

Australian Maritime Logistics System  
Lifting Productivity at Australia's Container Ports – Draft Report  
SUBMISSION

**To:** Dr Stephen King - Presiding Commissioner  
Julie Abramson - Commissioner  
Productivity Commission  
*via online portal*

**From:** Jason Sprott – Owner & Director

**Re:** **Lifting productivity at Australia's container ports - draft report**

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Dear Dr King and Ms Abramson,

Thank you for the invitation to provide comment on the inquiry into Australia's maritime logistics system including the draft report.

I congratulate the Productivity Commission team on the draft document that provides significant insight into the current operation of the industry.

We must however always remember that no two ports are the same. Whilst several fundamental elements are seen at all ports, they do differ greater in terms of their operational capabilities & constraints, environmental setting and urban context in which they are located. This coupled with several ownership models at play in Australia necessitates the need for caution when considering forward policy directions.

We must however ensure the ongoing protection of these nodes and supply chain corridors well into the future – with well-articulated 'port network architecture' including 'line of sight' policy between local and national levels.

### Background

My personal experience in the seaport industry extends to over 20+ years – including 10 years of operational experience with the Port of Brisbane between 2001 and 2011. I was the recipient of a Sir Winston Churchill Fellowship during this time – allowing me to travel and research port planning and sustainability issues across Asia, Europe, the USA and Canada.

For the past 10+ years I have operated my Australian consultancy practice (<http://www.sprottplanning.com>) with a particular focus on the seaport industry. We work with a number of private and public sector clients across Australia and New Zealand in various aspects of seaport governance and management including: spatial/master planning, sustainability, major project approvals, impact assessment, advisory services, project management and peer review.

We have authored several national guidelines in collaboration with Ports Australia covering Master Planning, Supply Chain Protection and Sustainability Strategy Development.

We are currently working with several Australian ports in the sustainability and land use planning disciplines.

My formal qualifications include a Bachelor of Urban & Regional Planning and a Master of Science (Environmental Management).

During the various COVID lockdowns, I also completed Executive Education through Cambridge University focussed on Business Sustainability.



## Submission Content

My short submission does not advocate a position on behalf of industry in any way. It is simply based on my exposure to, and professional experience within the port industry over two decades.

My comments are made with the sole intention of benefitting inquiry, and industry, outcomes.

### 'Arteries of Prosperity'

My submission is purely focussed on the issue of port (node) and supply chain protection – critical for future productivity.

Our road, rail and sea channel connections are the 'arteries of prosperity' for our island nation.

Our port system will simply not function productively, efficiently or in an environmentally acceptable way without well-defined and well-protected surface transport corridors.

As both an urban planner and a port professional faced with dealing with incompatible and encroaching development, I have a particular focus on striving for sustainable and enduring outcomes.

We must ensure that all levels of policy *define, support and protect* our port nodes and surface transport corridors – our supply chains.

If we achieve this aspiration, we can help address:

- Urban and Freight Growth
- Traffic Congestion & Emission Reductions
- Stakeholder Safety
- Sustainability & enhanced liveability through desired land use outcomes

My particular comments relate to:

#### **Draft Report Finding:**

##### **Draft finding 7.3**

##### **Planning systems should allocate land around ports to highest value uses**

*Urban encroachment is an issue at all of Australia's major container ports except Brisbane. Industrial land around some ports is gradually being redeveloped for higher value commercial and residential uses and this can create conflict with some port users.*

*Planning decisions should support the use of land in its highest value.*

#### **Comments:**

Urban encroachment is an issue at Brisbane because it is an issue for their supply chains.

Whilst Brisbane has benefited from historical decisions to relocate the main operational precinct to the mouth of the Brisbane River, and precinct planning (and robust environmental management) over many years has protected the immediate operational environs, the need to continuously identify and protect supply chain 'arteries' that support the port – remains an issue.

Planning decisions in and around port precincts and supply chains must protect and support the enduring functioning of these surface transport corridors – **not** the highest value.

City Plans and Planning Schemes have a central responsibility to ensure the city and economy functions effectively and is not constrained by incompatible land uses elevating 'reverse amenity' issues.

Industrial corridors that support ports and related lands must be protected.

From my experience in the industry and from looking overseas at examples such as the City of London (viz. 'Safeguarded Wharves' legislation) and City of Seattle (viz. Seattle's 'Comprehensive Plan' / 'One Plan') more robustly articulated legislative provisions can assist in the identification and ongoing protection of critical nodes and supply chain corridors.



**Draft Report Commentary:**

**OVERVIEW: Long term planning appears to be adequate**

*.....All state governments have released freight and transport strategies that include consideration of port infrastructure needs into the future. Compelling evidence has not been presented that more plans are required or that these plans will not be implemented.*

**Comments:**

It is my view that a properly articulated National Port Strategy needs to be re-worked on as the guiding policy document for State, Regional and Local Planning. These would support the National Freight & Supply Strategy released in 2019 which called for 'Better Planning, Coordination and Regulation'.

This would assist in reinforcing similar issues found in the *National Airport Safeguarding Framework* which provides a national approach to better planning outcomes around our critical Airport nodes.

A National Port Strategy would also drive 'line-of-sight' planning architecture across our island nation – and reinforce the critical importance of ports and their supply chains as precursors for productive, viable and sustainable freight movements across, and through, our nation.

I hope these comments assist the commission in your forward work. I would of course be happy to expand on any matter at your convenience.

Kind regards,

**Jason Sprott**

October, 2022

