

# IMPORTING TO AUSTRALIA

## A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Designed for individuals and small to medium sized  
businesses wishing to import to Australia



COMPILED BY LEADING AUSTRALIAN CUSTOMS BROKER PETER MCRAE

**PLATINUM**<sup>®</sup>  
FREIGHT MANAGEMENT PTY LTD

“ A good broker will always investigate if it is possible to reduce import duties to **0%**

*Peter McRae*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Peter McRae is the CEO and founder of Platinum Freight Management Pty Ltd since 2000. Peter has been a customs broker since 1998 and a senior lecturer in Customs Brokering since 2008. In 16 short years he has built his customs brokering and freight management business to be one of the leading customs clearance agencies in the Australian industry.

**Peter's qualifications include:**

- ▶ Master of International Customs Law and Administration
- ▶ Master of International Revenue Administration
- ▶ Certified Customs Specialist U.S.A
- ▶ Certified Customs Specialist Canada
- ▶ Certified Trade Compliance Specialist Canada

Peter supports and encourages those starting out in business and has put this detailed guide together to explain the basics and also the full picture for first time importers.

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# HOW TO GET YOUR PRODUCT TO AUSTRALIA

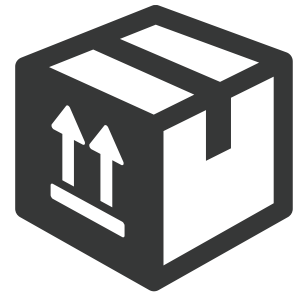
You have ordered goods from your overseas supplier; you are now wondering how to get it to Australia.

There are a few options:



HOW TO GET YOUR PRODUCT TO AUSTRALIA

## SEND VIA THE POSTAL SYSTEM ?



Sending your goods via the postal system, is very convenient if the goods are say 20 kilograms or less. Your supplier will take the parcel to the local post office, send the goods to Australia and complete a customs declaration card which is affixed to the outside of the parcel.

Once the goods arrive at the mail centre into Australia, the parcel will be x-rayed and the customs declaration will be examined to determine the value of the goods. If the goods are **valued at less than \$1000 AUD**, the parcel will be delivered to the address on the outside of the parcel or to your local post office for collection.

If the goods are **valued over \$1000 AUD**, Australian Border Force (ABF) (formerly the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service) will send you a notice in the mail requesting that you either undertake the customs clearance yourself or employ a customs broker to process the customs clearance on your behalf.

Once the customs clearance and taxes have been paid, Australian Border Force will advise Australia Post that the parcel can now be released and delivered to the address on the outside of the parcel or to your local post office for collection.

**The benefit of retaining a customs broker to process your parcel post shipment is that the broker is linked to the ABF and can transmit the declaration and payment of taxes instantaneously.**

**SENDING YOUR GOODS VIA THE POSTAL SYSTEM, IS VERY CONVENIENT IF THE GOODS ARE SAY 20KG OR LESS.**



If a customs broker customs clears your shipment; the **Import Processing Charge payable to Customs is \$50.00.**



Click here for a video further explaining the parcel post customs clearance process.

HOW TO GET YOUR PRODUCT TO AUSTRALIA

## SEND VIA EXPRESS COURIER?



Sending your goods via an express courier is also very convenient and cost effective if your package is lets say 20 kilograms or less. Your supplier would telephone the express courier company in their country, make the booking and then the express courier would attend to their office and collect the parcel, freight it to Australia, undertake the customs clearance in Australia and then deliver to your nominated address; for one all-inclusive price.

If the goods are valued at **less than \$1000 AUD**, the parcel will not be subject to duty and or GST, (unless the goods are tobacco or wine), the express courier will process the customs clearance and then deliver the goods to your nominated address.

If the goods are **valued over \$1000 AUD**, the express courier will process the customs entry (generally for free as it is built into the freight rate), then advise you of the taxes payable and ask for payment before they deliver the goods to your nominated address.

