



Joint Meeting of ASEAN Business Councils
Opening Remarks by ATBC President - Douglas R Blunt
25 July 2018

Acknowledgements – Consul Gen of Thailand – Khun
Nathapol Kanthahiran & Khun Salila Tepkasetkul - Thai Trade Centre Sydney, friends
and colleagues:

- The eyes of the world have been on Thailand recently with the magnificent rescue of the Thai Youth Soccer team who were trapped inside the huge Tham Luang cave in Chang Rai N. Thailand by rising flood waters, getting ever worse in the shadow on the oncoming monsoon rains.
- Timing and organisation was critical.
- Some say that the rescue attracted more attention in and on the region than the World Cup soccer contest in Russia!
- Rapid assistance 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 citizens with cave diving and critical medical skills from Australia and Britain at very short notice.
- They were in support of Thai Navy divers and support teams, and 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 rescue would be.
- The visiting Thai Deputy PM Prajin Juntong has formally thanked Australia for its participation during his visit to Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney this week.

What of Business – this has not been given great coverage but was most certainly there supporting the effort with equipment. Apart from the media that is, who were there in force alerting the world to the risky venture.

ATBC as a regional business council was formed in 1980 as Thai Australia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TACCI), a privately funded NFP with the aim of connecting Australians with Thailand to help them cross the many challenges of expanding into new markets.

- This applied and still applies equally to Thai companies coming to Australia. TACCI eventually evolved into ATBC in 1989 with a Thai section in Thailand.
- We approach or 40th year in 2020.

- **Almost in parallel, Austcham Thailand was formed in Bangkok as many Australian businesses expanded into Thailand.**
- **It has developed extremely well and now has about 450 members.**
- **The ATBC has a formal MOU with them and we mutually visit when possible.**
- **My wife Dr Kathie Blunt and I made a recent visit to Bangkok early last month and were able to attend a joint Sundowners evening networking function with other chambers of commerce in much the same way as this function tonight.**
- **In 2005, TAFTA was signed and since then the 2 way trade between Aust & Thailand has increased to \$19Bn approx. and 2 way investment to \$7bn approx.**
- **We are pleased to say that more Thai companies are now establishing a presence in Australia, and we welcome them.**
- **Possibly, ATBC has been a victim of past overall successes in this respect as our membership has recently been less active but we are again rebuilding with a very keen Board of Management.**
- **We truly welcome this joint networking function amongst the ASEAN Business Councils as we all have a common aim as regional neighbours.**
- **We especially thank Mr Lean Soh from AMBC and Guy Boekenstein from NSW Trade and Investment for their help and support in coordinating the efforts of the individual Business Councils in making tonight happen, and look forward to more of them.**

Thank you.