



**President's Report to the Annual General Meeting of the Australia Thailand
Business Council (ATBC), Thursday 1 November 2018
Kingsgate Consolidated, Level 21, 20 Bond Street, Sydney, NSW 2000**

Your ATBC Board has been led by President and Treasurer, Doug Blunt, Vice President and Secretary, Jamie Gibson, and Assistant Secretary and Board Member, Peter Siripol, since the last AGM in November 2017. Jamie Gibson has continued portfolio responsibility for website/communications, Peter Siripol for strategic relations with the Thai Government, and Doug Blunt for finance and banking. Secretarial services were provided courtesy of Jamie Gibson.

There were no office expense charges for the year, thanks to our generous sponsor Kingsgate Consolidated. We also have had minimal compliance and admin costs. Peter Siripol who is based in Canberra ACT, continues to be our local representation and Public Officer and has been a very valuable contributor to the Council throughout the year.

I'm pleased to say that the ATBC has been reinvigorated over the course of the past year, with a surge in the number of contacts for assistance, and an increase in the number of engagements with Thai Government and agencies, in particular with the Board of Investment and the Thai Trade Centre in Sydney as well as the Royal Thai Embassy in Canberra. Your Board has complemented this renewed interest through various activities to promote the Council.

Member subscriptions from established members were not called for again during 2017/18 as ATBC finances remained healthy. However, given the mini renaissance that the Council has undergone throughout the year, it has caused us to be prudent and think of the need to keep our finances stable. We will be asking all current and past members to review their level of membership and engage actively.

From 1 January 2019, new memberships will be sought, with the new membership fee rates available via the website. (Note: this doesn't apply to anyone who has joined since 1 July 2018)

As will be seen from the Statement of Financial Position, the ATBC reports good cash balances as at 30/6/18 with regard for our present activities. Cash balances currently total A\$15,800 approx.

As I briefly mentioned, the year 2017/18 and to date has seen a real spike in activity for the ATBC. I am pleased to give some examples of our major activities which include but are not limited to:

- Attendance and representation at the Thailand National Day in Sydney on 4 December 2017;
- Attendance and representation at “Thailand Taking Off To New Heights” a Thai Board of Investment Seminar on 24 May 2018, at PWC in Sydney;
- Welcome meeting with Her Excellency, Mrs Nantana Sivakua, Ambassador of Thailand to Australia, on 19 June 2018, to discuss issues of mutual benefit;
- The ATBC was proud to be a founder in the inaugural ASEAN Business Council's Networking Event held in partnership with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and the NSW and Australian Governments at the NSW Trade and Investment Offices in Sydney, on 25 July 2018, attended by about 60 people of wide regional interests;
- Attendance and representation with the Thai Assistant Minister for Commerce – promoting exciting new Thai rice varieties in Sydney, on 14 September 2018; and
- Traveling to Thailand throughout the year and meeting with various stakeholders including with members from our sister chamber – AustCham.
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I would also like to comment specifically on the level of contact with the Council from both Thai and Australian businesses seeking advice or assistance has been very high this year. We are averaging 1-2 contacts per week across a range of sectors from agriculture, manufacturing, resources, tourism and sports and leisure.

As a result of this renewed activity and engagement we have continued to re-inforce excellent relationships with Australian and Thai government agencies, Austcham in Bangkok, Austrade, Asialink, the Asia Society and other like-minded organisations to continually maintain information and links via our website as a reference for the public and for the use of members. AustCham's e-magazine Advance remains available to all members via our website at: <http://www.aust-thai.org.au>

I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge some magnificent Australia - Thailand cooperation during the rescue of the Thai Youth Soccer Team in July this year, when the eyes of the world were on Thailand during this huge rescue effort. The team of 15 boys and coach were trapped inside the huge Tham Luang cave in Chiang Rai, Northern Thailand by rising flood waters, getting ever worse in the shadow of oncoming monsoon rains. Timing and organisation was critical.

Rapid assistance to Thai Navy divers came from other countries who had specialist diving rescue teams such as Australia and the USA in their armed and police forces, and most especially private Australian and British citizens with cave diving skills. Critical medical knowledge from Australian divers at very short notice made a fairly unlikely rescue possible.

A single Thai volunteer support diver Suman Kunan was a casualty and he is remembered as a hero. It reminded all how dangerous the whole rescue effort was.

The visiting Thai Deputy Prime Minister Prajin Juntong, formally thanked Australia for its participation during his visit to Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney in late July.

The ATBC's traditional role as a high-level organisation aimed at facilitating trade and investment between Australia and Thailand faced increased demand this year, and as we look ahead to the next year we will be once again focusing on:

- providing bilateral business services to Thai and Australian companies/individuals;
- recruiting and building a diverse and active membership base;
- continuing to promote the Council's good name and reputation at all levels of engagement;
- hosting events aimed at providing relevant and meaningful networking, business development opportunities; and
- improving our website to the point where it can serve as the basic go-to starting point for businesses large and small wanting to engage in two way trade and investment with Thailand.

In conclusion, I think 2017/18 has been a much needed shot in the arm for the Council and as we look towards 2019, consolidating and improving on the gains we've made so far, we would encourage anybody with an interest in doing business in Thailand to get in touch.

The opportunities are limitless and I look forward to another exciting year ahead.

**D R Blunt,
ATBC President, 2017-18**