Spotyard

THE PRACTICAL
IMPORT HANDBOOK

Importing from China to Australia

A step-by-step guide from supplier selection to your final delivery.

Sourcing • Compliance
Freight • Customs
Biosecurity • Delivery

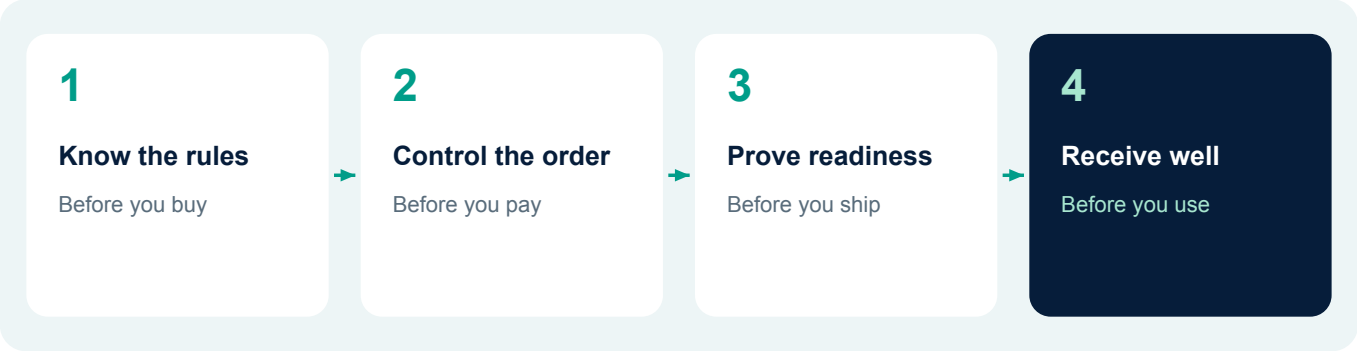
54 PAGES / NOVEMBER 2026
Checklists, diagrams, examples and a linked source directory.



START HERE

A practical guide for real shipments

For Australian business owners, builders, developers, procurement teams and online sellers buying commercial goods from China.



What this handbook covers

Work through the purchase, compliance, freight, border clearance and delivery process in order. Use the worksheets to turn a product idea into a shipment file with named owners, approved documents and an achievable delivery plan.

How to use it

Read the roadmap first. Before paying a deposit, complete the product and supplier checks. Before shipping, complete the document and release checks. Keep the final checklist beside your purchase order and update it as decisions change.

The important limit

This is a broad commercial-importing handbook, not an approval for a particular product. No general guide can contain every rule for every commodity. Food, chemicals, medical devices, vehicles, live plants and animals, dangerous goods and other controlled goods need their own current requirements checked.

Edition and assumptions

Prepared 15 November 2026. Monetary examples are in Australian dollars unless stated. Rates, rules, fees and carrier terms can change. Examples and schedules are illustrative, not freight quotes or promised clearance times. Confirm shipment-specific legal and tax decisions with the relevant regulator, licensed customs broker and adviser.

> **Keep an electronic copy of the evidence behind every important decision.**

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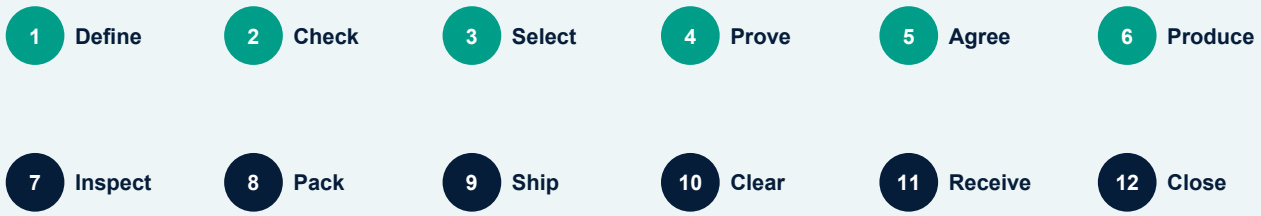
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PLAN • 01

The journey, from idea to delivery

A reliable import is a sequence of approvals. Each stage should produce evidence before the next stage begins.



1–3 | Define, check, select

Specify the exact product and intended use. Confirm that it can be imported, supplied and used in Australia. Compare suppliers using the same specification and landed-cost assumptions.

4–6 | Prove, agree, produce

Approve samples and compliance evidence. Sign the commercial terms and confirm bank details. Monitor production against the approved sample, drawings and inspection plan.

7–9 | Inspect, pack, ship

Release the order only after the agreed checks pass. Confirm packaging and biosecurity requirements. Match all documents, book suitable freight and arrange insurance before the risk starts.

10–12 | Clear, receive, close

Prepare declarations before arrival. Resolve customs and biosecurity requirements, carrier release and collection. Count and inspect goods on delivery, record claims and reconcile the true landed cost.

> **Do not skip an unresolved approval because a vessel deadline is approaching.**

PLAN • 02

Know who is responsible

Appoint one importer-side coordinator. A supplier, freight forwarder and customs broker each solve different parts of the shipment.



Importer / buyer

Owns product selection, accurate information, compliance decisions, purchase approvals, funding and delivery readiness. Confirm the importer's legal entity and ABN with the broker; if there is no ABN, ask about Customs Client ID registration. Appointing an agent does not automatically remove importer obligations.

Supplier / manufacturer

Makes to the agreed specification, provides accurate production and commercial information, packs as contracted and arranges the seller's export tasks under the agreed terms. Confirm whether the exporter is a different legal entity.

Forwarder / carrier / broker

The forwarder arranges transport; carriers physically move cargo; a licensed customs broker prepares customs entries on your instructions. Confirm in writing who also handles DAFF documentation and inspection bookings.

Inspector / specialist / receiver

An independent inspector checks agreed production criteria. Product specialists assess applicable technical requirements. The warehouse or site receiver arranges unloading, counts packages and preserves delivery evidence. Name a backup contact for each role.

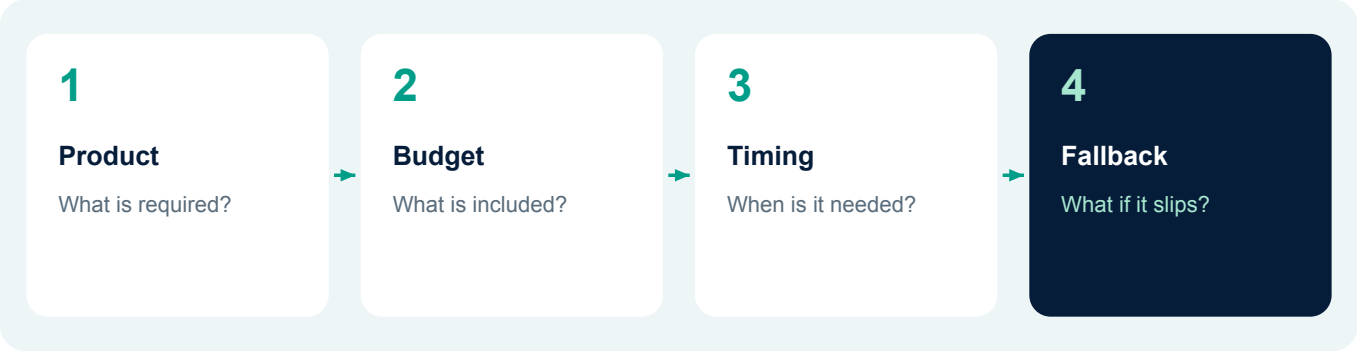
Sources: [1], [2], [4], [38] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Create a contact sheet: organisation, named person, role, phone, email, time zone and escalation contact.

