

Port of Melbourne Stakeholder Update 16

Strong container volumes continued in March

March 2021 was another strong month for total container throughput (full and empty) with a total of 291,262 TEU, 29.8% above the previous year. The percentage increase reflects a COVID-19 impacted month in March last year.

Overall March 2021 container trade results compared with March 2020:

- full overseas container imports 37.2% above March 2020 with year to date volumes up by 16.0% with the largest increases in household items such as furniture and clothing;
- full overseas container exports increased 9.0% on March 2020 with year to date volumes up by 3.9%, with cereal grains and wool the key drivers;
- full container trade between Melbourne and Tasmania excluding transshipments increased 7.9% on March 2020 to total 19,732 TEU and was up 6.6% for the year to date;
- empty container movements for March totalled 79,476 TEU, 51.0% above March 2020 and 16.6% up for the year to date;
- full transshipments were up 51.9% on March 2020 with year to date volumes up by 34.3%;
- motor vehicle trade was up 22.5% on March 2020 with imports increasing 16.0% and exports up 59.4%;
- break bulk trade (excluding motor vehicles) increased 76.2% over March 2020, up 35.8% for the financial year to date driven primarily by increased imports of non-electrical machinery, iron and steel and exports of non-electrical machinery;
- dry bulk trade increased 45.2% over March 2020, up 14.9% for the year to date, primarily driven by strong grain exports compared with no grain exports in March 2020; and
- total liquid bulk trade for the month was 12.4% below the March 2020 level primarily driven by crude oil imports being down on March 2020.

Trade outlook

Overall container trade volumes continue to track above the comparative periods in 2020, although the second week of April was flat compared to the comparable week in 2020. This likely reflects vessel arrival patterns.



Supply chain

A Maersk sweeper vessel called to the port of Melbourne in early April to evacuate containers back to Asia where demand remains strong. With a total capacity of 9,640 TEU, the vessel 'Maersk Soroe' loaded 4,148 empty containers at VICT.

Global congestion remains an ongoing issue with vessel schedules frequently changing to cater for various delays. Berthing congestion in South East Asia, port congestion in Auckland and ongoing delays in the US have been observed.

Industrial relations

There was no industrial relations activity during March. VICT and the MUA suspended all Protected Industrial Action (PIA) until 26 April 2021 and the MUA has now notified VICT that PIA will resume in May.

Other news

Port of Melbourne is pleased to announce the signing of a three year partnership with Williamstown Swimming and Life Saving Club. The partnership will support the club's swimming and lifesaving programs for primary schools, youth and people with different abilities.

Last week I testified at a public Senate hearing held by the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee into Inland Rail. Port of Melbourne supports Inland Rail, and an efficient connection of Inland Rail to the port of Melbourne will be essential to meeting the demands of consumers and business over the next 30 years and beyond.

Please call your Port of Melbourne contact or email us at information@portofmelbourne.com if you have any queries.

Brendan Bourke
Chief Executive Officer