There are a few express companies that you and your suppliers could rely upon:

- ▶ [www.fedex.com.au](http://www.fedex.com.au)
- ▶ [www.dhl.com.au](http://www.dhl.com.au)
- ▶ [www.ups.com](http://www.ups.com)

**SENDING YOUR GOODS  
VIA EXPRESS COURIER IS  
ALSO VERY CONVENIENT  
IF THE GOODS ARE SAY  
20KG OR LESS.**



If a customs broker customs clears your express courier shipment and the goods are valued over \$1,000 AUD and less than \$10,000 AUD; the **Import Processing Charge payable to Customs is \$83.00.**

If a customs broker customs clears your express courier shipment and the goods are valued over \$10,000 AUD; the **Import Processing Charge payable to Customs is \$185.00.**



## HOW TO GET YOUR PRODUCT TO AUSTRALIA

# SEND VIA AIR CARGO?



Sending your goods via air cargo is not recommended for small shipments but it is economical if your shipment is large, lets say at least 50 kilograms and over.

Your supplier would need to deliver the goods to a freight forwarder or airline terminal in their country, then the goods would be shipped to Australia. Once the goods arrive into Australia you would receive a telephone call from the air cargo terminal advising that the goods have arrived; you generally have 24 hours to collect the goods before storage starts.

**In this instance it is always best to ask your customs broker to process the customs clearance before the goods arrive into Australia – in order to avoid storage which is generally \$0.40 per chargeable kilogram per day (subject to GST).**

Please note that all airline terminal charge fees such as Import Terminal Fees [ITF] and Import Document Fees [IDF].

As you can see when comparing the express courier option for small parcels to air cargo; express couriers absorb the terminal fees in the all-inclusive freight price.

**SENDING YOUR GOODS  
VIA AIR CARGO IS  
ECONOMICAL IF YOUR  
SHIPMENT IS LARGE, AT  
LEAST 50 KGS AND OVER**



If a customs broker customs clears your air cargo shipment and the goods are valued over \$1,000 AUD and less than \$10,000 AUD; the **Import Processing Charge payable to Customs is \$83.00.**

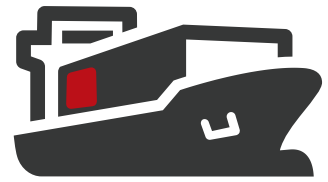
If a customs broker customs clears your air cargo shipment and the goods are valued over \$10,000 AUD; the **Import Processing Charge payable to Customs is \$185.00.**



**Click here for a video  
further explaining the  
air freight customs  
clearance process**

HOW TO GET YOUR PRODUCT TO AUSTRALIA

## SEND VIA SEA FREIGHT LCL?



Less than a Container Load [LCL] means that your goods will share space inside a shipping container with other peoples' goods to the same port as you in Australia.

Once the container arrives into Australia, the container will be taken off the vessel, taken to an unpack depot and this is where your goods will be separated from other peoples' goods.

**Sending your goods via sea freight LCL is economical in regards to shipping costs; as it is quite cheap to ship goods to Australia but once the goods arrive, there are costs which you need to pay to the company that brought your goods to Australia; these costs are called port charges and are based on cubic metres [m3] and kilograms.**

Every day we talk to importers who were not aware that Australia has high port charges which easily affect their project.

**EVERY DAY WE TALK TO IMPORTERS WHO WERE NOT AWARE THAT AUSTRALIA HAS HIGH PORT CHARGES WHICH EASILY AFFECT THEIR PROJECT**



**PACKING DECLARATION  
DOWNLOAD HERE**

All sea freight shipments that enter Australia must have a packing declaration which needs to be completed by the supplier overseas.