PLAN • 03

Build the business case first

The cheapest factory price may not be the cheapest usable product delivered to your warehouse or building site.



Define the job the product must do

Record the SKU, intended user, installation location, operating conditions, expected life, materials, finishes, dimensions and tolerances. For building goods, specify the project application and approval pathway before shopping.

Calculate the full commitment

Include samples, testing, tooling, inspection, origin transport, freight, insurance, duty, GST cash flow, clearance, destination charges, storage and delivery. Add spares, rejects, finance, currency movement and warranty support to the business case.

Work backwards from the need date

Separate design approval, samples, production, inspection, rework, freight, clearance and final delivery. Add contingency where the risk sits. Do not use the vessel's ETA as the site delivery date.

Set your stop conditions

Decide in advance what would make the order unviable: missing evidence, unacceptable sample, landed cost above budget, delivery after the installation window or payment to an unverified beneficiary. Give each condition an owner.

Approve a written budget and latest acceptable delivery date before requesting deposits.

CHECK • 04

Can this exact product enter Australia?

A product name is not enough. The answer depends on composition, use, condition, origin, packaging and sometimes the route.



Start with border restrictions

Australia does not require a general import licence, but particular goods can require permits or be prohibited. Check the ABF prohibited-goods guidance using the exact product description. Samples and personal purchases can still trigger controls.

Then check biosecurity

Search BICON for the product and materials, country of origin, processing and intended use. Record the case, selected answers, conditions and search date. If a permit is required before import, obtain it at the required stage before shipping.

Then check supply and use

Border release, legal sale and lawful installation are separate questions. Map product safety, electrical, radio, building, plumbing, food, chemical or therapeutic requirements as applicable. A foreign certificate alone is not an Australian approval.

Create a compliance register

Use columns: requirement; regulator; exact model; evidence needed; responsible person; approval date; unresolved issue. Ask a qualified specialist about uncertain classifications and technical claims before ordering.

Sources: [1], [3], [4], [5], [35] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Gate: do not pay for bulk production until the required approval pathway is clear.

CHECK • 05

Product categories that need extra work

Use this as a routing checklist. It points you to the correct specialist checks; it does not replace them.

Building NCC / application	**Electrical** EESS / ACMA	**Plumbing** WaterMark / WELS
Food BICON / IFIS	**Chemicals** AICIS pathway	**Health** TGA pathway

Building and plumbing

For ACP, glazing, insulation, structural materials and similar products, obtain evidence for the exact system and intended application under applicable NCC and state rules. A panel's appearance or fire-rating label is not enough. Check the WaterMark schedule/database and WELS where relevant, including current lead-free requirements and state adoption dates.

Electrical and connected products

Determine whether electrical-safety registration, equipment registration, testing and RCM marking apply. Separately assess ACMA requirements for radio, telecommunications and electromagnetic compatibility. Confirm the responsible supplier, exact model and evidence file; CE marking is not a substitute.

Food, cosmetics, chemicals and health

Food needs BICON and food-safety checks, labels and possible inspection/testing. Industrial chemicals and products that release them may trigger AICIS registration and categorisation. Therapeutic goods and medical devices need a TGA pathway before commercial import or supply, unless a valid exemption applies.

Other regulated goods

Escalate vehicles, plant and animal products, CITES specimens, refrigerants, weapons, tobacco/vapes, batteries and machinery to the relevant rules. Used equipment needs condition and contamination checks. Do not assume another buyer's previous shipment establishes your permission.

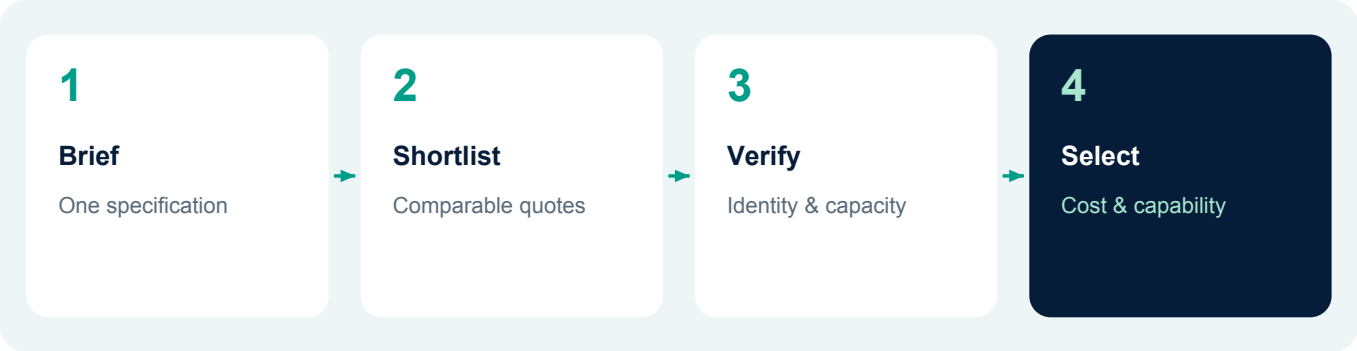
Sources: [6], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [12], [36] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Obtain written confirmation of applicable requirements for your exact model and intended use.

SOURCE • 06

Find and shortlist suppliers

Compare suppliers against a brief, rather than choosing from attractive catalogue photographs alone.



Use more than one route

Shortlist through trade platforms, trade fairs, industry referrals or a sourcing partner. Distinguish manufacturers, trading companies and exporters. A trading company can be useful, but know who controls production and who owes you the contract obligations.

Ask the same opening questions

Can you manufacture this specification? What is the minimum order by model and colour? Which factory will make it? What are sample and production lead times? Can you provide evidence for Australian requirements and allow independent inspection?

Compare on a consistent basis

Request the same quantities, materials, packaging, currency, Incoterm, named place and quote validity. Separate tooling, custom packaging and sample charges. Ask whether price changes with exchange rates, raw materials or quantity.

Build a shortlist of credible options

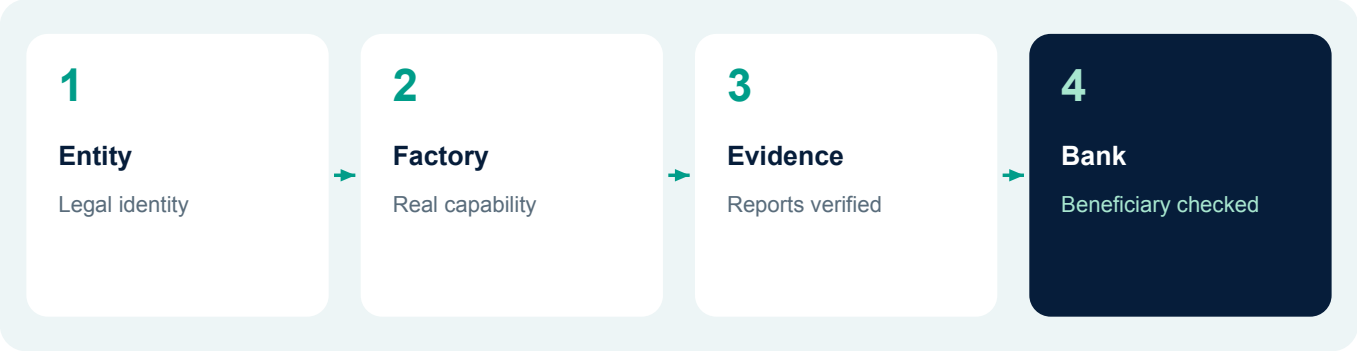
Record response quality, technical understanding, evidence quality, capacity, communication and total cost. Treat a very low price as a question to investigate. Do not send sensitive drawings more widely than necessary; protect confidential design information.

