

SHAPING THE FUTURE



There was a time when supply chain disruption was viewed as the exception rather than the rule.

Today, volatility has become part of doing business.

Whether driven by geopolitical conflict, shifting trade policy, regulatory reform, technological innovation or changing customer expectations, the operating environment for importers, exporters, freight forwarders and logistics providers continues to become more complex. The challenge is no longer responding to a single issue. It is understanding how multiple forces are converging to reshape international trade.

GLOBAL TRADE AND GEOPOLITICS

Trade tensions between major economies, conflicts affecting key shipping routes, sanctions regimes and evolving free trade agreements continue to influence where goods move, how they move and the risks associated with global supply chains. Businesses are increasingly balancing cost against resilience, with many reassessing sourcing strategies and considering greater regional diversification. The ability to anticipate and respond to geopolitical change has become a competitive advantage rather than simply a strategic consideration.

INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING AND FREIGHT MARKETS

Global shipping markets remain in a state of transition. Carrier alliances, industry consolidation and changing service networks

Global trade continues to evolve at an extraordinary pace. From geopolitical uncertainty and technological disruption to sustainability, market competition and regulatory reform, the challenges facing Australia's shipping and logistics sector have never been more interconnected, writes Sal Milici

continue to reshape competition, while freight rates and schedule reliability remain sensitive to global events. At the same time, digitalisation is transforming the movement of information, with electronic Bills of Lading and improved data sharing promising greater efficiency across international supply chains. Building resilient supply chains now extends well beyond negotiating freight rates; it requires visibility, collaboration and informed risk management.

DOMESTIC FREIGHT INFRASTRUCTURE

Australia's international competitiveness depends not only on shipping services but also on how efficiently freight moves once it reaches our shores. Continued investment in ports, metropolitan intermodal terminals, road freight connectivity and coastal shipping will play a critical role in supporting future freight growth. Better integration between maritime, road, rail

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and air transport will be essential if supply chains are to remain productive, reliable and resilient.

SUPPLY CHAIN COMPETITION

Competition issues continue to extend beyond the waterfront. Landside charges, terminal access costs, empty container management and broader market dynamics all have a direct impact on supply chain efficiency and the cost of doing business. These issues increasingly require careful consideration by governments and regulators to ensure markets remain competitive, transparent and capable of supporting Australia's trading economy.

TECHNOLOGY AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Few areas are evolving more rapidly than technology. Artificial intelligence, automation, predictive analytics and real-time supply chain visibility are moving from emerging concepts to practical business tools. These technologies have the potential to improve compliance, reduce manual processing, enhance forecasting and provide greater transparency across increasingly complex logistics networks.

Technology, however, should remain an enabler rather than an objective in itself. The greatest value will come from using digital capability to improve decision-making, simplify regulatory compliance and strengthen collaboration between industry and government.

SUSTAINABILITY AND SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE

Environmental, social and governance considerations have become mainstream business issues. Decarbonisation, alternative fuels, emissions reduction, ethical sourcing, illegal logging controls and modern slavery obligations are increasingly shaping commercial decisions throughout international supply chains. For many organisations, sustainability is no longer simply about compliance—it is becoming an important component of long-term resilience, customer expectations and corporate reputation.

BORDER REFORM

Governments on both sides of the Tasman continue to modernise border management to better balance trade facilitation with

community protection. Future customs reforms, trusted trader programmes, digital cargo reporting and smarter use of data all have the potential to improve efficiency while maintaining strong regulatory outcomes. As international trade continues to grow, successful border management will increasingly rely on collaboration between government and industry rather than regulation alone.

BIOSECURITY

Australia and New Zealand share a strong commitment to protecting their unique environments while supporting international trade. The movement of shipping containers, emerging pest and disease threats and increasing trade volumes reinforce the importance of practical, science-based biosecurity measures. Success will depend on shared responsibility across regulators, shipping lines, freight operators, importers and exporters, together with continued international cooperation to reduce biosecurity risks before they reach our borders.

No single organisation has all the answers to these increasingly interconnected challenges.

Success will depend on governments, regulators, industry bodies, technology providers and supply chain participants working together to share knowledge, challenge conventional thinking and identify practical solutions that strengthen both resilience and competitiveness.

These are precisely the conversations that will take centre stage at the Australia & New Zealand Shipping & Logistics Conference, to be held in Sydney on 27–28 August 2026. Bringing together international experts, senior government officials and industry leaders from across Australia, New Zealand and beyond, the conference will examine the issues shaping the future of trade—from global shipping, market competition and technology through to border reform, biosecurity and sustainability. If your business is involved in international trade, freight or logistics, it promises to be one of the year's most valuable opportunities to gain insights, share experiences and help shape the future direction of our industry. ■

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