

Media Release

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Freight border protocols need national focus to keep economy moving

The Australasian Railway Association (ARA) has called for national protocols on freight movements across borders to be adopted by state and territory governments to support essential workers across the network.

ARA Chief Executive Officer Caroline Wilkie said the protocols published by the National Cabinet last week provided a clear and coordinated approach to support the freight network.

She said different approaches by individual states and territories, as has emerged since the protocols were established, could lead to freight delays and unintended safety risks.

“Rail freight operators are acutely aware of the importance of maintaining COVIDsafe operations as they cross borders to keep supply chains open,” Ms Wilkie said.

“We have already seen long delays and some confusion at our borders for rail freight operators.

“It is essential state and territory border restrictions account for the vitally important role of the rail freight sector and make sure operators have consistent protocols to follow as they travel across the country.”

The ARA welcomed the national protocols for freight movements, which would prioritise freight operators at state and territory borders and provide clarity on COVID-19 testing and reporting requirements for staff.

Ms Wilkie said it was important governments responded quickly to the protocols to ensure they were operating in practice effectively.

“The rail industry has been working throughout COVID-19 to keep our supply chains open and ensure essential services are there when we need them,” she said.

“Delays at the border or differing approaches across the country frustrate those efforts at a time when we rely on our rail freight network more than ever.”

The protocol for domestic border controls on freight movements is available [here](#).

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