



## The importance of freight and the seafarer highlighted in the COVID year

By the Hon MICHAEL MCCORMACK MP,  
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Development

For the Australian shipping industry, we can look back on 2020 as the year that certainly challenged all of us.

It was also the year Australian families and businesses realised the vital role shipping and transport play in their everyday lives.

For the tireless efforts of all transport industry workers, which enabled Australia to respond so well, I would like to offer my sincerest thanks.

Scenes of supermarket shelves stripped of toilet paper and other essential items highlighted the need for efficient supply chains to every household. One positive – the Australian public are now far more aware of the importance of freight to their everyday lives.

I am proud of the action the Australian Government has taken to keep goods moving, ensuring early in the COVID-19 crisis that our supply chain workers could keep doing what they do best.

The measures we put in place ensured Australia's supply chains kept functioning and did not suffer from critical shortages in essential supplies. Our ports stayed open, our trucks and trains kept moving, our warehouses kept operating, and our exports and imports kept flowing.

We can all take pride in meeting the challenges of 2020 through the strong collaboration of Governments, industry and regulators, such as the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA).

Looking to the future, I was pleased to recently appoint Captain Jeanine Drummond to the AMSA Board. Captain Drummond has impressive experience in international shipping, port operations and maritime training, which I am sure will be of benefit to all.

I am confident shipping will rebound to pre-COVID levels, despite the challenges

of an interrupted global supply chain we faced this year.

The Australian Government worked closely with industry to identify and secure the supply of essential products for Australian businesses, families and important frontline workers, and to ensure their continued supply. Our medicines and personal protective equipment, so essential in these difficult times, were prioritised through the supply chain to ensure our health professionals had and continue to have the products they need to do their jobs.

For the tireless efforts of all transport industry workers, which enabled Australia to respond so well, I would like to offer my sincerest thanks.

There are those in the shipping industry who have been doing it tough. Our seafarers have faced an enormous set of challenges over this past year as borders closed around the globe, preventing repatriation and halting much-needed shore leave. For many, this has meant extended periods of time in quarantine or relocated to another State, with no prospect of seeing home, while friends and family faced COVID-19 without them.

To all of our seafarers, who have continued to work under these trying conditions, I say thank you.

The Australian Government has been working closely, through the National Cabinet and the specially formed Maritime Response Group, to address issues relating to the movement of maritime crew in Australia to enable crew changes, international maritime obligations, maritime visas, aviation caps and supply chain impacts. It is a valuable platform for information sharing between industry and Australian Governments and for aligning health practices. I would like to thank Shipping Australia for their continued support of this group.

Maritime crewing issues are a truly global challenge, and the Australian Government has been working closely with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations and other international agencies, as well as bilaterally, on crew and supply chain issues. This has included supporting the adoption of an IMO Resolution on crew changes and the development of industry protocols to facilitate safe crew changes.

We cannot talk about the impact of 2020 on the shipping industry without acknowledging the plight of the cruise industry. The Australian Government's decision to ban the arrival of cruise ships from foreign ports was based on expert medical advice, with the safety and wellbeing of all Australians the number one priority. However, the impact on the cruise industry has been significant. The Australian Government continues to work with the cruise sector to implement arrangements to allow the recommencement of cruising, while also ensuring the continued health and safety of passengers and crew. This recommencement will be important for so many who rely on this key industry.

Throughout the next year, we will continue to see the impacts of COVID-19 play out through the global economy. Many of our overseas counterparts continue to face the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and we wish them the all the best.

Here, the Australian Government will continue to work closely with stakeholders to open up and increase trade, while keeping Australians safe. Next year will also be challenging but our recent experience has given us a solid foundation to continue our recovery.

To everyone in shipping, again, I say thank you. ▲