If a customs broker customs clears your sea freight LCL shipment and the goods are valued between \$1,000 AUD and less than \$10,000 AUD, then the **Import Processing Charge is \$92.00.**

If a customs broker customs clears your sea freight LCL shipment and the goods are valued at more than \$10,000 AUD, then the **Import Processing Charge is \$194.00.**

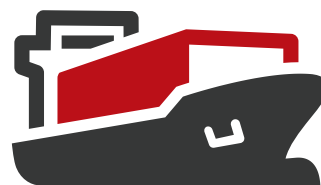


**Click here for a video further explaining the sea freight LCL customs clearance process**



HOW TO GET YOUR PRODUCT TO AUSTRALIA

## SEND VIA SEA FREIGHT FCL?



Full Container Load [FCL] means that all of the goods inside the shipping container are yours and that **you will be responsible for all costs** of collecting the container from the wharf, taking it to a quarantine depot for inspection (if necessary), delivering the container to your premise and then returning the empty container to the wharf; all of these arrangements can be organised and facilitated through your customs broker.

**The shipping company that carries your container to Australia will charge port charges to you; generally \$600 – \$700 AUD for every 20" and \$700 - \$800 AUD for every 40".**



If a customs broker customs clears your sea freight FCL shipment and the goods are valued between \$1,000 AUD and less than \$10,000 AUD, then the **Import Processing Charge is \$92.00.**

If a customs broker customs clears your sea freight FCL shipment and the goods are valued at more than \$10,000 AUD, then the **Import Processing Charge is \$194.00.**



### **PACKING DECLARATION DOWNLOAD HERE**

All sea freight shipments that enter Australia must have a packing declaration which needs to be completed by the supplier overseas.

(there is an exception for goods which have been frozen from the time of export).



# WHERE IS YOUR PRODUCT ONCE IT ARRIVES INTO AUSTRALIA ?

## PARCEL POST

The package will first arrive at a mail centre; for example in Queensland the mail centre is in Brisbane, for Victoria the mail centre is in Melbourne.

## EXPRESS COURIER

The package will first arrive at a capital city air freight terminal and then be collected by the express courier company and held in their customs bonded warehouse until the goods have been processed through Customs and Quarantine.

## AIR CARGO

The package will first arrive at a capital city air freight terminal which is a customs bonded warehouse and will be held here until the goods have been processed through Customs and Quarantine.

Once the goods have been processed, the goods can either be collected by yourself, your transport company or your customs broker.

**Please note that if Quarantine wish to inspect the goods; the goods will need to be taken to a Quarantine depot before you can take possession of the goods.**



### PACKING DECLARATION [DOWNLOAD HERE](#)

All sea freight shipments that enter Australia must have a packing declaration which needs to be completed by the supplier overseas.  
(there is an exception for goods which have been frozen from the time of export).

## SEA FREIGHT LCL

The shipping container will arrive at a port, then be unloaded from the vessel and placed on the wharf. The container will then be collected by a freight forwarder, taken to their unpack depot and the goods will be segregated from the other goods; this process can take up to 7 days.

Once the goods have been segregated, you, your transport company or your customs broker has 3 days to collect the goods before storage starts. Storage is not cheap, it is generally **\$40 per cubic metre per day** including weekends **with a minimum of \$200 AUD plus GST for the first day.**

**Please note that if Quarantine wish to inspect the goods; the goods will need to be inspected at the unpack depot or at another nominated depot before you can take possession of the goods.**

## SEA FREIGHT FCL

The shipping container will arrive at a port, then be unloaded from the vessel and placed on the wharf. The container will then need to be collected by your transport company or your customs broker and taken to your premise for unloading. The empty container needs to be returned to the wharf promptly as the shipping company charges "rent" on the container generally after 7 days of arrival into Australia. **Rent is usually \$85 - \$120 per day plus GST.**

**Please note that if Quarantine wish to inspect the goods; the goods will need to be inspected at an unpack depot or at another nominated depot before you can take possession of the goods.**

# IMPORTING PERSONAL EFFECTS



When importing personal effects, you are saying that you have owned and used the goods for the previous 12 months; personal effects are free of duty and GST but do attract taxes if you are importing such things as wine, tobacco or motor vehicles.

**Personal effects are considered to be a high risk and therefore may be inspected by Customs and Quarantine or solely by Quarantine.**

## PERSONAL EFFECTS AIR FREIGHT

When the goods are personal effects, the airline terminals usually give longer than 24 hours to collect the goods.

