



## Sustainability – an investment for the future

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The past twelve months has seen the importance of sustainable practices pushed to the forefront, now more than ever before, by the Australian ports sector. This can be attributed to COVID-19 shining the spotlight on gaps missed in past planning, potential weaknesses in current operations, and areas needing a revisit for future mapping. Fortunately, we end 2020 with confidence in what we're doing and where we are heading as a sector.

The objective of sustainable practice is often confused with environmental protection, when it's actually so much more. It's fortifying the future of your operations, and your relationship with the environment within which you operate. The environment with which you share this relationship encompasses surrounding communities, physical land and life, and the corporate workforce behind the operation.

If ports and supply chains are to evolve and serve their communities long into the future, we believe sustainability is a priority focus. Ports are economic

foundations for facilitating trade, but they are also community members and environmental partners. They also operate in some of our most beautiful and important natural environments. For these reasons, sustainability should be at the core of all businesses serving a supply chain.

One port's sustainability journey is a critical contribution to the network of supply chain partners playing their role in overcoming the threats currently facing the modern world, while simultaneously continuing to operate and serve their community. These efforts tackle current global challenges, carbon emissions and pollution, and local challenges like community engagement.

Over recent years, Ports Australia has directed a great deal of attention towards the relevance and value of sustainable practice for the ports industry. We've examined the work Australian ports have already put in for their future, and more recently we've produced a guide for sustainability planning.

Showcasing current sustainability projects at our nation's ports was our way of informing the community on the investment being made for the sector's future. While our Port Sustainability Strategy Development Guide was produced to further strengthen this commitment and encourage an ongoing effort. In doing so, knowledge can be shared between supply chain partners and ports can be empowered to take action for the future. As the peak body for the sector, it's our priority to acknowledge and promote an aspect of business which unites the ports sector under one shared set of visions and values, despite each port operating uniquely.

The end of a year always brings a time for reflection, this one with particular focus on COVID-19 and the challenges it posed. Nobody could have anticipated something like a pandemic to hit the world the way it continues to. The challenge for our national supply chain is ongoing, and we may not see a resolution for some time. This year has proven that while we can't predict the future, we can place ourselves in the best position possible to overcome its hurdles.

Before considering unanticipated threats like COVID-19, we remain vigilant in identifying biosecurity risks, interrupted supply chain continuity, cybersecurity attacks, environmental degradation, and economical and workforce instability. These are just some of the threats we acknowledge and plan for as a ports sector.

From Ports Australia's perspective as the peak body for the sector, communication is the strongest way to get ahead of these kinds of risks. Through a ground-up approach, the team has made a conscious effort to enhance lines of communication this past year, in response to COVID-19. That's meant increasing the capacity for our internal technical working groups to meet (albeit virtually for now), boosting correspondence with government departments, and strengthening ties with our newest members from across the South Pacific, to share knowledge pertinent to our region's resilience.

I'm proud to reflect on the efforts made by the wider ports community towards sustainability planning, which have ultimately placed us in a position to handle any future adversities in 2021. ▲



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