

Media Release  
11 December 2017

## **Trade blockade requires urgent action**

### **Governments and authorities must use all means at their disposal to end the illegal picket at the Melbourne docks, industry bodies say.**

The Victorian International Container Terminal at Webb Dock has been blockaded since Monday 27 November, stranding hundreds of containers of imports and exports including Christmas goods and perishables worth millions of dollars.

The Maritime Union of Australia has offered a revolving door of reasons for the picket, ignored approaches for dispute resolution via legal channels, and escalated their interference in shippers' business by involving other, unrelated unions. Last Friday all Melbourne's major overseas and interstate shipping terminals were crippled by industrial action.

The Freight & Trade Alliance's Paul Zalai says cargo owners are at their wits' end.

"The MUA has its own agendas and these have nothing whatsoever to do with the owners of these containers or their contents. The union is happy for everyone else to be collateral damage as it fights its own, irrelevant wars," Mr Zalai said.

"Many small to medium sized businesses have shared their stories of hardship as a result of export and import goods being trapped at the wharf. While this has obvious and immediate commercial implications for those affected, the situation also does irreparable damage to Australia's international trade reputation."

Separately, in Sydney container trade in Port Botany is into its third month of disruption as the MUA prolongs a dispute with the Port Authority of NSW over crewing of pilot cutters. Every time the union calls a strike – there's yet another 24-hour stoppage this Wednesday – ships and trade come to a halt at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Freight & Trade Alliance, the Australian Peak Shippers Association, Shipping Australia, the Container Transport Alliance of Australia, the Victorian Transport Association and the Australian Logistics Council are amongst bodies condemning the union's aggression and its refusal to acknowledge shippers' plight.

"Surely there now has to be some form of government intervention. We desperately need resolution to this matter and, more so, we need confidence that such illegal activity won't happen again," Mr Zalai said.

"Successive federal governments have negotiated Free Trade Agreements to support trade and promote our exports. This counts for very little without confidence that our sea cargo gateways are accessible. The number one requirement for Australian exporters is that we have predictability in transport services and price to service a highly competitive global market.

"Urgent resolution is required to salvage our international trade."

Further information:

**Paul Zalai – Director Freight & Trade Alliance (FTA) and Secretariat to the Australian Peak Shippers Association (APSA)**

☎ ph. +61 2 9975 1878 | 📱 mob +61 408 280 123

🖨 [www.FTAlliance.com.au](http://www.FTAlliance.com.au) | ✉ [pzalai@FTAlliance.com.au](mailto:pzalai@FTAlliance.com.au)