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Communique

TTWG Meeting 10 April 2024

The Australian Border Force (ABF) convened its first TTWG meeting of the year at the Department of Home Affairs in Belconnen ACT with the Chair Mr Ashley Bell, Assistant Secretary Customs and Border Modernisation Branch, conducting opening formalities and meeting administration.

ABF officials introduced the Foundations for a Single Trade Environment initiative, which as part of the development of a trade portal, has established a secure cloud environment that will link to the Integrated Cargo System (ICS) and support Whole of Government (WoG) digital identity authentication. The initiative will test the ABF's capability to support incremental transitioning from ICS to systems that enable machine integration with industry. Members noted the current development of Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) and discussed the WoG approach which will utilise existing authentication mechanisms, including MyGov ID and the Australian Tax Office (ATO) Relationship Authorisation Manager (RAM).

Following an overview of the ABF's vision for a future Australia Cargo System, members discussed the need for technological modernisation, particularly the ICS and associated systems. There was broad agreement that the ABF must uplift aging technology and adapt current and future business processes through modernisation of trade systems, enabling trust-based reporting, and enhancing digital service delivery. Members noted the ABF's four proposed bodies of work, including Digital Foundations; Uplift Identity and Risk; Trust and Compliance and Supply Chain Integrity, and how these programs will assist with current work, including in relation to verifiable credentials. Members expressed interest in supporting testing of verifiable credentials, potentially through the Regulatory Sandbox process; further engagement will occur with those stakeholders.

Discussion turned to ABF data collection requirements and the large volume of forms in use, with members agreeing to provide ABF with details regarding the number of forms. From there, members were advised that the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) is implementing its Simplified Targeting and Enhanced Processing System (STEPS) initiative, which will make cargo clearance faster, simpler and will support biosecurity management. This will help to minimise delays and costs at the border by making systems more efficient and reducing congestion.

Members then discussed the Streamlined Cargo Intervention Model (SCIM), which will develop Automated Threat Detection (ATD) capabilities to augment ABF decision-making in relation to cargo intervention. Noting the move towards automation, members discussed the use of artificial intelligence (AI) as a tool, the differences in use of AI in aviation and maritime sectors, and how the ABF will leverage the capability in relation to targeting. Members expressed interest in a further briefing regarding the Targeting 2.0 program.

The next TTWG meeting will be held on 21 August 2024.

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