



Presidents page September 2009

Dear Members,

This has been a busy and productive year, and it seems that will continue.

Our Annual General Meeting season is almost upon us and planning for our AGM's in each region and each of the Industry Councils is currently underway.

Some of the highlights of the Chambers engagement in the community on behalf of Members since May include:

Between 27-29 May 2009, together with Greg Bicknell (Manager, Industry Councils); Sean Mahoney (Chair, International Business Council) and Bernie Kelly (Tradestart Export Advisor), I joined the Northern Territory delegation to Timor-Leste led by Chief Minister Paul Henderson. Many Northern Territory firms supply both goods and services to the UN, NGO's, the international missions and projects in Timor-Leste. These have resulted in significant continuing orders of goods and services from Northern Territory suppliers. The delegation was comprised of approximately 50 persons from Government (Chief Minister, Minister Burns and Minister Night included); Darwin City Council (including Lord Mayor Graeme Sawyer); Education; Business and the Community.

Darwin hosted one of the largest international conferences yet to visit our city focused on a key industry for our region. More than 1,600 delegates of the Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association met here over a number of days in June. During that conference, Inpex launched its new logo for the Ichthys Gas Field Development.

The Manufacturers Council launched the Export Awards on 3 June 2009 and we are looking forward to the Awards presentation in just a few weeks.

The Chamber held two well attended and successful Business at Sunsets. In June 2009, Territory Icon, TIO, hosted Chamber Members at the Sailing Club. In July, the Defence Support Reserves together with the Royal Australian Navy entertained a large gathering of Members at HMAS Coonawarra. This event coincided with a visit to Darwin by Board members and Members of the General Council of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), the Peak Employer organisation in Australia. Our Navy Defence Support Reserves were exceptional hosts, providing information, including making available for inspection the Armidale Class Patrol Boats.

The Northern Territory Chamber was very proud to host the ACCI Board and Members of General Council at meetings in July 2009, at SkyCity Darwin. General Council agreed on several key resolutions, including relation to the new industrial laws, Award Modernisation, the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and 457 Visas, all of which place pressure on business. General Council is seriously concerned about the additional costs the modern awards will impose on employers on a range of industry sectors and the consequent adverse impact on employment. Regarding 457 Visas, General Council agrees that the changes to the SubClass 457 visa inhibit the flow of skilled labour into Australia and will restrict the capacity of business to expand when a recovery occurs. Other topics included encouraging a comprehensive review of, and reduction in, government expenditure outlays to return the budget back to surplus when the economy begins to recover. General Council also advocated measures, including Payroll Tax reform, to reduce business costs and encourage investment and employment growth.

The ACCI Dinner at SkyCity was well attended and everyone enjoyed the informative and quality presentations by ACCI President Tony Horwath and Treasurer the Hon Delia Lawrie, MLA. Mr Horwath AO said that it is always a motivating experience visiting Darwin and the Territory especially witnessing first hand the strong signs of confidence and ever increasing examples of major capital expansion." Treasurer Lawrie added to that and outlined the developments in the Territory and government investment in infrastructure.

I am very proud of our Member's achievements and investment in our productive capacity. The Chamber continues to advocate on your behalf to ensure policy, including government policy, Federal and State, does not impose costs on, and has clear benefits for our Members.

Sincerely,

George Roussos
President, Chamber of Commerce, Northern Territory