Managing airfreight in the national interest

Summary

- COVID-19 has sharply reduced airfreight capacity. The market is responding with more commercial freight flights, but capacity is still scarce which is keeping costs high.

- In response, the Australian Government is stepping in to help address this gap and will secure airfreight capacity to import critical items such as medicines when needed, while using Government-supported flights to help re-establish supply chains so Australian exporters can get their products overseas, supporting jobs during the COVID-19 crisis.

- New coordination arrangements will aim to ensure Australian Government-supported flights during the pandemic are filled with freight in both directions.

- To support this initiative, the Australian Government has appointed Air Vice-Marshal Margaret Staib AM CSC (Retd) to be the Australian Government Freight Controller, working across government to coordinate airfreight and re-establish supply chains for critical imports required in the national interest such as medicines and medical supplies.

- Air Vice-Marshal Staib will work alongside the International Freight Coordinator General, Mr Michael Byrne. The Australian Government established the International Freight Coordinator General on 1 April 2020 to focus on helping restore critical global supply chains allowing Australian agricultural and fisheries exporters to continue servicing their supply contracts.

- These new coordination arrangements will help deliver critical imports to Australians, while maximising commercial opportunities for exporters to reach their overseas customers.

- Other international, domestic and regional aviation measures taken by the Government are also providing vitally important airfreight capacity. These measures include the International Freight Assistance Mechanism; the Facilitating Flights to Bring Australians Home initiative; the Minimum Domestic Aviation Network; and assistance packages for the domestic aviation sector.

Funding

- If there are no viable commercial or Government supported airfreight opportunities available, the Australian Government will use the Fund to secure airfreight capacity for critical goods needed for the health and wellbeing of Australians, for example by chartering dedicated flights to import essential medicines.

- Where possible, additional capacity will be made available to the commercial market on any dedicated services.
Timing

- The new coordination arrangements were announced on 29 April 2020.

For more information

- If you are an exporter of high-value agricultural and fisheries products, you can register your interest in accessing airfreight export opportunities under the International Freight Assistance Mechanism [here](#).
- If you are an importer seeking further information about obtaining airfreight for critical needs, such as medical supplies, please contact [airfreight@austrade.gov.au](mailto:airfreight@austrade.gov.au).