



Roundtable Summary – Australian Logistics Council (ALC)

Date: Monday 8 July 2024

Host: Dr Angela Jackson, Panel Member, Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry

Participants: This roundtable brought together representatives from the ALC and its membership, a number of ALC Councillors.

Purpose of this roundtable

- This roundtable provided representatives from the ALC and its members with the opportunity to reflect on what worked well during the pandemic and what could improve preparedness for a future crisis.
- Businesses and workers across the freight and logistics supply chain experienced significant challenges during the pandemic, which ultimately impacted all Australians, and there are many lessons to be learnt from their experiences.

What we heard at the roundtable

- The pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of Australia's supply chains and particular government measures, such as domestic border closures, at times intensified challenges in the sector.
- Governments need to improve their understanding of the sophisticated supply chains that underpin the Australian economy. There is currently limited understanding of the complexities and interdependencies of supply chains within governments, and there needs to be better coordination between agencies responsible for different elements of supply chains.
- Government did not understand the implications for supply chains of its decision to close the international border. The air freight system collapsed and producers had no mechanism to export their produce. As a result, the Government introduced the International Freight Assistance Mechanism to address the gap that had been created.
- The relationship between the broader supply chains industry and government during the pandemic was cooperative, with many significant issues being resolved. However, this often occurred on a reactionary basis.
- Supply chains can be very volatile due to the number of variables that can impact them, in addition to pandemics, such as natural disasters and industrial action. Given the near

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certainty of future crises, the sector would welcome improved crisis planning with government, including holding supply chain scenario exercises.

- Clearer and timelier communication of changes in health orders was needed. This would minimise the risk of public health measures resulting in disruptions to supply chains by enabling essential businesses to pivot their operations.
- A national approach to essential workers and cross-border transit would help those operating across the freight and logistics supply chain to continue functioning and minimise the risk of supply chain disruptions.
- Supply chains for health equipment, including personal protective equipment, faced significant challenges and were poorly managed by government.
- The logistics sector view a number of arrangements introduced during the pandemic as positive, including permit systems and curfews. However, these have not been continued and there has been a broader return to pre-COVID-19 treatment of supply chains issues.