

LIFTING EQUIPMENT ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION BACKS LOCAL SLING MANUFACTURING

Lifting Equipment Engineers Association (LEEAA) Regional Manager-Australia and New Zealand Justin Boehm recently visited SpanSet Australia's Emu Plains manufacturing facility in the foothills of New South Wales' Blue Mountains. Managing Director, Kristian Pritchett, gave him a tour.

"I WAS VERY IMPRESSED WITH SPANSET

Australia's manufacturing facility, it is fantastic. I was impressed with the work they do, how they hand craft their range of products on wildly impressive automated sewing machines. It's actually a great Australian manufacturing story. For someone seeing for the first time how these synthetic slings and height safety equipment are actually manufactured is a genuine eye-opener," said Justin.

"The research and development that goes into every product is excellent and seeing the quality of and how carefully the products are put together and then tested and certified needs to be told more broadly to the Australian crane and lifting sectors. In terms of the testing and understanding how much SpanSet Australia has invested and can categorically prove their products conform to Australian Standards, is very impressive," he said.

Justin goes on to discuss the industry-wide issue of how synthetic slings are treated. In many instances cheap synthetic slings are used as 'one-offs' for a lift or they are not cared for carefully enough and they end up in landfill.

"In my opinion, we've got a massive



Kristian Pritchett and Justin Boehm.

problem with synthetic slings and synthetic products in general, it's a race to the bottom on price, which ends up being so bad for the environment. When you look at the lifting industry and see that thousands and thousands of slings are being imported used once or twice and then discarded, it's having a massive environmental impact. As an

industry we have to look what we're doing and instead of companies saving \$2 per sling, they should be examining the long-term cost of these cheap disposable products. It's an industry wide issue we want everyone to be talking about," said Justin.

Justin goes on to observe how Tier One builders, Tier One Offshore Oil and

Gas providers, and Tier One resources companies are examining ways of reducing carbon footprints and understanding environmental impact requirements.

“Increasingly, these major Tier One projects are looking for sustainable construction methodology in everything they do, and they are driving that back down to their suppliers to understand what contributions they are making towards reducing carbon footprints. One off usage of synthetic slings and lifting equipment is not going to ‘cut it’ into the future,” said Justin.

“For me it’s pretty basic, the industry needs to consider how it is sourcing these synthetic products and examine their quality and the longevity. It might be a simple task of maintaining the products, cleaning them after each project and storing them properly between jobs,” he said.

Justin goes on to highlight the significant impact Scope 3 Emissions Mandatory Reporting is going to have on the industry. Scope 3 emissions represent the indirect greenhouse gas emissions generated throughout a company’s entire value chain.

“Scope 3 Emission Mandatory Reporting will have a major impact on the lifting industry. Companies will have to report on the amount of their emissions particularly when it comes to Tier One Government projects. So where are we going to be in the next five years as an industry? We will have to be smarter and stop buying products on price that are sent to landfill after one use. We need to invest in quality products and service them carefully between projects,” he said.

“This is a topic we touched on at LiftEx last year and 12 months on we haven’t confronted the issue, we haven’t examined what we are actually doing as an industry. But seeing what SpanSet Australia is doing and seeing that they already have some projects on the go to try to address the issue to correct wastage and to address and educate the industry on how to reuse or clean these slings has doubled down on my thinking. As an industry we’ve got to do something and it’s time to get the ball rolling,” said Justin.

Justin is impressed with SpanSet Australia’s latest investment, the 600-tonne 45m long tensile test bed.

The size of the test bed gives SpanSet unparalleled scope to proof test high-tonnage lifting slings at exceptionally long lengths.



“The other thing that strikes me with that test bed and the certification of products, safety is obviously paramount. I think a big topic is around how we ensure the safety of slings. The certification and documentation for a lot of these products may be dubious,” he said.

“I put this in my last article. If you go to ‘Hammerbarn’ (that’s a Bluey reference,) the slings have been certified by the exact same person every single time. Are they actually doing the tests required under Australian Standards? I mean really is a \$6 sling that’s lifting a \$100,000 piece of equipment or \$10,000 piece of equipment, who cares how much it costs if you need the job done safely. If you are trusting your lift to the cheapest product, you’re asking for trouble in my opinion.”

Justin is also concerned about the safety element surrounding non-conforming, cheap products and the potential for any

incident to be catastrophic.

“There have been a number of incidents recently as an industry we are lucky no one is dead. The Chain of Responsibility (COR) is going to be a significant issue. If you are a Director of the business and they know they are buying second rate equipment just to get a job done and that equipment fails and there is a fatality, that Director is going to jail.

“It’s the same for the Dogman and Rigger, if they know the product is second rate and it fails, COR means they will be in serious trouble also, as they are legally and financially liable for the fatality. So I applaud Kristian and his team at SpanSet Australia for sticking to their guns and doubling down on the need for our industry to purchase quality, tested and certified product and to look after it, for the wellbeing of those lifting with the product as well as the environment,” said Justin. ●