

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee | Into the Inquiry of Victorian Government's  
Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

*Questions taken on notice and further information agreed to be supplied at the hearings.*

Portfolio:	Transport
Witness:	Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Committee Member:	Mr Danny O'Brien MP
Page/s of transcript:	19-20

**Question:**

You mentioned in your presentation that there had been a 10 per cent downturn in throughput in the Melbourne port. Could I get a breakdown, please, for the ports of Melbourne, Geelong, Portland and Hastings? And are you able to provide the Committee with what processes are in place at Victorian ports to ensure that vessels arriving from overseas do not pose a biological risk and what protections are put in place for pilots as well as anyone else interacting with ships?

**Answer:**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on trade volumes at Victoria's commercial ports as a result of demand and international supply of many commodities. Demand has been affected by the impact of restrictions.

Port of Melbourne

Total containerised trade for the year ending April 2020 was down 5.2 per cent compared to the previous year, following an improvement in performance in the last two weeks of the month. Full import container volumes were down 4.8 per cent and full export container volumes were down 3.2 per cent.

Non containerised cargo volumes for the same period were also lower, motor vehicle imports by 14.2 per cent, bulk grain by 17.6 per cent and liquid bulk by 6.9 per cent.

Port of Hastings

Throughput at the Port of Hastings was higher by 27 per cent for the year ending April 2020 compared to the previous year. This is due to Esso exporting oil out of the port because of the lack of local demand for petrol.

Port of Geelong

Total liquid bulk commodities (petrol, bitumen, crude, chemicals, avgas and sulphuric acid) volumes are down by 4.19 per cent for the year ending April 2020 compared to the previous year.

Port of Portland

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Throughput at the port has improved in the month of April 2020, although overall trade is down in comparison to the previous year<sup>1</sup>.

Safety Procedures

In respect of the processes in place to manage the risk from COVID-19, border clearance processes are the responsibility of the Australian Border Force (ABF). A ship's master is required to complete the pratique notification (quarantine clearance) to the federal Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment (DAWE) 48 hours prior to arrival at the first point of entry to Australia, a process called granting "pratique".

The biosecurity section of DAWE will conduct an assessment and determine if a vessel is given or denied entry. Biosecurity informs the Australian Border Force (ABF) of its assessment. When pratique is granted, ABF notifies the Harbour Master (via ships agent and vessel traffic services) and the Harbour Master then grants entry of the vessel to port waters.

As a result of COVID-19, additional screening and quarantine procedures were introduced by ABF on 6 February 2020, originally only applying to vessels arriving from China and Iran, and then Italy and South Korea. On 1 April 2020 ABF updated its requirements to apply quarantine restrictions to all countries.

Under these requirements, vessels may berth in Australia at any time, however if the vessel arrives within 14-days from their last international port of call, restrictions apply. These include all crew remaining on board while the vessel is berthed in Australia, unless conducting essential vessel functions, in which case crew must wear personal protective equipment (PPE).

Due to the small number of licensed pilots in their organisations, both APG and PoPL decided not to board vessels from any country inside the 14-day quarantine period, with exemptions being considered by PoPL on a case by case basis.

PPSP initially boarded vessels inside the 14-day quarantine period. Due to concerns about the virus spread, it implemented a questionnaire on 26 March 2020 to inform a risk assessment before boarding the vessel.

The Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHS) website provides guidance on steps to prevent the contraction and spread of the disease.



**Hon Jacinta Allan MP**  
Minister for Transport Infrastructure  
Minister for the Coordination of Transport: COVID-19

29 / 05 / 2020

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<sup>1</sup> Port of Portland, the private operator of the port, declined to provide April 2020 statistics.

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