

## ESSENTIAL SERVICE REASSURANCE FOR FREIGHT TRANSPORT

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### Regulator, industry bodies and operators move to clarify status

Any virus-inflicted restrictions on cross-border movements or community services will have minimal impact on the freight transport industry, according to numerous stakeholders.

Government statements have broadly listed transport and logistics, or the commercial supply chain, as an essential service that is able to continue work despite state shutdowns as a control measure against the spread of coronavirus Covid-19, including continuing to work cross borders.



Northline is keeping an eye on developments

### NATIONAL REGULATOR

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) says that while several state road managers will place restrictions on some cross-border movements, freight operations will most likely remain unchanged.

"All governments have indicated that essential freight will continue, however the details and rules are being finalised," the regulator notes.

"We are still working with governments to identify any restriction to cross-border travel as a result of the measures outlined above put in place to slow the spread of coronavirus.

"At this stage restrictions are expected to be minimal, however we expect to have further information this evening."

### INDUSTRY BODIES

The South Australian Road Transport Association (SARTA) notes that following a discussion with state premier Steven Marshall that "the exemption for freight applies to all trucks".

"There will not be checks on drivers at borders at this stage but it is essential, for the sake of the community and of individual truck operators and their drivers that ... all drivers and employees of trucking business follow all the advice regarding health and safety measures to control COVID-19."

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### **Read a federal minister's take on trucking's performance in this crisis, here**

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Heavy Vehicle Industry Australia (HVIA) notes while some offices, outlets and factories may voluntarily and temporarily shut down, its members' ability to provide service, maintenance and other support is 'crucial'.

"Our members are adapting to the pressures and evolving circumstances in very practical ways," chief executive Todd Hacking notes.

"They are shutting down non-essential parts of their businesses, they are implementing recommended hygiene initiatives, and they are looking at every opportunity to consider the well-being of their employees, who like the rest of the community are under great stress from this rapidly evolving crisis.

"But on the front line they are continuing to deliver the support and service that will keep Australia's road freight transport network moving."

The Australian Trucking Association (ATA) urges governments to look after the services that allow freight transport to function.

"As the National Cabinet considers whether further shutdowns are necessary, the Prime Minister, premiers and chief ministers must ensure that trucking and its related industries continue to be regarded as essential," ATA chair Geoff Crouch says.

"The last few weeks have reminded every single Australian of the importance of our truck drivers, supported by schedulers, loaders, forkies, logistics managers, service technicians and all the other people who make up our industry.

"Regardless of the shutdown decisions they take in the future, the ATA considers that governments must declare, as essential:

- service stations and roadhouses
- truck, trailer and logistics equipment production, sales, repair and related facilities
- freight and logistics, including postal services and post office boxes
- home delivery services.

"The whole of the supply chain, including the Australian Logistics Council, the ATA and our member associations are reminding governments of the importance of freight."

Crouch says that governments also needed to ensure that the stage 1 shutdown decisions did not stop long distance truck drivers accessing food on the road, showers and toilets.

"A long distance truck driver can't take a prime mover through a drive through," Crouch adds.

"It's vital that these services continue to be available."

## COMPANIES

Transport and logistics operators have also moved to reassure customers that business operations will proceed as usual in the face of any impending state closures.

"Henry Transport Group [HTG] believes transport and logistics is an essential service," HTG CEO Brent Henry says.

"HTG intends to continue on with transport and logistical work through this challenging time to ensure we deliver for our clients but most importantly to keep our staff employed.

"We care about our people and want to ensure they are not financially impacted by the continuously challenging environment.

"Let's keep moving forward people, follow the new hygiene routine we have implemented and keep healthy by taking care of yourselves in public."

Similarly, Northline says it is keeping abreast of announcements and an open line of communication with customers but anticipates no disruptions to its services.

"Please note that Northline and the wider transport and logistics industry are exempt from any restrictions on border closures and for us, business will remain as usual.

"Whilst other businesses classified as 'non-essential' services will be required to close as of 12.00pm today, transport and logistics is an 'essential service' which means Northline will continue to service the freight and logistics needs of our customers across Australia.

"We understand that these announcements are moving quickly, and we will endeavour to maintain an open channel of communication with our customers, as and when additional announcements are made."