



MEDIA RELEASE

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Consumers will pay for industrial action at the wharves

The Victorian Transport Association has called for an ‘attitude of reason’ and not the self-interest that appears to be behind the growing and protracted industrial action at ports around Australia and resolve disputes at the wharves that are beginning to impact supply chains.

“Our economy and our communities are desperately trying to survive a once in 100-year pandemic that is pushing our economy towards a deep recession,” said VTA CEO Peter Anderson.

“Hundreds of thousands of Australians are out of work and have little short-term prospects of finding a job, yet we have squabbling and disagreement in a sector that has been fortunate enough to maintain near full employment on above average wages.

“All parties need to put the national interest ahead of self interest and spare Australian consumers the higher prices and inevitable shortages they will face if their industrial action persists,” Anderson said.

Supply chains around Australia and the world have been upended since the COVID-19 pandemic began impacting ordering patterns earlier in the year, creating supply chain bubbles, surges in supply and false readings of market demand.

“With the economy outside Victoria gradually reopening over the last few months, we are now seeing a spike in inbound freight to stock depleted warehouses, distribution centres, wholesalers and retailers in the lead up to Christmas,” Anderson said.

“This has created a situation where stevedores and wharf carriers already have larger volumes of inbound freight to offload, and expectations of significant outbound freight with the cropping season upon us. Ongoing work stoppages are making an already challenging problem worse than it needs to be.”

Anderson said ultimately it is freight customers and ordinary consumers who will wear the consequences of industrial action in the form of higher prices.

“The cost of carting thousands of containers by road or rail to Sydney from other ports will inevitably be passed on throughout the supply chain which ultimately will be reflected in higher prices consumers will have to pay.

“After a horror year where people have lost lives and livelihoods, does the port supply chain really need to subject Australians to higher prices they can’t or won’t pay by persisting with this type of disruption? There is a time and a place for protected industrial action under our system but now, in the midst of recovering from a pandemic, is not the time,” Anderson said.

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