## PERSONAL EFFECTS SEA FREIGHT LCL [LESS THAN A CONTAINER LOAD]

The depots do not usually give any extended time to collect personal effects and generally charge **\$40 per cubic metre per day including weekends with a minimum of \$200 AUD plus GST for the first day.**

## PERSONAL EFFECTS SEA FREIGHT FCL [FULL CONTAINER LOAD]

The whole container needs to be taken from the wharf to an unpack depot and fully unpacked; the shipping container then needs to be returned to the wharf to avoid "rent". Once the personal effects have been examined, you will need to employ a removalist to collect all of your loose articles and take to your premise. The depots usually give 1 free day of storage after Quarantine has released the goods.

The unpack depot may charge storage at **\$40 AUD per cubic metre per day including weekends plus GST.**

**PERSONAL EFFECTS ARE FREE OF DUTY AND GST BUT DO ATTRACT TAXES IF YOU ARE IMPORTING SUCH THINGS AS WINE, TOBACCO OR MOTOR VEHICLES.**



**PERSONAL EFFECTS  
STATEMENT  
[DOWNLOAD HERE](#)**

**Please refer to the personal effects statement which needs to be completed for Customs and Quarantine**



**Personal  
Effects  
Clearances**



# QUARANTINE ISSUES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND WATER RESOURCES

Whenever you wish to locate the rules for importing particular products to Australia, you would be recommended to visit:

<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/import/online-services/bicon>

This web-link provides the rules for importing a wide variety of items such as used machinery, food, nuts, timber products, biological products and is also country specific.

All sea freight shipments that enter Australia must have a packing declaration which needs to be completed by the supplier overseas. There is an exception and they mainly revolves around goods which have been frozen from the time of shipping to Australia. Please refer to the link at right for a packing declaration template.



## **PACKING DECLARATION DOWNLOAD HERE**

**All sea freight shipments that enter Australia must have a packing declaration which needs to be completed by the supplier overseas.**

(there is an exception for goods which have been frozen from the time of export).



# IMPORTING A CARAVAN

Importing caravans are quite popular, especially from the United Kingdom. Before you can ship the caravan to Australia, you will need to apply and receive an import permit from The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development.

**Please refer to the import permit web-link:**

[https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/vehicles/imports/online\\_form.aspx](https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/vehicles/imports/online_form.aspx)

Please note that if your caravan has an air-conditioner; you will need to liaise with the Department of the Environment.

**Please refer to the import permit web-link:**

<http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/environment-protection/ozone/licences-and-reporting/equipment-licences-eqpl-and-lvil>

# IMPORTING MOTOR VEHICLES

Importing cars is quite popular, especially from the United States of America; if the motor vehicle is of an age of 30 years or more, there is no import duty. There will however be import GST of 10%.

Before you can ship the car to Australia, you will need to apply and receive an import permit from The Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development.

**Please refer to the import permit web-link:**

[https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/vehicles/imports/online\\_form.aspx](https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/vehicles/imports/online_form.aspx)

Please note that if your car has an air-conditioner; you will need to liaise with the Department of the Environment.

**Please refer to the import permit web-link:**

<http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/environment-protection/ozone/licences-and-reporting/equipment-licences-eqpl-and-lvil>

**IF THE MOTOR VEHICLE IS  
OF AN AGE OF 30 YEARS  
OR MORE, THERE IS NO  
IMPORT DUTY**

# IMPORTING OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Importing off-road vehicles do not require an import permit, but we recommend that you still apply to the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development for a ruling stating that no import permit is required.

**Please refer to the import permit web-link:**

[https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/vehicles/imports/online\\_form.aspx](https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/vehicles/imports/online_form.aspx)

# IMPORTING FRIDGES, AIR CONDITIONERS AND OTHER ARTICLES

(WHICH OPERATE ON REFRIGERANT GASES SUCH AS “SLUSHIE” MACHINES)

One-off importers planning to import up to five pieces of equipment arriving in one consignment and containing less than 10Kg of gas in total may be eligible for a partial waiver of the licence application fee. The partial waiver reduces the application fee from \$3000 to \$400, with the licence expiring fourteen days after the equipment arrives or fourteen days after the issue of the licence, whichever is the latest. A partial fee waiver is only available once every two years.

