



Roundtable Summary – Freight and Logistics

Date: Wednesday 15 May 2024

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

Participants: This roundtable brought together a range of participants from industry, peak bodies and unions to discuss the experiences of the freight and logistics sector during the pandemic.

Purpose of this roundtable

- The freight and logistics sector is critical in supporting the day-to-day life of Australians, as we all rely on this sector to deliver vital goods such as food and medicine across the country.
- Freight and logistics businesses and workers experienced significant challenges during the pandemic, which ultimately impacted all Australians, and there are many lessons to be learnt from their experiences.
- This roundtable provided key freight and logistics representatives with the opportunity to share their thoughts on what the Commonwealth Government did well and what could be improved for a future crisis.

What we heard at the roundtable

- The relationship between businesses and government during the pandemic was cooperative, with issues being resolved to ensure supply chains kept functioning.
- Industry would find communication with governments more efficient if there was a single point of contact.
- A national approach to essential workers and cross-border travel would help freight and logistics businesses ensure they could keep functioning and minimise the risk of supply chain disruptions. Workers in the sector faced significant hardship due to operation of public health orders.
- Governments should consider how to meet the health and welfare needs of seafarers so that Australia meets its international obligations under the Maritime Labour Convention 2006.
- Freight and logistics businesses would find it easier to keep track of requirements and provide practical advice to workers if public health orders were written in plain English, with any changes clearly communicated.
- A greater understanding of supply chains within government would minimise the risk of public health measures resulting in disruptions to supply chains.
- The freight and logistics sector would welcome improved crisis planning with government, including holding scenario testing exercises between government and industry.