Shortlist at least two credible options where practical, then perform supplier checks.

SOURCE • 07

Verify the business before you pay

Check the legal identity, production capability and payment route independently. Marketplace badges are only one input.



Confirm the contracting entity

Obtain the registered Chinese company name, business licence, Unified Social Credit Code, registered address and business scope. Verify through an official registry or qualified local verifier. Match the entity to the contract, invoice and bank beneficiary; explain any exporter or group-company differences.

Confirm production reality

Use a live factory walkthrough, site audit or independent inspection to assess machinery, workforce, capacity and subcontracting. Request recent comparable production evidence and references that you can verify independently.

Check technical evidence properly

Match reports to the manufacturer, model, materials, tested standard and current product revision. Contact the laboratory or certifier through independently found details to verify important reports. Certification for a different product or factory may not help you.

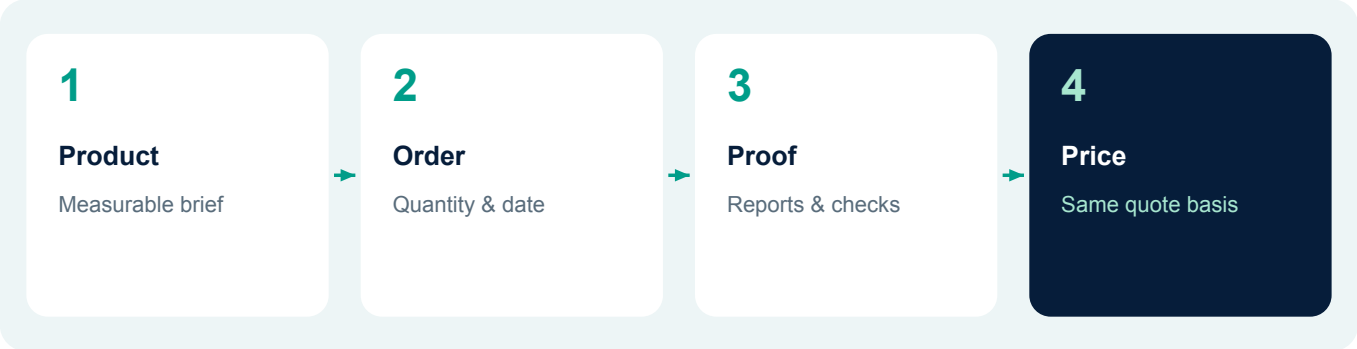
Watch for payment fraud

Investigate personal accounts, unexplained third-party beneficiaries, urgent last-minute changes and email-domain variations. Call a previously verified number to confirm bank changes. Keep the confirmation evidence; do not rely on the same email chain that requested the change.

Gate: no deposit until identity, capability and beneficiary checks are documented.

Write an RFQ that suppliers can price

A useful request for quotation removes ambiguity. Attach a version-controlled specification and ask suppliers to identify every exception.



Specify the product

Include drawings, dimensions, material grade, finish/colour reference, performance, accessories, spare parts, labelling, language of instructions and packaging. Give measurable acceptance tolerances rather than terms such as “premium quality”.

Specify the order

State quantities by SKU, trial and repeat-order quantities, destination postcode, intended use and latest acceptable delivery date. Ask for minimum order quantities, carton dimensions, gross/net weights, pallet layout and total estimated cubic metres.

Specify evidence and checks

List required reports, certificates and declarations by exact model. Ask for independent sample testing and inspection access. Request production timing from approved sample and deposit, with the assumptions clearly stated.

Specify the commercial comparison

Request currency, item prices, tooling, sample cost, Incoterm 2020 and named place, payment milestones, quote validity, warranty and remedy terms. Ask the supplier to return a compliance/deviation schedule with all substitutions highlighted.

Use the RFQ worksheet near the end of this guide; keep the final reply with the purchase file.

Approve samples and evidence

The approved sample becomes a reference for production. It is not proof that the entire order will be identical or compliant.



Approve the product, then control changes.

Choose the right sample

Distinguish a stock sample, pre-production sample and production-selected sample. Confirm which materials, tooling, finish and components will be used for the order. For custom goods, approve drawings before authorising the production sample.

Test what matters

Check dimensions, fit, operation, finish and packaging. Arrange product-specific testing with a suitably qualified laboratory where required. Confirm that the test standard and model match the Australian application; verify the report rather than accepting a certificate image.

Create a golden-sample record

Label and date the approved sample, photograph key details and record measurements. Sign the specification revision and colour reference. Keep a matching supplier reference sample where practical. Record unresolved variations explicitly.

Prevent silent changes

Require written approval before material, component, factory, process or packaging substitutions. Changes can invalidate the sample approval or evidence. Budget time for another test or sample when a change affects performance or compliance.

Gate: sign the exact sample/specification revision before production starts.

Put the agreement in writing

A purchase order should connect the product specification, commercial terms and practical remedies in one consistent set of documents.



Define the goods and price

Identify both legal entities, product codes, drawing/specification revision, approved samples, quantities, currency, tooling ownership and included accessories. Set the Incoterm, named place and version. Clarify which document wins if terms conflict.

Define release and timing

State milestones, evidence required for payment, inspection rights, packaging requirements and who may authorise dispatch. Agree the process for delayed production, failed inspection, partial delivery and approved changes. Document how deadlines are measured.

Define remedies

Agree how defects, shortages, non-conforming goods and warranty claims will be assessed and resolved. Address rework, replacement, credits, freight costs, return feasibility and spare parts. A supplier warranty is only useful if the remedy can actually be performed.

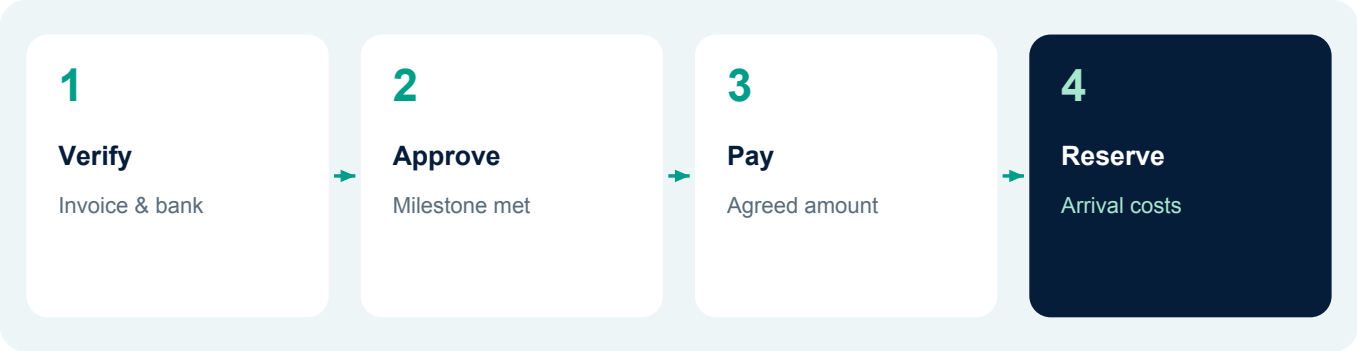
Address commercial legal points

Use appropriate legal advice for governing law, dispute resolution, intellectual property, confidentiality, product liability, force majeure, termination and enforceability. Payment protection and Incoterms do not replace a product-quality contract.