**Please refer to the import permit web-link:**

<http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/environment-protection/ozone/licences/equipment-licences-eqpl-and-lvil>

**ONE-OFF IMPORTERS  
MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR  
A PARTIAL WAIVER  
OF THE LICENCE  
APPLICATION FEE.**

# IMPORTING FOOD

Importing food is a complex issue and involves the Australian Border Force [ABF], Department of Agriculture and Water Resources [DAWR], Imported Foods and possibly a laboratory to test the food products before they can be sold in Australia.

**IMPORTING FOOD IS A  
COMPLEX ISSUE**

The **minimum information** that needs to be on the immediate outside packaging of the food is:

- ▶ Name of importer
- ▶ Address and phone number of the importer
- ▶ Ingredients list in English
- ▶ Batch number / lot code / expiry date or best before date

# IMPORTING WINE

Importing wine is fairly easy enough but it is an expensive exercise; wine is subject to import duty, import GST and a tax called Wine Equalisation Tax [WET] which is currently 29%.

**IMPORTING WINE IS  
FAIRLY EASY BUT IS AN  
EXPENSIVE EXERCISE**

These three taxes are paid on wine products no matter what the value is; under or over \$1000 AUD.

**Customs clearing wine can involve Australian Border Force, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources [DAWR], Imported Foods and possibly a laboratory to test the wine products before they can be sold in Australia.**

The **minimum information** that needs to be on the immediate outside label of the wine is:

- ▶ Name of importer
- ▶ Address and phone number of the importer
- ▶ Ingredients list in English
- ▶ Batch number / lot code / expiry date or best before date

# TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN THE CUSTOMS AND QUARANTINE DEPOTS

Whenever the goods need to be moved from the airline terminal, the wharf or the sea freight depot to quarantine; your broker can move the goods on your behalf. Often the broker will prefer to move the goods as they are then able to control the process on your behalf.

**Your broker should liaise with everyone concerned so that the goods are processed as quickly and promptly as possible.**





# SOURCES OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

## The Australian Border Force (ABF)

[www.customs.gov.au](http://www.customs.gov.au)

## Department of Agriculture and Water Resources [DAWR]

[www.daff.gov.au](http://www.daff.gov.au)

## Department of the Environment

<http://www.environment.gov.au/>

## Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development

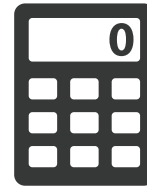
<http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/>

## Prohibited and restricted imports

<http://www.customs.gov.au/site/page4369.asp>



# IMPORT COSTS ESTIMATOR



How much will my supplier charge me to buy the goods?	\$
How much will it cost me to have the goods shipped / freighted to Australia?	\$
How much do my goods weigh?	
What are the cubic metre measurements for my goods?	
Do my goods need to be fumigated before arriving into Australia?	Y/N
How much will the terminal fees be in Australia [air freight]?	\$
How much will the port charges be in Australia [sea freight LCL]?	\$
How much will the port charges be in Australia [sea freight FCL]?	\$
How much is the import duty?	\$
How much is the import GST?	\$
Will I need to pay WET?	Y/N
How much will my customs entry fee; payable to the Australian Border Force be?	\$
How much will it cost for my customs broker to customs clear the goods through the Australian Border Force and Quarantine?	\$
How much will the Quarantine fees be [if any]?	\$
Will my goods need to be inspected? If, so how much will the quarantine depot charge?	\$
How much will the delivery fees be to transport my goods from the airline, depot or wharf the goods to my home or premise?	\$
Has my customs broker been given the opportunity to view all of the paperwork [invoice, packing list, bill of lading (sea freight), air waybill (air freight), fumigation certificate] before the goods leave for Australia from overseas?	Y/N
<b>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST OF IMPORT</b>	<b>\$</b>

## Platinum Freight Management

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