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Brisbane Airport Preliminary Draft 2026 Master Plan

Submission to Brisbane Airport on behalf of Freight & Trade Alliance (FTA) and the
Australian Peak Shippers Association (APSA)

“KEEPING AUSTRALIA’S INTERNATIONAL TRADE MOVING”



Australian Peak Shippers
Association Inc. (APSA)

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ABOUT THE ALLIANCE

Freight & Trade Alliance (FTA) is the peak body for the international trade sector with a vision to establish a global benchmark of efficiency in Australian biosecurity, border related security, compliance, and logistics activities.

FTA represents more than 500 businesses including Australia's leading customs brokerages, freight forwarders and major importers.

On 1 January 2017, FTA was appointed the Secretariat role for the Australian Peak Shippers Association (APSA).

APSA is the peak body for Australia's containerised exporters and importers under *Part X of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010* as designated by the Federal Minister of Infrastructure and Transport.

APSA is also a member and has board representation on the Global Shippers Forum (GSF) that represents shippers' interests and that of their national and regional organisations in Asia, Europe, North and South America, Africa and Australasia.

FTA / APSA also provide international trade and logistics advocacy support to the following associations:

- Australian Council for Wool Exporters and Processors;
- Australian Dairy Products Federation;
- Australian Horticulture Trade;
- Australian International Movers Association;
- Australian Meat Industry Council;
- Australian Steel Association;
- Feed Ingredient and Additives Association of Australia;
- Grain Trade Australia; and
- Tyre Stewardship Association.

The current APSA Officers and Committee of Management are listed below:

- Olga Harriton (Manildra Group) - APSA Chair
- Brian Thorpe (Visy) - APSA Vice Chair
- Billy Davies (Australian Meat Industry Council) - Treasurer
- Mark Christmas (QMAG)
- Flaminio Dondina (Casella Family Brands)
- Sarah Granger (Fletcher International Exports)
- Brian Wright (Australian International Movers Association)
- Michael Brittain (AGT Foods Australia)
- Paul Zalai - APSA Secretary

A list of all members and further information about FTA / APSA is available at www.FTAlliance.com.au

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Freight & Trade Alliance (FTA) and the Australian Peak Shippers Association (APSA) represent the businesses at the heart of Australia's international supply chains. Our members include exporters, importers, freight forwarders, licensed customs brokers, and logistics providers, the operators who ensure cargo is cleared, stored, transported and delivered every single day. These businesses are critical to the national economy, facilitating the movement of goods worth billions of dollars each year and underpinning both Australia's domestic prosperity and its role in global trade.

Brisbane Airport is a major gateway for high-value and time-critical freight, supporting Queensland's exporters, importers and rapidly growing population base. With freight activity concentrated across precincts such as Export Park and Da Vinci, long-term planning is essential to ensure capacity keeps pace with demand driven by population growth, tourism, industry expansion and the upcoming Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Clear forward planning for warehousing, cold-chain, biosecurity facilities and landside efficiency will enable Brisbane to meet its forecast economic and trade growth.

Protecting freight-dedicated industrial land remains vital. Competing commercial development pressures risk constraining logistics capacity, increasing operating costs and limiting future growth. Safeguarding on-airport industrial zones, strengthening landside connectivity to major distribution centres, and ensuring freight remains prioritised within broader precinct planning will help maintain efficient and resilient supply chains. Brisbane Airport's strong sustainability commitments, including Net Zero by 2025, also present an opportunity to embed freight-specific decarbonisation initiatives across ground handling, cold-chain operations and digital processes.

To support competitiveness and reliability, Brisbane Airport must ensure modernised inspection and biosecurity infrastructure, resilient digital systems, and scalable operational capability for periods of disruption or surge demand. Workforce development will also be critical, requiring coordinated training pathways across aviation, cargo handling, compliance, and digital trade to support the airport's projected employment growth.

As Brisbane Airport continues to play a central role in Australia's air cargo network, it is essential that the 2026 Master Plan provides clear, long-term planning for freight operations. FTA/APSA offer the following recommendations to ensure Brisbane Airport remains competitive, resilient and aligned with national freight and trade priorities.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1 – Publish a long-term cargo infrastructure development roadmap

Brisbane Airport's cargo and freight facilities are primarily located within Export Park, Da Vinci, and Terminal Area precincts, with future growth expected in Airport Industrial Park and centrally located facilities. FTA/APSA recommend a detailed roadmap for the development of freight infrastructure, including warehousing, cold-chain storage, automation, digital integration, and inspection capacity, to support high-value and time-critical export/import flows. This roadmap should be aligned with the 20-year land use and precinct planning outlined in the 2026 Master Plan.

