

“KEEPING AUSTRALIA’S INTERNATIONAL TRADE MOVING”



**FTA**  
FREIGHT & TRADE ALLIANCE



Australian Peak Shippers  
Association Inc. (APSA)

**3 MARCH 2024 - MEDIA RELEASE**

## **IMPORTERS PREPARED TO PAY LEVY IN THREE-POINT PLAN**

**Freight & Trade Alliance (FTA), the peak industry body representing importers, customs brokers and freight forwarders, reveals import biosecurity document processing delays are spiralling out of control.**

FTA Director Paul Zalai says the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) use labour intensive processes with biosecurity officers physically assessing import documentation and selecting consignments for further treatment or inspection on a set criterion for inspection.

*“It is a broken and hopelessly outdated system unable to keep pace with increases and changing patterns of international trade – DAFF are unable to recruit and train staff quick enough to keep up with demand - despite the best efforts of management and existing frontline officers, industry is paying a heavy price.”*

According to FTA, this is causing significant delays for importers to gain release of cargo resulting in breaches to commercial contractual arrangements, adding to storage costs and generating exorbitant container detention fees administered by and payable to foreign owned shipping lines.

*“Making matters worse, stevedores and empty container parks are ramping up their ‘ransom model’ forcing transport operators to pay designated fees or be denied access to container collection and dispatch facilities. It is not sustainable for our exporters and importers to absorb this rapidly increasing impost of hundreds of millions of dollars annually whereby they cannot influence service or price” Zalai says*

*“The scourge of TACs, combined with the biosecurity processing delays, is resulting in rapidly escalating supply chain costs directly adding to inflationary pressures and fuelling the cost-of-living crisis.”*

FTA acknowledges that DAFF is co-designing solutions with industry and notes the significant financial commitment from the federal government to modernise systems.

*“These longer-term strategies have the potential to set a benchmark of global best practice in safeguarding against biosecurity risk whilst enabling legitimate trade. Whilst applauding and supporting these initiatives, we need the federal government to introduce immediate relief measures.”*

*“We well and truly understand the need to protect against biosecurity risks and would be prepared to pay an additional levy or cost recovery fee on the proviso that an appropriate proportion directly translates to commensurate improved and immediate trade facilitation measures.”*

As a part of a broader response to controversial Biosecurity Protection Levy (BPL), FTA and the Australian Peak Shippers Association (APSA) have submitted a three-point plan recommending the federal government:

1. does not proceed with the complex proposed levy against producers (\$47.5m being 6% of the budgeted BPL);
2. increase the Full Import Declarations (FID) cost recovery to recoup the above \$47.5m shortfall, and additional funds to address interim remedial action to support import processing until additional permanent resources and benefits of modernised systems are realised; and
3. offset the increased FID cost recovery impost on importers, by regulating against the current incontestable stevedore and empty container park Terminal Access Charge (TAC) regime, currently costing importers and exporters an estimated \$850m per annum.

## ABOUT FTA

Freight & Trade Alliance (FTA) is the peak body for the international trade sector representing more than 500 businesses including major importers, e-commerce providers, freight forwarders and customs brokerages. Since 1 January 2017, FTA has been the Secretariat of the Australian Peak Shippers Australia (APSA), 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.

In context of the Biosecurity Protection Levy (BPL), The Hon. Murray Watt (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) wrote to FTA on 28 February 2024 with an invitation to join the newly created Sustainable Biosecurity Funding Advisory Panel – further detail about the alliance's activities and member directory is available at [www.FTAlliance.com.au](http://www.FTAlliance.com.au)

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