manager.

The limiting factor to this clearly needed expansion is staff. We are already in a position where the industry is desperate for trained people who can fill the needs of modern production technology.

Businesses from all over Australia are already utilising the services of welders from Asian countries to meet the shortfall they are experiencing.

This is happening to meet our current demand, what is going to happen when the increase kicks in and we have to lift production or lose the business?

As I do not believe that we can lose local business, we are confronted with

some of our manufacturing capability being taken off shore.

This is a scenario that none of us wants to contemplate, and so far our industry has been protected by its specialist nature.

So what is the answer? As I see it, we need to train staff and we need to do it now. If we prove to be able to meet the production challenge our industry will grow and be profitable.

The training available through the apprenticeship system under the current AUM Bus, Truck and Trailer qualification is the most suitable package our industry has ever had access to and is currently being delivered in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia, with NSW to come on line soon.

This qualification has been delivering multi skilled tradespersons in Queensland for several years and has been an enormous advantage to industry.

If we want to grow the potential of our industry, there is little choice

in the matter. We need to train staff that are capable of manufacturing our sophisticated product.

The CVIAQ has been working with the school system in the South West of Brisbane to make sure that school leavers are aware of potential careers in our industry and to assist with ensuring that the right recruits are available.

They are about to commence a program that will encourage schools and member companies to participate in activities, increasing student exposure to industry and facilitate work experience; industry visits and apprenticeship take up.

If you want to move forward with the growth of our industry then you must train the people who will make the journey with you. ■

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