

Trade Facilitation Initiatives Working Group

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Communique

TFIWG Meeting 20 November 2024

The Australian Border Force (ABF) convened the third Trade Facilitation Initiatives Working Group (TFIWG) meeting of the year at Australian Border Force (ABF) Head Quarters in Brindabella Park, ACT with Mr Aaron O'Neill, Assistant Secretary Customs and Border Modernisation Branch, chairing the meeting.

The Simplified Trade System (STS) Unit provided an update on the transition of STS coordination from taskforce to a unit in Austrade. The priorities for the STS Unit include strategic forward planning, progressing regulatory reform work and development of an STS portfolio oversight function.

STS partner agencies provided an overview of the priority initiatives progressed during 2024 as part of a three year regulatory reform roadmap. These include strengthening and modernising the customs licensing regime; supporting paperless trade through the adoption of model legislation; and developing whole-of-government policy frameworks on cross-border trade data sharing, border controls, trade identity and Fit and Proper Persons (FPP).

Members discussed additional regulatory reform focus areas being progressed in 2025. The prioritisation of these reform initiatives was informed by a public consultation process undertaken by the former STS Taskforce in 2023.

The forward plan includes commencing work to develop a Future Cargo Reporting Model, investigating opportunities to utilise Rules as Code in the trade system, identifying opportunities to iteratively digitalise government forms and processes to support paperless trade and identifying opportunities for future reform of border intermediaries, which is being considered through the Border Intermediaries Sub-Working Group (BISWG).

Members discussed the need for co-design of processes by government and industry, and ways that industry feedback can be incorporated into this process.

Representatives from the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) provided an update on the Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records (MLETR). The consultation period on proposed implementation options was open from 16 September 2024 – 28 October 2024, with some organisations being provided an extension on providing feedback. Based on an early review of the consultation responses, this feedback from industry and government has proved positive.

The ABF led a discussion about the new Future Cargo Reporting Model (FCRM) project. A FCRM is an important step to informing process, legislative and system design for a future trade system. The ABF is working closely with DAFF to develop the scope of the FCRM, noting that the focus is on the reporting of cargo rather than addressing the entire "trade" environment.

As a part of the discussion, the ABF also highlighted the learnings from previous reviews and retrospectives on the introduction of the ICS. A key takeaway is the early engagement of industry in the

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initial design process, and TFIWG members were invited to nominate to engage with the FCRM Project from the early stages to support co-design and also discovery work.

The next TFIWG meeting is expected to be held on 9 April 2025.

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