> **Have the final order acknowledged by an authorised representative of the supplier.**

Pay safely and plan the cash flow

Control both the amount at risk and the evidence required before each payment.



Set payment milestones

Negotiate a structure appropriate to the supplier, product and order size. A deposit followed by payment after agreed inspection is a commercial option, not a universal rule. Avoid paying the whole amount early without understanding the exposure.

Choose the payment mechanism

Compare verified bank transfer, suitable platform protection, escrow or a letter of credit for larger transactions. Read eligibility, claim deadlines and exclusions. Letters of credit generally deal with compliant documents, not a guarantee of product quality.

Verify before releasing funds

Match bank beneficiary to the verified contract arrangements. Check invoice number, currency, amount, bank charges and payment reference. Confirm changes using an independent channel and two-person approval where practical.

Reserve arrival money

Keep cash for freight balances, duty/GST, clearance, inspection, delivery and contingency. Allow for exchange-rate movement and bank spreads. Decide whether currency hedging suits the business with an adviser. A paid factory invoice does not mean all import costs are paid.

Gate: every payment must have an approved invoice, verified beneficiary and agreed milestone evidence.

Choose the right Incoterm

Write the rule, precise named place and “Incoterms® 2020”. Price responsibility and the point where risk transfers are separate questions.



EXW and FCA

EXW can leave the buyer dealing with origin loading/export practicalities. FCA is often a better starting point for containerised or multimodal shipments: the seller delivers to the nominated carrier/place and handles export clearance. Specify whether delivery is at the factory or a terminal.

FOB, CFR and CIF

These are sea/inland-waterway rules. Under FOB, risk transfers when goods are on board at origin. Under CFR/CIF, the seller pays the agreed carriage but risk also transfers on board at origin. CIF adds seller-arranged minimum insurance, which may not cover your main risks.

DAP, DPU and DDP

DAP means delivery at destination ready for unloading; buyer normally handles import clearance/taxes. DPU includes unloading. DDP puts import-clearance/duty obligations on the seller, but confirm lawful importer arrangements, tax evidence and exclusions before accepting it.

Write the rest separately

Incoterms do not settle title, payment, product compliance, warranty or every service charge. Agree insurance, unloading, accessorial costs and any departures explicitly. Ask your forwarder to check that the chosen rule suits the actual handover.

Sources: [13], [37] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Ask: who pays each leg, who carries risk, who clears export/import, and who unloads?

Compare quotes on a landed basis

Normalize the quotes before deciding. A low ocean-freight line can be offset by destination charges or missing origin services.

Illustrative cost categories — proportions are not a quotation.



Origin side

List collection, loading, export documentation/clearance, terminal handling, consolidation, inspection, packing and treatment. Mark each item included, excluded or pending. Check whether the supplier's quoted volume and weight are estimates.

Transport side

List main freight, fuel/security or seasonal surcharges, transshipment, dangerous-goods charges, insurance and any special equipment. Record carrier/service, routing, validity, cargo-ready date assumptions and cancellation or amendment terms.

Australia side

List broker service, government charges, duties/taxes, terminal/depot handling, release/document fees, storage, inspection/treatment and final transport. Ask about tail-lift, crane, waiting time, difficult access and empty-container return.

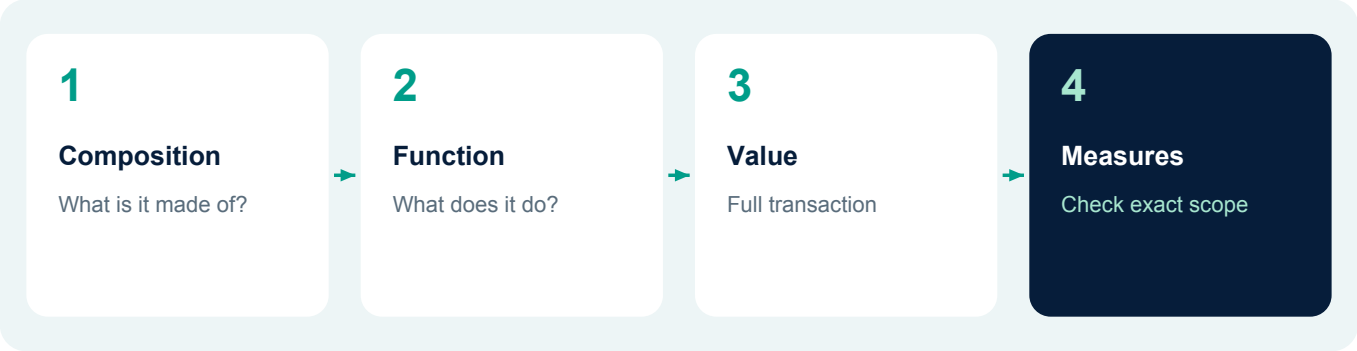
Compare usable units

Allocate shared charges consistently by weight, volume, value or another sensible driver. Divide by usable units, not simply units ordered. Keep refundable GST separate from permanent cost if your business is entitled to a credit. Compare an adverse-cost scenario too.

Obtain an itemised door-to-door cost schedule with assumptions and exclusions in writing.

Tariff classification and customs value

Give your broker the full product facts. Similar-looking goods may have different classifications, duty rates or trade-remedy treatment.



Describe what the product really is

Provide materials and percentages, function, specifications, photos, manufacturing process where relevant and intended use. Ask the broker to confirm the Australian classification and statistical requirements; a supplier's Chinese export code is only a starting point.

Establish the customs value

Customs value is determined under valuation rules, not simply whichever figure is printed on an invoice. Disclose assists such as buyer-funded tooling/materials, related-party arrangements, royalties, discounts and non-cash consideration so the broker can assess adjustments.

Use the correct exchange basis

Tell the broker the invoice currency, payment arrangements and shipment facts. Customs conversion can differ from your bank's exchange rate. Keep both the declared value calculation and the actual Australian-dollar cash cost for accounting.

Screen trade remedies separately

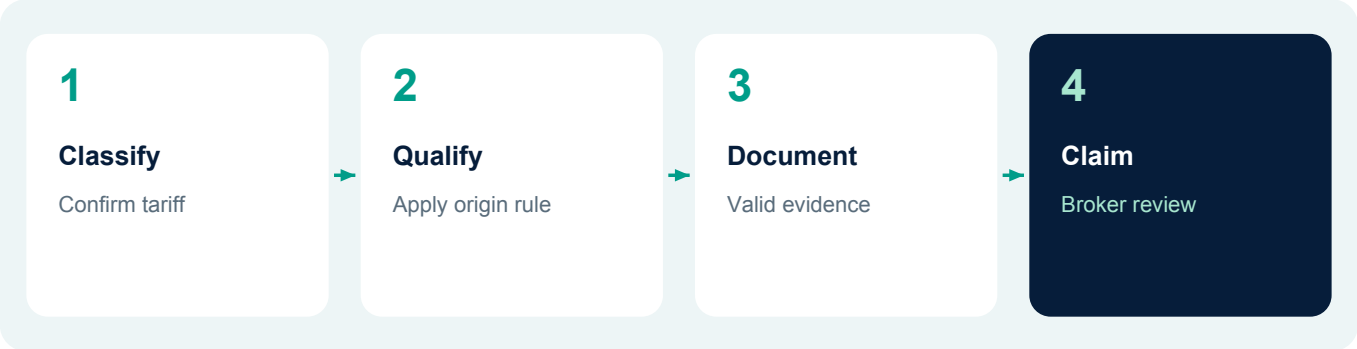
Check the live dumping commodity register against the exact goods, origin, exporter and any applicable measures. Preferential duty under an FTA does not automatically remove anti-dumping or countervailing liabilities. Seek an advance ruling/advice when uncertainty is material.

