

Recent developments in manufacturing, such as just-in-time inventory control have forced suppliers to increase their stockholdings while users reduce theirs. This trend in conjunction with the high cost of land, buildings and labour has increased the need for sophistication in the storing, processing, packing and despatching of goods. Nevertheless, fully automated systems still represent a minority part of the total market and offer an attractive market opportunity.

Current figures for the size of the total Australian market for materials handling equipment are not available, however the majority of this market is in cranes (derricks, hoists etc), work trucks (forklifts, stackers etc) and conveyors, conveyor systems and components.

Imports account for approximately half of domestic demand, with the main import items being forklift trucks, robot controlled handling/lifting machinery, cranes and componentry. Imports increased strongly in 1985/86 from \$194m to \$308m before dropping back in 1986/87 to \$289m.

Imports of materials handling equipment have faced high tariffs with most imports entering at rates of 25 and 30 per cent. However, the rates applying to almost all of these goods are being phased down to 15 per cent over the next four years starting from 1st July, 1988.

Materials handling equipment is covered by a range of product performance standards set by the Standards Association of Australia. While not compulsory, most buyers will require products to conform to the relevant standard. Canadian manufacturers considering export to Australia should, in the first instance, obtain copies of the relevant Australian standards (see standards section in each chapter) to ensure that their products comply with the relevant requirements.

2.3 Information Sources

There are a variety of trade magazines and trade Associations which are sources of useful information. These are listed below and specific product information is provided in the relevant product sections.