

BRIAN O'CONNOR

Brian O'Connor began working for his father (Joe O'Connor) in the Yass NSW Caltex Distributorship in September 1953 after 4 years in the Commonwealth Bank. Joe O'Connor started the Texaco Agency for Yass in 1934 (later Caltex) and was still actively working in it in 1984 when he was recognised by Caltex for his half a century association with the Caltex Oil Company at a dinner attended by the Chairman of Caltex Oil Australia, which coincided with his eightieth birthday. Unfortunately Joe passed away shortly afterwards

Trading as E.J. O'Connor & Son (Yass) Pty Ltd Brian continued to run the Yass Distributorship until 1988 (54 years trading) when he sold it to Kirks Petroleum Services and took on a contract to run the Canberra Inland Terminal as the terminal operator. This was a new approach for Caltex where the terminal was operated by a manager and staff and the sales and transport were handled by other contractors

Brian stayed at Canberra for five years (1988-1993) and in that period he brought the terminal the Canberra facility to a very high standard and won several awards for Environmental aspects and OH&S

Brian then contracted to Don Kirk at Kirks Tanker Services (KTS) with an emphasis on Safety, TruckSafe, Driver Fatigue and also editing the Kirk staff newsletter

Following the sale of Kirks Tanker Services in 1998 Brian became the National Emergency Response Coordinator for the national OAMPS Insurance Brokers and continued in this role until 2011. Brian also travelled a lot making industry presentations for OAMPS and various companies, across Australia.

In the late 1990's Brian together with Bill Cronin of Shell conducted Rollover Tanker Training Exercises in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and the ACT. These training sessions were sponsored by OAMPS AND Brian handled all the marketing and administration. Attendance figures of 400-500 people were recorded at each location and two & three sessions per day were conducted and spread over two days. This proved there was a very real demand for this type of specialised training. A forerunner of things to come?

In 1999 Brian was contracted by Global Spill Control of Melbourne to go to East Borneo (Indonesia) and spent a week instructing the staff of a giant coal mine at East Kalimantan in emergency response and oil spill cleanups

In 2005 Brian was invited by the Chinese Government to be a guest speaker at the huge National China Safe Work Forum in Beijing where he gave two presentations at this very large conference speaking on the road transport of dangerous goods in Australia with special emphasis on safety measures being introduced into the Australian petroleum products transport system and he also spoke on specific case studies of incidents

He has given many, many presentations over the years and was a speaker at the National HAZMAT 2012 Conference in Melbourne, where his presentation placed strong emphasis of improvements that could be made to the Australian emergency response to road tanker incidents by adopting the very successful and economically beneficial Canadian system. He strongly believes in this one!

He has sixty two years (62) active involvement in the Australian Oil Industry and is still going strong with his heavy CROIERG duties

CROIERG

On May 8th 1989 while Brian was at Canberra there was a tanker rollover on the Federal Highway (Goulburn-Canberra) with a total loss of product (35,000 litres) into a creek which was fast flowing because of heavy rains. This spill threatened a nearby town's water supply and it turned out there was no spill response equipment in the National Capital. The equipment had to be brought down to Canberra from Sydney, this took well over half a day and the equipment provided was unsatisfactory for the task.

The Press and TV stations attacked the oil industry for the lack of preparedness and politicians also jumped on the band wagon. It was patently obvious that the situation was unsatisfactory and Brian O'Connor and Don Kirk decided to take prompt and firm action to fix the problem

They called a meeting on May 16th 1989 of the oil distributors/agents and tanker operators in the Canberra area and formed The Canberra & Regions Oil Industry Emergency Response Group, Incorporated (CROIERG)

Brian O'Connor was the founding Chairman of CROIERG and stayed in that role until 2007 when he took on the secretariat to be closer to the action with many developments taking place. Over the 24 years of its existence CROIERG has gone from strength to strength. A long way from where it was when O'Connor and Don Kirk called the initial meeting in May 1989

CROIERG as it is now widely known is funded by annual membership subscriptions and is now 27 years later recognised as the leading oil industry emergency response group in Australia. From a one trailer beginning it has grown to a 34 trailer organisation with close to \$800,000.00 in assets.

Membership now stands at 38 companies with the membership comprising Tanker Operators, Oil Distributors, Oil Companies and Insurance & Training industry representatives. The group has 32 spill response trailers based in NSW, The ACT, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland and two specialised training trailers.

TRAINING

Following a court case involving emergency response it became apparent that there was no national competencies covering training for industry responders to road tanker incidents. Governments were concerned at this aspect and began quoting legislation that this training was in fact mandatory under law and that they were prepared to use their enforcement powers.

No one seemed to take this seriously until a specific incident made it obvious that actions had to be taken. Brian O'Connor had for some time been researching North American emergency responder training and the CROIERG committee agreed to fund a scoping study to examine what could be achieved in the training area. This study confirmed that specialised training courses could be run to cover the contingencies of managing and incident and responding to an incident.

The training courses were not only essential but they had to be financially viable and a lot of hard work went into this very important aspect

The CROIERG Training Program for industry responders was contracted to the Transport Industries Skills Centre (TISC) of Canberra and detailed training courses developed, using the research conducted by Brian O'Connor as the base for the programs. Competencies were developed, scrutinized and eventually national accreditation approval obtained.

The CROIERG training courses are the only national approved courses for industry responders to road tanker incidents in Australia

These courses have so far trained over 377 people. The programs have been nationally recognised by the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) who have approved the training courses and responder recognition by the emergency services/

One Hundred and Twenty Four (124) People have so far qualified for the nationally recognised Bulk Tanker Emergency Responder Card. This card shows emergency services personnel that the card holder has received formal; training in dealing with bulk tanker emergency incidents. The card is administered by the Fire Protection Association of Australia

CROIERG has provided all of the specialised training equipment for running the courses at considerable expense. Courses are conducted at the large TISC Training Complex on the outskirts of the National Capital, where CROIERG also has its main equipment base

Recently CROIERG has acquired a specialised semi-trailer tanker unit that provides the potential to conduct the training courses external to Canberra. This opens up a new area of potential trainees

Brian is the editor in of the CROIERG website www.croierg.com.au which monthly provides information on keeping abreast of the latest developments in the industry. The website also provides essential group emergency contact information, technical issues and equipment sources. The Group has now introduced a monthly ENEWS to keep up with technological changes

Brian O'Connor has been active in oil industry matters. He was the President of the Caltex Distributors Association at the time of the Caltex swoop on Golden Fleece. He was Secretary of the APADA (Australian Petroleum & Distributors Association) NSW Branch and for three years also was a National Board Member of APADA.

On the home front he served thirteen years as a Councillor on the fast growing Yass Valley Council, where he served on many committees including Aged Care Services, Disability Access, Landscape and representation for Yass on regional bodies. He was made Yass Citizen of the Year for Year 2009.

Brian was awarded a Queens Commendation for Brave Conduct in 1956 for his attempts at rescuing people (3 died, 1 survived) when a car went into the flooded Yass River at Pearce's Bridge