Sources: [14], [15], [16] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Never agree to understate value, change the description or split invoices to conceal the true transaction.

Use ChAFTA correctly

Goods shipped from China do not automatically qualify for preferential customs duty. Origin rules and valid evidence matter.



Check eligibility by product

Confirm the tariff classification, applicable preferential rate and product-specific origin rule with your broker. Imported inputs or substantial processing in another country can affect origin. “Made in China” on a carton is not sufficient proof of FTA eligibility.

Request the correct origin document

For imports to Australia, DFAT identifies China’s authorised issuing bodies as the General Administration of Customs of China and CCPIT. Check that the certificate matches the shipment and required particulars. A generic chamber certificate is not necessarily a ChAFTA certificate.

Do not assume self-declaration works

Under ChAFTA, a Declaration of Origin is accepted in place of a certificate for goods covered by an origin advance ruling. Ask your broker about the exact conditions before using that pathway.

Keep route and evidence together

Retain manufacturing/origin evidence as needed, certificate and commercial documents, plus transshipment information where relevant. Have the broker review discrepancies before arrival. If evidence is missing, obtain advice on the lawful entry and any later refund pathway; do not invent a declaration.

Sources: [16], [17] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Gate: broker confirms origin evidence and claim basis before the preferential claim is lodged.

Duty, GST and government charges

Build a cash-flow estimate before ordering, then replace estimates with the broker's actual assessment.

CUSTOMS VALUE + **DUTY** + **TRANSPORT / INSURANCE**

Taxable importation value × 10% = import GST

Simplified standard-goods formula; check adjustments and any wine tax.

Declaration threshold

Commercial consignments over A$1,000 generally require a full import declaration for home consumption and applicable charges. Most goods at or below A$1,000 have no border duty/tax charges, but exceptions and low-value GST collection rules apply. Do not split shipments to evade obligations.

Duty and GST are different

Duty depends on the classification, concessions and other measures. Import GST is generally 10% of the taxable importation value, including customs value, applicable duty, transport and insurance to the Australian place of consignment, and any relevant wine tax. Avoid double-counting amounts already included.

Other charges

At the research date, ABF's electronic import processing charge is A$50 above A$1,000 and below A$10,000, or A$152 at A$10,000 and above. DAFF charges and commercial broker/terminal fees are separate. Recheck the live schedules when costing.

GST cash flow

Eligible GST-registered businesses may claim credits for creditable importations and may qualify for the deferred GST scheme. This is not automatic. Keep evidence that identifies the importer and the GST paid/deferred; ask your accountant about entitlement and BAS treatment.

Sources: [2], [18], [19], [20] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Ask for two totals: cash needed to receive the goods, and cost after any recoverable GST.

Worked landed-cost example

Illustrative order: 1,000 units. These figures explain the method; they are not a tariff decision or a current freight quote.

A$20,000	A$1,000	A$2,350	A$27,850
Customs value	Assumed duty	Import GST	Cash shown*

*Includes A$2,500 transport/insurance and A$2,000 other charges; see assumptions below.

Assumptions

Customs value A$20,000; transport/insurance to the place of consignment A$2,500; assumed duty 5%; other landed charges A$2,000 ex-GST. Assume those other charges do not form part of customs value or the import-GST base. Real charge treatment must be checked.

Calculation

Duty = 20,000 × 5% = A$1,000. Taxable importation value = 20,000 + 2,500 + 1,000 = A$23,500. Import GST = A$2,350. Landed amount before recoverable import GST = A$25,500, or A$25.50 per ordered unit.

Cash and usable stock

Cash total shown = A$27,850, plus any GST charged separately on local services. If 20 units are unusable, A$25,500 ÷ 980 = A$26.02 per usable unit. Repairs, returns and finance costs would increase that figure.

Compare a valid duty-free case

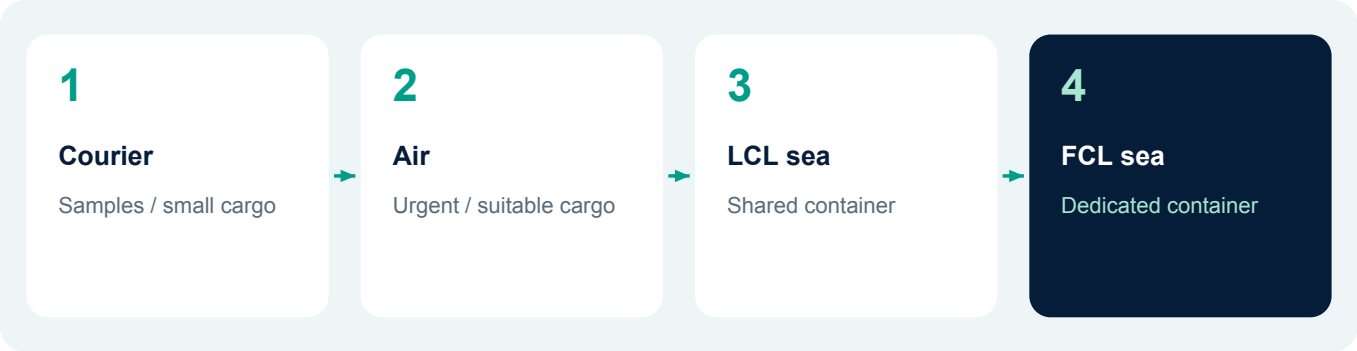
If a confirmed concession reduces duty to zero, the same assumptions give A$2,250 import GST and A$24,500 before recoverable import GST. Cash shown becomes A$26,750. The A$1,100 cash difference comprises A$1,000 duty and A$100 GST; the permanent saving depends on GST credit entitlement.

Sources: [18], [19] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Replace every assumption with your own written quote, valuation and broker-confirmed duty treatment.

Choose courier, air, LCL or FCL

The right mode depends on the packed shipment, handling risk, urgency and total destination costs.



Courier and airfreight

Useful for samples, small shipments or urgent parts. Compare chargeable weight, dimensional-weight formula, service exclusions and clearance arrangements. Ask whether dangerous goods, batteries, magnets, liquids or oversized items are accepted. Faster transit does not eliminate clearance risk.

LCL sea freight

Less than Container Load shares space with other cargo. Suitable for many smaller sea shipments, but involves consolidation and deconsolidation. Compare minimum charges, destination depot costs, handling exposure and availability after unpack, not just the sea-freight rate.

FCL sea freight

Full Container Load can reduce shared handling and give more control over packing. It does not guarantee no inspection or damage. Confirm container type, payload, dimensions, door opening, load distribution, delivery method and empty-return arrangements.