RECOMMENDATION 2 – Strengthen and protect freight connectivity to key logistics hubs

Freight performance depends on seamless landside and airside connectivity. FTA/APSA recommend a "freight-first" approach to transport and road planning, including enhancements for B-Double and A-Double truck access, improved wayfinding, congestion management, and coordination with Brisbane City Council, TMR, and surrounding Australia Trade Coast precincts. This will protect internal and external freight movement, support industrial precinct growth, and future-proof the network for increasing freight volumes.

RECOMMENDATION 3 – Safeguard industrial land for air cargo, logistics and cold-storage operations

The ongoing expansion of Brisbane Airport's industrial and commercial precincts is critical for air cargo, logistics, and cold-chain operations. FTA/APSA recommend that both on-airport and adjoining industrial land be protected from higher-yield retail or commercial development, ensuring long-term operational capability and the potential to accommodate projected growth in cargo volumes and freight trips over the next 20 years.

RECOMMENDATION 4 – Maintain a competitive and attractive environment for freight operators

Freight demand is highly sensitive to cost, reliability, and service levels. FTA/APSA recommend competitive pricing structures, transparent service-level agreements, and potential incentives to attract and retain freighter activity at Brisbane Airport, ensuring operators can deliver reliable and timely freight services.

RECOMMENDATION 5 – Develop a coordinated air freight workforce strategy

Brisbane Airport's growing cargo operations require a skilled workforce across freight handling, cold-chain logistics, aviation operations, security, and specialised support functions. FTA/APSA recommend a collaborative workforce strategy with TAFE, universities, and industry bodies to provide targeted training, apprenticeships, and workforce planning aligned to the airport's projected growth in industrial and cargo precincts.

RECOMMENDATION 6 – Embed cargo-specific sustainability initiatives

Brisbane Airport's environmental management framework (AES) provides a strong platform for sustainability in freight operations. FTA/APSA recommend cargo-focused sustainability measures including low-emission ground support equipment (GSE), renewable-powered cold-chain systems, sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) pathways, and integration with circular terminal operations, ensuring alignment with the Airport Environment Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION 7 – Enhance operational resilience and surge capacity

The airport must be prepared for disruptions such as e-commerce spikes, supply chain shocks, and biosecurity events. FTA/APSA recommend planning for surge handling capacity, redundancy in cargo processing and IT systems, and robust crisis management protocols to maintain continuity of operations.

RECOMMENDATION 8 – Adopt measurable cargo performance benchmarks aligned with global leaders

FTA/APSA recommend the development of a formal Freight Performance & Service Charter, establishing KPIs and benchmarks for cargo clearance times, landside dwell, cold-chain integrity, truck turnaround, and terminal efficiency. Benchmarking against leading international airports such as Changi, Doha, and Incheon will ensure Brisbane Airport's cargo operations remain competitive and transparent to industry stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION 9 – Align airport freight planning with national and regional trade strategies

FTA/APSA recommend that Brisbane Airport's cargo and logistics planning be fully coordinated with Queensland and national freight strategies, including the State's Industrial Strategy, Australia Trade Coast development plans, and Federal aviation and supply chain resilience initiatives. This ensures airport growth supports broader trade, export, and economic priorities.

RESPONSES

Industrial Land Safeguards

Brisbane Airport's industrial, commercial, and freight precincts are expanding, particularly in the south-west, Airport Industrial Park, and Airport Central Precinct. Forecast growth in cargo operations and industrial activity over the next 20 years will generate increased intra- and inter-precinct trips, placing additional pressure on landside capacity.

FTA/APSA consider it essential that the Master Plan provides strong land-use protections for on-airport industrial and logistics land. Ring-fencing land for freight, warehousing, cold-chain, and distribution activity will prevent displacement by higher-yield commercial or retail developments, ensuring Brisbane Airport retains long-term capacity to support growing cargo and logistics demand.

