The Westport Taskforce was established by the Minister for Transport in September 2017. It is a cross-agency project team that is led by an Independent Chair, Nicole Lockwood, and governed by a Steering Committee comprising of six Directors General and the Chairmen of Fremantle Ports and the WA Planning Commission.

Westport was tasked with developing a Strategy to guide the Government on the long-term development and growth of the Inner Harbour at Fremantle; the Outer Harbour at Kwinana; the required rail and road networks; and the potential for the Port of Bunbury to contribute to growing trade needs. The Strategy will look at Perth and the South West’s freight, trade and logistics requirements for the next 50-100 years. The final Strategy is due to be presented to Government by the end of 2019.

Many products that WA households use and consume every day arrive by sea container including electronics, furniture, clothing, shoes, building products and pharmaceuticals. The price of these goods and the competitiveness of WA industries depend on efficient ports and supply chains. With Perth’s population estimated to double by around mid-century and demand for imports growing in tandem, it is critical to ensure we have the infrastructure required to meet these needs. Perth’s current freight network will not be sufficient to cope with rising demand and is already under pressure.
While the State Government made an election commitment to plan and build new port facilities at the Outer Harbour, Westport is undertaking a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of the capabilities of all three study areas (Fremantle, Kwinana and Bunbury) to determine how best to handle Perth’s future trade load. Westport will also determine proposed timeframes for any trade transitions, along with funding and investment models.

The environment is a critical area of focus for Westport and is being considered throughout the development of the final Strategy. Westport has adopted PIANC’s Working with Nature approach, which is a proactive, integrated philosophy that considers environmental values from the outset, rather than as an afterthought. The focus is on delivering the project in an ecosystem context with a view to achieving win-win solutions, rather than simply minimising ecological harm. Westport is also following the Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia’s (ISCA) Infrastructure Sustainability (IS) V2.0 Planning Framework, which is widely considered by industry to be best-practice in ensuring infrastructure sustainability.

The Deloitte Access Economics trade forecasts commissioned by Westport estimate that WA’s container trade will quadruple in volume by the year 2068 from 0.7 million TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units) to 3.1 million TEU. This is based on a long-term average growth of 2.8 per cent annually. Growth in container trade is driven by increases in population and consumption (imports) and increased demand for WA products (exports). Fremantle Port’s container trade increased by 7.5 per cent from 2016/17 (715,949 TEU) to 2017/18 (769,686 TEU), so 2.8 per cent is a conservative figure.
There are four main types of port trade: containers, bulk goods (liquids, minerals, woodchips etc), general cargo (vehicles, machinery etc) and passengers (cruise ships, navy vessels etc). Fremantle is currently WA’s main container port while also handling passenger vessels and general cargo. Kwinana currently handles bulk products while navy vessels access Garden Island through Cockburn Sound. Bunbury handles bulk products, general cargo and some passenger vessels.

The Westport Taskforce is collaborating with more than 80 industry, government, business and community organisations to develop a Strategy based on robust data and consultation. Westport’s process is being independently assessed by well-respected peer reviewers and Westport is also developing an Aboriginal Engagement Strategy. Anyone can have their say on Westport; visit mysaytransport.wa.gov.au/westport to provide your input.

Westport is building a dynamic, interactive decision-making tool based on the most accurate and updatable spatial data. This tool will not only present the outcomes of Westport’s Strategy geographically, but also provide the flexibility to accommodate and respond to changes in the inputs (such as shifts in the economy, population or imports/exports) and change the proposed outputs accordingly well into the future. This will allow the Westport Strategy to be adapted as required well beyond the project’s current end date in 2019 and essentially make it ‘future-proofed’.