

Good evening

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

Before I answer each of the questions in your paper I would like to take issue with a statement that appears in the document a couple of times. It first appears on page 3 and asks for views from First Nations-led, gender etc.etc. Why do you think that this is required when at the end of the day what we are discussing is trade? Trade is trade, it has nothing to do with “who” is involved, everyone can buy and sell, I feel this is a very divisive statement to make in such an important document!

Q1.

As much as I applaud the “whole of government approach, all our current regulatory bodies have been given a task, they have developed ways to handle that task, and they have to report back on its success (or failure) to government. For example I have clients who obtain permits from the police service (weapons), Biosecurity, TGA, Environment (ozone gas) and Dept of Infrastructure (motor vehicles) just to name a few.

Assuming that there is a way to link these together, and as long as the costs of the permits is controlled, then yes, potentially there could be some savings to clients if they can make the applications via one platform, where all the base data is stored and can be accessed as required for each type of permit so that every application does not have to start from scratch.

From this perspective the regulatory authorities should be able to maintain the required security around each permit. But there in lies the rub, will you now start to amalgamate these bodies, or will the STS platform simply become the conduit to feed the data to them instead of us using each regulators current platform?

Which then leads to the cost of the STS platform, which would still then been dealing with the current regulators platforms, not a saving but actually a massive cost to structure the STS platform to be able to deal securely with each of those?

I love the term “whole-of-government”, is that not what we are doing right now with trade, we are using all the applicable regulators of the government to facilitate trade? Yes, it is clunky and yes it gets expensive, but industry is trying to finance what is already a very top heavy system that has never had enough resources at the front end to deal with industry!

If you want to save industry money, think about changing the structures of the departments, we do not need to have multiple department managers whose job is to oversee what happens below. Through training and shared responsibility within the departments, you could improve how resources are used ensuring that at ground level there is what is required for industry, the “higher” management roles could be shared across regulators under the “whole-of-government” approach as these are public servants whose higher roles are to manage so their skill requirements are different to those that need to process “applications”.

So will the high-level vision have as its final goals for industry to reduce transaction costs, to reduce duplication (and more) of importer/exporter data, be capable of being accessed by third-party providers who consolidate data from many external sources before approaching the regulators, and have a payment system where the “owners” make payments of direct debits for the bulk of importers/exporters rather than relying on service providers who will then only be dealing with much smaller entities and smaller costs/outlays!

Q2.

Services Standards

If these are structure correctly, with input from all parties within the logistics supply chain (door to door), which will involve data being received from offshore entities, then the other suggestions put forward will start to fall into place behind this.

Without a clear structure, we will be back to where we are today where each regulator works independently of each other, even though on many occasions, there is a very clear cross-over between multiple regulators.

As much as the STS is looking at the border, you have to take into account that we are looking at door to door movements of trade and each part of that movement needs to be incorporated into the STS.

In developing service standards, you will need to look at accreditation requirements for different areas within the framework so that you can have controls on the accuracy and reliability of data. Simply allowing people to enter the market place and perform tasks is not enough, which is what happens today, and why there is so much focus on crime in trade. Formal accreditation will go some way to assisting in developing a secure trade system.

Q3.

I have to deal with this on a daily basis for importers and exporters for whom I have to assist in getting their cargo across the border.

The need for each regulator to feel that they have to operate as independent entities creates havoc when trying to deal with multiple issues. Often the impact of one can have a negative impact on another part of a border situation. The sharing of data is a contact battle as there is an immense fear that by sharing data there is a loss of control.

Quite to the contrary, by sharing data, problems can be better identified and resolved, and in a more timely manner.

As a practicing licenced customs broker I have to deal with cross-border regulations on a daily basis. Some regulators are easier to deal with and more accessible when it comes to obtaining information than others.

For some there are restrictions on who can be contacted and when, and how much information they are allowed to share. This can prove expensive in time and creates issues when limited information is made available. Web sites are not the be all and end all to finding out answers, contrary to what people might think.

Other regulators have proven to be helpful and actually are prepared to work with industry knowing that they are going to get a fair outcome from both sides.

Q4

One of the most common issues is the fit and proper persons tests that are asked of by some regulators. They are not the same and the information gained is not allowed to be shared with each regulator. Why?