Border and Biosecurity Processes

Brisbane Airport is a critical international gateway for high-value exports, imports, and time-sensitive cargo. Consultation with freight operators has highlighted the need for improved airside and landside connectivity between T1, T2, and Export Park to facilitate faster cargo handling and clearance.

The Master Plan should commit to upgrading and expanding bonded facilities, inspection bays, and quarantine-approved premises, ensuring scalable biosecurity capacity to handle projected cargo growth. Modern, efficient infrastructure is vital for maintaining cargo throughput, particularly during peak periods, disruptions, or emergency events.

Digital Integration and Data Flows

The Master Plan acknowledges the importance of technology and automation in cargo handling, including robotic sorting, autonomous vehicles, and predictive maintenance. However, there is an opportunity to strengthen digital integration across the entire freight ecosystem.

FTA/APSA recommend that Brisbane Airport be positioned as a digitally enabled cargo hub, supporting e-freight standards, integration with freight community systems, and end-to-end visibility of cargo flows. Advanced digital trade and automation capabilities will reduce processing times, improve operational transparency, and maintain competitiveness in a rapidly evolving global logistics environment.

Workforce and Skills

Brisbane Airport's growing cargo and industrial precincts will require a skilled workforce across freight handling, aviation operations, cold-chain logistics, and digital trade systems.

FTA/APSA recommend that the Master Plan include a clear workforce strategy, developed in partnership with TAFE, universities, and industry bodies, incorporating targeted training, apprenticeships, and upskilling programs. A pipeline of qualified personnel is essential to support forecast growth in cargo throughput and ensure compliance with regulatory and operational requirements.

Sustainability and Decarbonisation

Freight operators and customers increasingly demand low-emission supply chains. The Brisbane Airport Master Plan includes high-level environmental objectives and identifies sustainability initiatives, but more detailed freight-specific measures are needed.

FTA/APSA recommend the integration of cargo-focused sustainability strategies, including sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) pathways, low-emission or electric ground support equipment (GSE), renewable-powered cold-chain facilities, and support for hydrogen or electric freight vehicles. Embedding these initiatives will ensure Brisbane Airport remains competitive and aligns with global sustainability expectations.

Resilience and Future-Proofing

The COVID-19 pandemic and other supply chain disruptions highlighted the vulnerability of air cargo operations dependent on passenger flights and single points of failure.

FTA/APSA recommend that the Master Plan incorporate explicit resilience measures for cargo operations, including surge warehousing and apron capacity, redundant inspection and clearance systems, and robust digital and IT infrastructure. A freight-specific Resilience and Continuity Blueprint should be developed to provide clear contingency arrangements and ensure uninterrupted cargo operations during crises, protecting the efficiency of both on-airport and regional supply chains.

Global Benchmarking

Brisbane Airport must maintain competitiveness against international cargo hubs. Transparent KPIs for cargo operations, including clearance times, landside dwell, cold-chain integrity, and truck turnaround, will drive performance improvements and industry confidence.

FTA/APSA recommend the adoption of measurable cargo performance benchmarks, informed by best practice at leading airports such as Changi, Doha, and Incheon, with annual reporting to ensure accountability and continuous improvement.

Policy Alignment

Brisbane Airport's cargo operations are central to Queensland's trade ecosystem and the broader Australia Trade Coast network.

FTA/APSA recommend that the Master Plan explicitly align with Queensland and national freight policies, including the State's Industrial Strategy, Australia Trade Coast planning frameworks, Federal aviation policy, and national supply chain resilience strategies. Coordination with these policies will ensure Brisbane Airport supports long-term productivity, national trade resilience, and economic growth.

Conclusion

Brisbane Airport is a critical national gateway, and its future success depends on a freight precinct that is modern, resilient, and capable of supporting Queensland's rapidly expanding trade profile. To meet rising demand across export industries, e-commerce, population growth and the lead-up to the 2032 Games, the Master Plan must position freight as a core strategic priority rather than a secondary consideration to commercial or passenger expansion.

Clear commitments to safeguarding industrial land, strengthening border and biosecurity capability, improving digital integration, embedding freight-focused sustainability measures, and developing a skilled workforce are essential to prevent future constraints and ensure Brisbane Airport can continue to operate as a high-performing logistics hub for the region.

FTA/APSA look forward to working with Brisbane Airport, government, and industry partners to ensure the final Master Plan delivers a future-ready freight environment that supports Queensland's exporters, importers and supply chain resilience for decades to come.