Measure before you book

CBM = packed length × width × height in metres, multiplied by packages. A 1.2 × 1.0 × 1.1 m pallet is 1.32 CBM; ten are 13.2 CBM before any non-stackability adjustment. Carrier chargeable volume/weight rules and real equipment limits still govern.

Ask the forwarder to price suitable modes against the same packed dimensions and delivery scope.

Design packaging for the whole journey

Packaging needs to survive handling, vibration, moisture exposure and the final unloading method—not just look tidy at the factory.



Protect edges and surfaces

Verify packing materials

Plan lifting and stacking

Record package weights

Protect the actual product

Use suitable corner/edge protection, cushioning, dividers and surface protection. Consider corrosion, humidity and condensation controls based on the material and journey. Test packaging where damage would be expensive; photographs alone do not show performance.

Make handling practical

Agree carton/pallet weights, stackability, fork access, centre of gravity and lifting points. Heavy stone, glass, panels and long goods need engineered support appropriate to the load. Confirm how the receiver will safely lift them before choosing crates or racks.

Control packaging materials

Tell the supplier which timber, bamboo, straw or other materials require checking under BICON. Solid timber packaging is not made compliant merely by painting it or writing “fumigated”. Require the applicable treatment/marking evidence and truthful packing declaration.

Mark and record

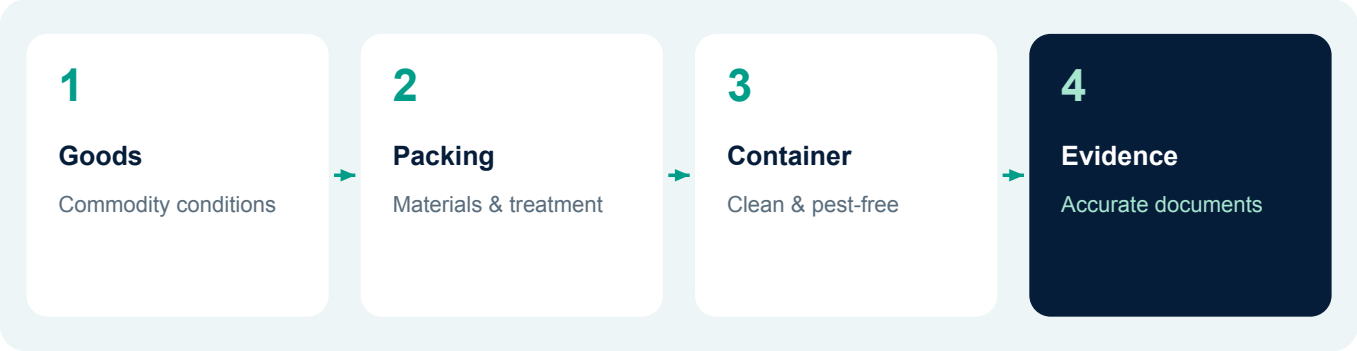
Label package numbers, SKU, quantities and handling instructions as appropriate. Keep labels readable after wrapping. Record packing photos, pallet dimensions and gross/net weights. Match the packing list to the actual load and photograph the container/seal at dispatch.

Sources: [21], [22] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Approve a packaging specification and loading method before production packing starts.

Goods, packaging and contamination

Biosecurity requirements apply beyond obvious food or plants. Timber furniture, used equipment, pallets and dirty containers can all create issues.



Check the current BICON pathway

Record the exact goods, materials, processing and origin. Check permit, treatment, certification and arrival conditions. Do this before production and again before dispatch if timing or shipment details change. Packaging conditions are additional to commodity conditions.

Keep contamination offshore

Arrange clean loading areas and inspect for soil, seeds, insects, bark, plant debris and animal contamination. Used machinery needs particular attention inside cavities, tracks and undercarriages. Ask for evidence of cleaning and treatment where required.

Timber products and packaging differ

Timber/bamboo goods must meet their commodity conditions. Packaging has its own pathway. DAFF requires packing declarations for FCL and LCL containerised cargo, subject to specified exceptions; the actual packer must provide accurate information.

Illegal logging is another check

For regulated timber products, assess whether due diligence applies. Where it does, have a written system and gather harvest/species and supply-chain information before import; assess and mitigate risk. Biosecurity treatment and FSC/PEFC paperwork do not replace the required due diligence process.

Sources: [21], [22], [23], [24], [35] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Gate: goods, packaging and required evidence all satisfy the selected import conditions.

Seasonal pests and asbestos risks

These are separate risk checks. Do not order a treatment simply because someone says all China cargo needs it.

SEASONAL PESTS

Goods + origin + date + route

ASBESTOS

Materials + supply-chain assurance

BMSB: use the current season rules

The 2026–27 measures use shipment dates, goods, origin, route and cargo type. China is listed for heightened vessel surveillance and emerging-risk random inspections; this is not a blanket mandatory-treatment rule for all goods from China. Target high-risk air cargo from China can face random inspection.

Ask about the complete route

Transshipment, packing with other risk cargo and vessel calls can change the assessment. Ask the forwarder/broker to check the current seasonal pathway. Where treatment is required, verify method, provider eligibility and documents before shipment; some break-bulk failures cannot be fixed onshore.

Asbestos: establish supply-chain assurance

Asbestos-containing imports are prohibited unless a lawful exception or permission applies. High-risk materials need credible assurance, not just an “asbestos free” label. Ask about raw materials, subcontractors and cross-contamination. Obtain appropriate testing where the risk assessment requires it.

If uncertainty remains

Do not dispatch questionable goods hoping the border will decide cheaply. Broker and specialist review, sampling and testing before shipment can avoid detention, storage and re-export costs. Keep the evidence linked to the exact production batch.

Sources: [25], [26], [27] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Recheck seasonal rules at booking; complete asbestos risk checks before shipment.

QUALITY • 22

Inspect before the balance is paid

An inspection should test a written acceptance plan. “Looks good” is not a measurable release criterion.



Measure against the approved specification.

Set the inspection stages

Consider a factory audit, pre-production review, during-production checks, pre-shipment inspection and container-loading check. Choose the stages based on product risk and supplier history. Agree who pays for reinspection if the first check fails.

Write the checklist

Include quantities by SKU, materials, dimensions, finish, function, accessories, labels, packaging and compliance-critical details. Agree defect definitions, sampling method and acceptance limits with a competent inspector. Sampling reduces uncertainty; it cannot prove every unit is defect-free.

Make the report useful

Request dated photos, measurements, test results, batch identification, quantity available and a clear list of deviations. Compare to the approved sample/specification. Confirm inspection independence and that enough finished, packed stock is available for the agreed checks.

Control the release

A failed inspection needs a corrective-action plan, evidence and appropriate reinspection. The buyer’s authorised person decides whether a deviation is acceptable. Keep shipment release separate from the supplier’s statement that production is complete.

Gate: no final release until inspection issues and compliance-critical deviations are closed.

Consolidate multiple suppliers carefully

Combining orders can reduce freight cost, but adds coordination, storage and document complexity.



Keep each supplier traceable.

Create a consolidation register

Record each supplier, purchase order, SKU, package count, dimensions, weight, cargo-ready date and required documents. Tell each supplier the receiving warehouse instructions and package-reference format.

Inspect at warehouse receipt

Require counts, visible-condition photos and exception reporting before cargo is combined. Record whether checks are carton-level only or include product inspection. Do not assume a warehouse receiving receipt confirms quality or full quantities inside sealed cartons.

