

Interview

Saul Cannon, Chief Executive Officer – Port of Melbourne

Paul Zalai, Co-founder / Director at Freight & Trade Alliance (FTA) recently sat down with Saul Cannon, CEO at Port of Melbourne to discuss his appointment and what is happening at the Port.

1. Paul Zalai – Saul, you have been at the port for nearly a year, what attracted you to the role?

After 25 years of senior corporate roles at Toll Group, Asciano and Telstra, the opportunity to lead Australia's largest container and general cargo port was an opportunity I couldn't let pass me by. Ports are the critical gateways for trade in and out of Australia. If ports are

working well, more goods are moving, the economy is growing, and people have jobs. I genuinely feel that our strategies and the future impact that we can have as a port is so closely aligned with what is good for Victoria and beyond.

2. Paul Zalai - It's been another year of disruption and challenges, what are the key lessons from your time at PoM to date?

If we were to go back three years, who would have ever thought that supply chains would be on the front page of daily newspapers around the globe on a regular basis! The events of the last few years have shown us just how

interconnected and dependent we all are on each other - how impacts in one part of the world, or in one part of Australia, or to one particular player in



one particular market, can have major flow on impacts right across the end-to-end supply chain.

There has certainly been no shortage of unexpected events over recent years. It feels like there is always something that is impacting the efficiency, productivity and capacity of our supply chains. Whether it's COVID, industrial action, or natural disasters and extreme weather in parts of our country.

This experience over recent years and the realisation of just how connected we all are to each other, is one that I think we need to make sure we learn from. To me it demonstrates the need for all of us to work together and take a more holistic approach to what is good for the broader supply chain and our nation. In the long run, this will lead to outcomes that are good for all of us.

3. Paul Zalai - You have several projects on the go, what is the strategy behind these projects?

The strategy is underpinned by a need to keep our State and nation moving through our ports, and meeting the needs of our economy and community.

An important area where we need alignment across governments and industry is on infrastructure investment. What infrastructure investment is required, and when is it needed by. Today, the port is moving forward with a number of key strategic projects that form part of our Port Development Strategy.

Our Port Rail Transformation Project is under development, involving the



PRTTP Under Construction

development of a rail terminal adjacent to the container terminal at Swanson Dock East. This is on track to be completed by mid-2023, and it will support the Victorian Government's Port Rail Shuttle Network providing direct rail connections from the port to major freight hubs in Melbourne's north, west and south-east.

Our Webb Dock East Extension Project commenced this year, and will restore Webb Dock East to a two berth terminal, as it was designed to be. This project is also on track to complete around mid-next year.

Planning for our Swanson Dock West remediation project is well underway. This project will remediate the condition of the existing wharf structures to maintain minimum load requirements, and it also includes upgrades to existing bollards. It will be a multi-year project so we minimise the operational impacts on the terminal operator.

4. Paul Zalai - The Victorian Government's Commercial Ports Strategy – Navigating our Port

Futures, was released recently. What does that mean for the Port of Melbourne?

We welcome this comprehensive strategy which takes a holistic, Victoria-wide approach. It was particularly pleasing to see the Government's recognition for supporting the next tranche of container capacity at the Port of Melbourne, and the role Government has in working with the port on the land transport connections, including road and rail capacity to support this growth.

Supply chain infrastructure has long lead times, so we need to plan now for the longer-term future. For ports, that means addressing the trend in larger vessels and ensuring we have the capacity to meet trade demand. We are in the early stages of our Port Capacity Enhancement Program (PCEP). It is a significant potential infrastructure program, aimed at developing a Webb Dock North Container Terminal and creating a long-term future for Tasmanian Trade Terminals. Current container trade projections indicate that the Port will require additional capacity around 2030.

Our current focus is to engage with our stakeholders and to seek feedback on the key drivers of capacity. In September 2022 we published a more detailed stakeholder engagement presentation pack together with three detailed independent expert reports on Port Capacity, Ship Fleet Forecast, and Demand Forecast. The findings from these reports will inform a Cost Benefit Analysis. We will be going back out to our stakeholders again between December 2022 and March 2023 to seek feedback on the emerging findings from the CBA.

We recognise that large scale port development is a significant and important issue for everyone, and we need to get it right. We're committed to open engagement, and we take our stewardship obligations very seriously. It's about ensuring that we have the right infrastructure in the right place at the right time to deliver for Victoria and beyond.



Webb Dock East Extension Project