Compliance within departments is also handled differently and with different approaches, this needs to be standardised for consistency and lack of confusion.

Q5

Not an area that I am familiar with and have not investigated as of yet.

Q6

Given that countries and companies all have their own way of doing business, and using a large variety of platforms, there is a vast number of different document formats for the same document. This also leads to difficulties when governments do try to establish digital documents between their respective departments such as Biosecurity has done with eCerts.

Due to inter-government issues and document format issues, the uptake of this functionality has been minimal at best. An expensive tool, which could be useful, but proving very difficult to get up and running in a meaningful way.

Q7

As an example, we transmit documents to Biosecurity on a daily basis for assessment by officers of commodities and other matters. These files can be as small as 3 pages to as many as 30 plus. The platform these are transmitted via can only handle 10mb as a maximum, this can see brokers making 2 or make lodgements of documents to get them through. Anywhere from 5 minutes to 20 minutes can be done completing these tasks.

When lodging permit applications, there are multiple documents required, these sourced, generally scanned through these days, but still have to be uploaded into a system that takes time.

Q8

MLETR sounds like a great idea, however, as stated before, given the vast variety of document platforms out there, and the fact that it cannot be made an international law, I think it could be a struggle to get up and running in a significant and viable way. And given that each country likes to control its own borders, the impact of greater electronic/digital document sharing could scare many governments out there.

Q9

Standardization of documents formats and how they are stored/retained would be a huge win if this could be adopted.

Q10

FPP are a useful tools, needing to be coupled with police checks, but the biggest issue is that there is more than one and the data obtained by an FPP is not shareable with other regulators which just continues to waste time and resources for all persons involved.

Q11

By creating one FPP, even if it needs to be expanded, that can be used by all regulators so companies only go to their staff once, not multiple times. Even if we have to do this on a yearly basis, it would be better than what we have now.

Q12

Absolutely, if we expand it as suggested above to the satisfaction of multiple regulators.

Q13

Permits being valid for longer periods, FPP expansion to a one size fits all, greater sharing of data between regulators at a transparent level.

Q14

The tariff concession system has been played with and changed a few times over the years, some good and some not so good. The advent of more FTA's will start to see the need for concessions to be reduced. To ensure the correct use of concessions I actually suggest that we go back a little and have brand names, and even end use included, this would then ensure that they do not inadvertently get miss-used by parties other than the applicant.

Q15

All border controls have a high regulatory burden on them, and for good reasons. What we need is for these burdens to not be per regulator, but as a whole, which means some will probably have to be changed to give greater coverage but to also strengthen their reasoning and clearly identifying the responsibilities.

Q16

ABF, ATO, TGA, BIOSECURITY, DEPT INFRASTRUCTURE, ENVIRONMENT (OZONE), SMALL ENGINE EMISSIONS, ASBESTOS, ILLEGAL LOGGING, MONEY LAUNDERING, MODERN SLAVERY, and so the list goes on.

Q17

All can be streamlined, the how is difficult as all have their place and reasons for being, it is how can some be combined with others for a more efficient use of them and the security that comes with them

Q18

Have not investigated or aware of any specific models at the moment

Q19

As much as delivering early benefits is the aim, I suspect that the end results will take longer than might be thought because the STS is a very large project indeed. It will have to be staged very carefully so that when an improvement is available, it can be rolled out and gains established immediately.

Q20

We actually do not have any choice but to use MyGovID for part of the Biosecurity system.

Q21

Again, there would have to be a joint consensus across many regulators before agreeing to a digital identification program so that its use benefits many, not just a few and would therefore see business doing the same thing again and again otherwise.

Q22

Transparency gets thrown around a lot when it comes to government and to regulators, I am yet to actually see that in reality when all of the "powers that be" want to be seen as them doing the right thing from a government point of view, rather than working with industry to get a "whole-of-country" result.

Q23

There is always issues with sharing data, be it from confidentiality to privacy to hacking. How systems are developed to protect everyone and everything is very difficult, and probably not likely. We can only hope that they are secure and fit for purpose and monitored 24/7.

Q24

This is very hard to measure. We all hope that time and money will be the savings benefits but until we get the first rollout, we will never know.

Q25

Without industry collaboration who can tell government and regulators about how things happen in the commercial world, the STS will not achieve the desired outcomes advertised.