Keep traceability intact

Maintain the link from each SKU/package to its supplier invoice, origin evidence and compliance documents. Ask the broker how separate suppliers/exporters affect entries and origin claims. Do not create a false single-supplier invoice merely to simplify clearance.

Manage the late supplier

Set a last acceptable delivery into consolidation and a storage allowance. Compare holding everything versus shipping a partial order. Check whether mixed dangerous goods, biosecurity-risk goods or awkward shapes create restrictions or extra handling. Allocate shared costs fairly by an agreed method.

Confirm a final consolidated packing list against the received cargo before booking release.

Book freight with complete cargo facts

A booking should describe what will physically move. Incorrect weights, undeclared batteries or late documents can prevent loading.



Provide a booking pack

Give pickup/delivery addresses, exact goods description, package counts, dimensions, gross weight, volume, stackability and cargo-ready date. Disclose batteries, chemicals, liquids, magnets and other potentially dangerous goods. Let a qualified dangerous-goods provider confirm classification and requirements.

Confirm service and deadlines

Obtain routing, carrier/service, ETD/ETA, transshipment, origin receiving location and documentation/cargo cut-offs. For sea containers, confirm who supplies the verified gross mass and by when. The responsible shipper must ensure the declared mass is accurate.

Confirm scope and charges

Record Incoterm, origin/destination services, free time, equipment, insurance, release method, cancellation/amendment charges and quote validity. Distinguish booking request, confirmed booking, gate-in and actual loading; they are not the same milestone.

Check China-side export arrangements

Confirm who is exporter of record and who handles export licences, declarations and local transport. Check that seller and forwarder have coordinated pickup/loading responsibilities. Resolve any entity differences before final commercial documents are issued.

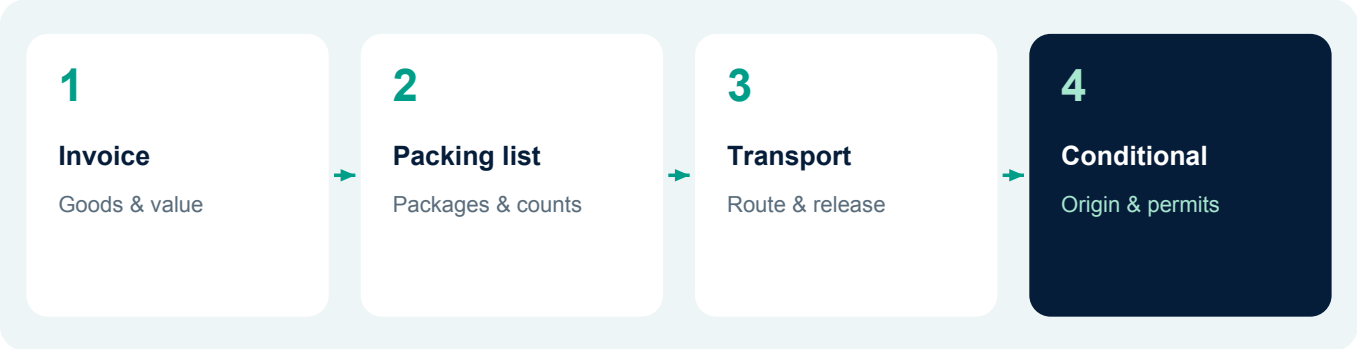
Sources: [13], [29] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Gate: forwarder accepts the real cargo details and confirms the service in writing.

DOCUMENTS • 25

Build one consistent shipment file

The documents should tell the same story: who bought what, from whom, for how much, how it is packed and how it is travelling.



The core file

Commercial invoice; packing list; bill of lading, sea waybill or air waybill; purchase order/contract; payment evidence; freight/insurance details; and broker authority/importer details as required. Add origin evidence if claiming an FTA concession.

Conditional documents

BICON permit and supporting declarations, packing declaration, treatment certificate, product compliance reports, dangerous-goods documents, inspection report and other regulator approvals where applicable. Use the required issuer and format, not an invented generic certificate.

Reconcile key fields

Check legal names, addresses, invoice number/date, currency, product description, models, quantities, origin, package count and weights. Check container/seal and transport references once known. Differences need explanation, correction and version control.

Set ownership and deadlines

Name who issues each document, who reviews it and when the final version is due. Send drafts to the broker before departure. Keep final files in a single shipment folder with clear names and an index. Store important originals and electronic records securely.

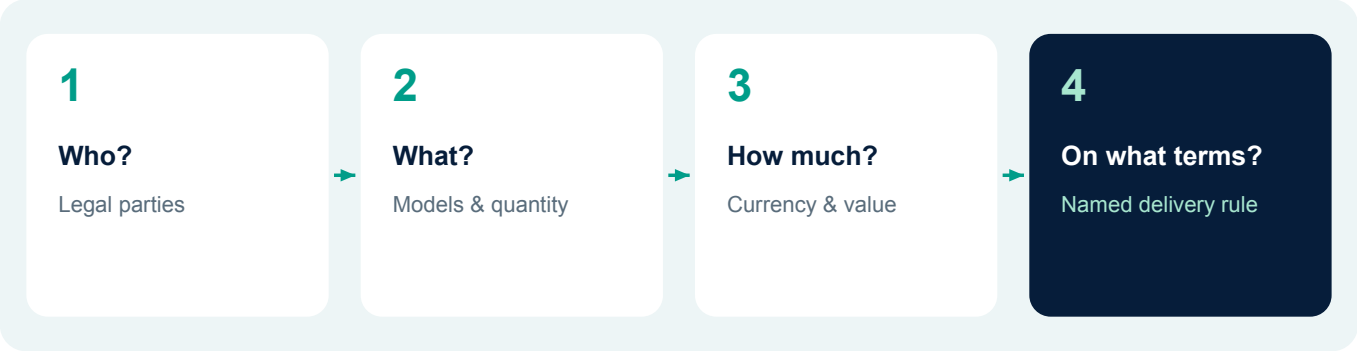
Sources: [2], [17], [22], [30] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Gate: broker/forwarder receives and reviews the required documents before arrival.

DOCUMENTS • 26

Commercial invoice: make it usable

A vague invoice forces questions. Prepare enough detail for classification, valuation and reconciliation with the real transaction.



Identify the parties and terms

Record seller/exporter, buyer/importer, relevant addresses, invoice number/date, currency, Incoterm/named place and purchase-order reference. Explain any separate manufacturer, exporter or payment beneficiary in the supporting file.

Describe each line accurately

Use model/SKU, clear description, material/function where useful, quantity, unit, unit price and line value. Show discounts, tooling or other charges transparently so the broker can assess them. Avoid descriptions such as “accessories”, “gift” or “samples” without actual product details.

Illustrative line structure

PO SY-001 | Model CH-01 | powder-coated steel chair, upholstered seat | 100 units | US$40/unit | US$4,000. This is a formatting example only. A broker still needs sufficient composition and use information to classify and value the goods.

Review before issue

Check multiplication, total currency, invoice-versus-payment consistency and separation of freight/insurance as appropriate. Do not ask for a lower invoice value. If there is no sale price, ask the broker how to establish a lawful customs value rather than declaring zero.

