

Member Roundtable Series — Findings Summary

Birmingham · Southampton · Aberdeen / Warrington · Australia & New Zealand

Three UK roundtables (Birmingham, Southampton and Aberdeen / Warrington) brought together LEEA members, procurement professionals, training providers and end users, held under the Chatham House Rule. The guiding question across all three: *how can LEEA make quality as visible and understandable as price, particularly for the procurement professionals buying lifting equipment?* A fourth consultation, with members in Australia & New Zealand, examined the same problem from the product-marking and supplier side; it is summarised at the end.

The core problem

A consistent picture emerged across all three sessions: the people buying lifting equipment are rarely the people using it, and procurement decisions are driven almost entirely by price, while quality and safety are prioritised by those who specify and use the equipment. The self-regulated model leaves real gaps in visibility and accountability. Contributing factors raised repeatedly were:

- Quality is largely self-declared, with little independent verification.
- Procurement teams lack expertise in lifting standards, and have no obligation to seek it out.
- Harmonised standards cover design and testing but *not* manufacturing quality control, so a product can be fully compliant yet still inferior.
- Declarations of conformity can be self-certified and, in practice, can be close to meaningless.
- Brand recognition is often the only proxy for quality in the absence of a clearer framework.
- Even some LEEA members have sourced from substandard suppliers, weakening membership as a quality signal.

Key themes

1. Verification & approved lists

Strong, consistent appetite for a formal LEEA verification mechanism that goes beyond membership, a “LEEAA Verified” mark applied per item, an approved supplier list distinguishing compliant members (without ranking them), independent verification (e.g. via UKAS), and supplementary quality specifications (as used by organisations such as Sellafield) to close the gap between compliance and genuine quality.

2. Education & engagement

Education was the highest priority, but aimed beyond members, who largely understand the issues already. The challenge is reaching procurement teams, end users and large contractors. Ideas: a short (~20-minute) online module for procurement professionals that members can signpost customers to; LEEA-led presentations members can invite customers to; targeted outreach to Appointed Persons and compliance teams; and engagement through LiftEx and other events.

3. Procurement tools

Proposed independently at multiple sessions, a decision-tree style tool (digital or AI-powered) that walks a buyer through the key questions (what is being lifted, in what environment, to what weight, under what conditions) and recommends suitable LEEA members. A procurement guidebook covering legal duties, supply-chain responsibilities and testing obligations was suggested as a companion.

4. Membership & influence

Concepts to extend LEEA's reach: an end-user membership grade encouraging end users to specify LEEA members; a LEEA Ambassador grade for individuals (e.g. Appointed Persons) who champion good practice inside non-member organisations; and a "CAP card" style scheme enabling inspection certificate numbers to be verified online. A 2019 proposal that only LEEA members be permitted to inspect lifting equipment (similar to Gas Safe) was referenced, though it has not progressed.

5. Reaching large companies & auditing

Getting major construction, utilities and industrial organisations to require LEEA membership or LEEA Verified products on tenders was seen as transformative, best argued through the "cheap now, expensive later" problem, and pursued in an educational rather than enforcement-led way. On auditing, Southampton participants preferred face-to-face over virtual audits, and raised unannounced audits as a more honest test of day-to-day standards.

Australia & New Zealand: product marking & documentation

A parallel consultation with members in Australia & New Zealand approached the issue from the supplier and product-marking side. Its guiding principle framed the whole discussion: *"LEEAA is not asking whether members already comply; LEEAA is asking whether the information is clear enough to prevent the wrong product being selected, purchased or used."*

Compliant but not understood. The recurring theme matched the UK sessions exactly: products can be fully compliant and correctly marked, yet buyers still misread them. The gap is comprehension, not compliance, and there was strong support for simple, practical checklists (for product marking and for certificates) as the first usable tools LEEA could publish.

Other points raised:

- **Minimum product information.** The product itself should carry WLL, grade, configuration limits, a traceability / batch / serial code and the referenced standards, so a competent person can identify it without guessing.
- **Standards gaps & ambiguity.** Outdated or absent standards for niche products (e.g. stainless steel connectors and chains), and a persistent SWL-versus-WLL ambiguity; products not explicitly covered by a standard are difficult to certify.
- **Education gaps.** Common buyer and end-user misunderstandings on capacity, configuration and environment, notably sling-angle reduction factors (angle from vertical versus horizontal) and edge protection, both of which can lead to failure.
- **A real-world reminder.** Members referenced a Western Australia case in which a company was fined following a fatality, linked to insufficient instructions for use and missing information about the product's intended environment, a stark illustration of what inadequate documentation can cost.
- **Imported & own-branded products.** Concern that some small firms import and re-brand products without adequate quality assurance (factory audits, break testing, documentation), with certification problems following.

- **Accreditation confusion.** Widespread buyer confusion between NATA certification and ISO 17025 accreditation, and appetite for clearer, coordinated industry messaging, including making LEEA the authoritative online source so that AI-driven search surfaces correct guidance.

Bottom line. Both sides of the supply chain describe the same gap: UK buyers cannot see quality next to price, and ANZ suppliers see compliant products misread by the people buying them. LEEA needs greater reach, stronger influence and smarter tools, starting with the plain-language checklists both groups asked for, to make good procurement the path of least resistance, and to define, communicate and verify what “good” actually looks like.