

## **REPORT ON NOVEMBER 2011 MEETING.**

Speaker: Ray Smith of the Port Kembla Port Corporation.

Topic: Port Kembla Harbour.

Ray Smith recalled effectively our industrial past and in particular our shipping and port facilities at Port Kembla and their development. He enhanced his presentation using an overhead projector to display wide landscape photos to put his address in perspective.

Timber jetties into the open sea were the initial means of loading coal for shipping to markets. It was in the 1880s that jetties were built associated with shipments of coal from Mt Kembla coal, and in time protected by two breakwaters forming a partial enclosure for them, with a 300 metre opening to the sea. Completion was not immediate but a start having been made, the Port and the Town of Port Kembla were formed and formed and took on a momentum of their own. Industries were established for copper ore smelting and refining, and then copper piping, and fertilising products. Jetties were improved, lengthened and added to and by 1915 the breakwaters in place today were completed.

By 1927 the move from Lithgow of Hoskins Steel Works to Port Kembla became a reality and a trigger for further expansion of the Port facilities. The pace of change slowed down during the Depression, but the Steel Works were attracting a range of industries, and at war's end it was the Steel Works that were to surpass all other industries in every respect. Activity through the outer harbour increased as the area's industrial base intensified putting pressure on for enlargement of Port facilities.

Attention turned to the development of an Inner Harbour, then Tom Thumb lagoon, a heavily silted area within Allens Creek, with an opening to the sea and close by the Outer Harbour. Work commenced in 1956 with extensive dredging and the Inner Harbour was opened to shipping in 1960. It was a great addition to the facilities of the Outer Harbour serving the Steel Works, their new steelmaking processes, the flat products division, imports and exports. A coal loader with extensive receivable facilities was added in 1965 and enlarged in 1980. Throughout the 1960s and beyond the local economy was in overdrive, but in the early 1970s signs of decline in the steel industry started to appear.

The Port Corporation directed its efforts to turning to account the considerable open space available to it. A dry dock was constructed and used as a casting basin for component parts of the Sydney Harbour Tunnel. These sections were floated out of the Inner Harbour. Then a Deep Sea Oil Rig was constructed and towed to Bass Strait. A Multi Purpose Berth was added to cater for special and large one-off products. A grain terminal was completed in the 1990s. At the same time to meet shipping trends worldwide jetties and berths were extended for larger ships.

The casting basin was filled in and the Corporation secured the car imports previously shipped through Glebe Island. The open space, now restored, has a car berth of some 300 metres in length to cater for the huge car transport ships and can accommodate 7,000 vehicles. A Service industry is in place there to prepare vehicles for delivery to outlets throughout Australia.

There are now 27 berths in the Outer and Inner Harbour. Five tugs including pilot boats assist with the movements of vessels. Ship visits during 2010/2011 numbered 1002, and tonnages were up overall. A good year, our speaker said. There is hope that the grain elevator throughput, post drought, will fill the void left by our steel industry vacating its export business for the time being. As for the immediate future. The Corporation is reclaiming now a large area of the Outer Harbour to meet future shipping needs.

Well done Port Kembla Port Corporation!