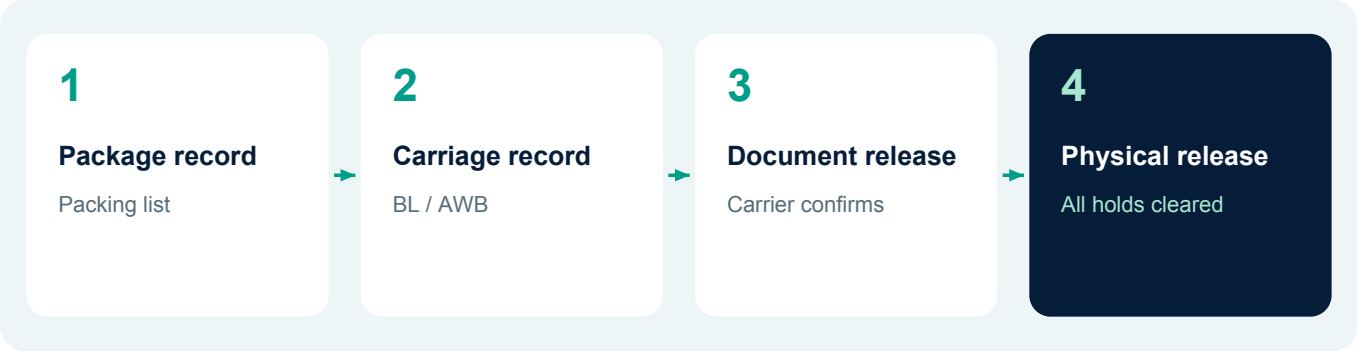
Sources: [14], [34] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Cross-check the final invoice against the purchase order, packing list and payment record.

DOCUMENTS • 27

Packing lists and transport documents

Package-level detail helps locate goods, inspect efficiently and identify shortages. Transport documents control different parts of carriage and release.



Packing-list fields

Show invoice/PO reference, package numbers, model/SKU, quantity per package, package type, dimensions, gross/net weight and total volume. Identify mixed-SKU cartons clearly. Include container/seal numbers once available. Totals must reconcile to the actual cargo.

Bill of lading or sea waybill

Review shipper, consignee, notify party, ports, vessel/voyage, packages, cargo description and release instructions. Original bills, electronic bills and sea waybills have different release arrangements. Confirm the carrier's actual requirements rather than assuming a PDF copy is sufficient.

Air waybill and courier papers

Check shipper/consignee, delivery details, goods description, pieces, weights and service. Confirm who handles entry and who pays charges. An air waybill is not a negotiable document of title in the same way as a negotiable ocean bill.

Release is a separate task

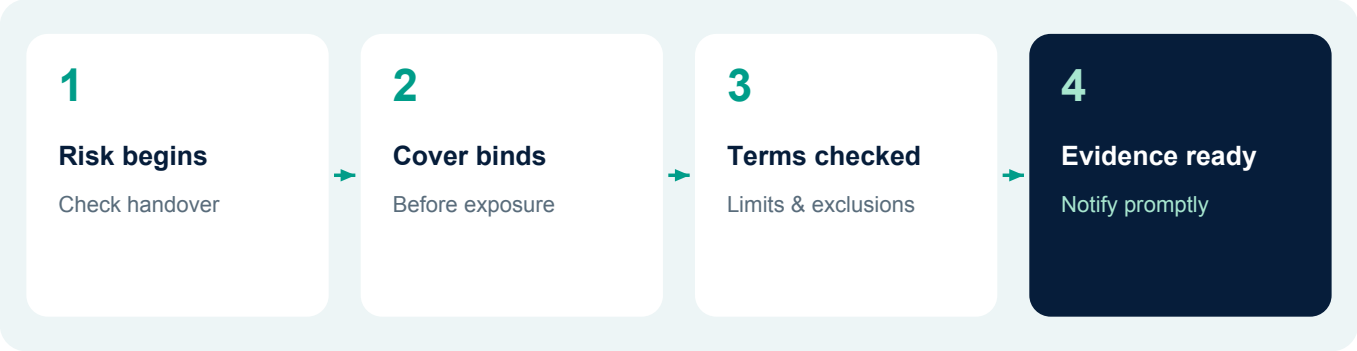
Ask when originals must be surrendered or an electronic/telex release authorised, if applicable. Record who controls release and any unpaid balances. Cargo may be customs-cleared but still unavailable because the carrier's document/payment requirements are unresolved.

Approve transport-document drafts early, and obtain written confirmation of the release method.

RISK • 28

Arrange cargo insurance deliberately

Carrier liability, supplier promises and cargo insurance are different. A freight booking does not automatically include suitable insurance.



Start with the risk handover

Use the contract and Incoterm to identify when your exposure begins and ends. Ask for cover spanning the required journey, including storage, consolidation, transshipment and final delivery where needed. Bind cover before the risk starts.

Read the actual cover

Confirm insured value, currency, deductible, covered perils, exclusions and claims procedure. Ask specifically about fragile goods, moisture/corrosion, theft, used equipment, inadequate packing, war/strikes and general average. “All risks” is not literally every possible loss.

Understand common gaps

Poor packing, inherent vice, ordinary delay and loss of market may be excluded or restricted. Cargo cover may not protect your project-delay exposure. CIF seller-arranged insurance can be minimum cover; obtain the certificate/policy and check whether it meets your needs.

Prepare to claim

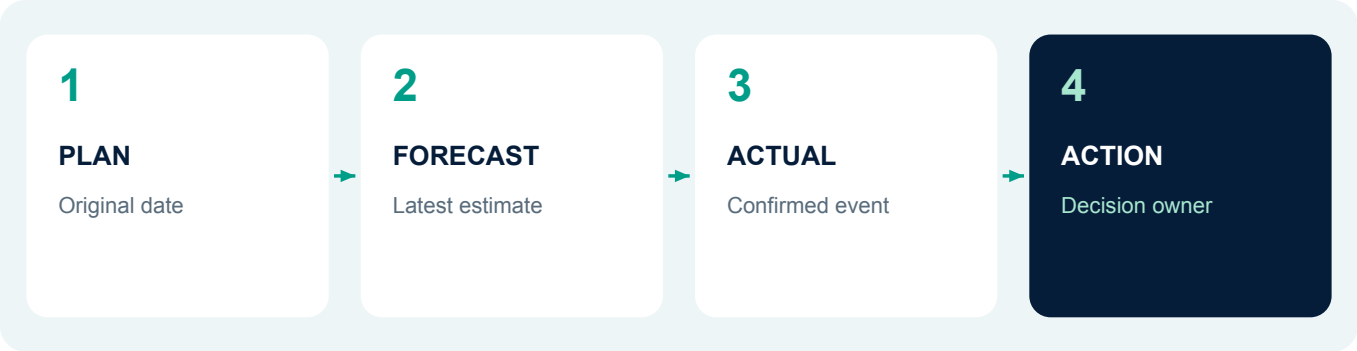
Keep invoice, packing list, transport documents, policy/certificate, loading photos, inspection evidence and delivery records. Know notification deadlines and survey requirements before arrival. Do not dispose of damaged goods or packaging until insurer/surveyor instructions are clear.

Sources: [13], [37] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Ask the insurer/broker to confirm in writing that the product, packing and journey are covered.

Track milestones, not just a map

Tracking is useful when it leads to decisions. Separate planned dates from confirmed physical events.



Maintain a shipment tracker

Record cargo ready, inspection passed, pickup, origin warehouse receipt, export clearance, loaded/departed, transshipment, arrival, discharge, availability, releases, delivery and empty return. Assign an owner and evidence to each event.

Use three dates for each milestone

Keep original plan, latest forecast and actual date. Ask the forwarder what changed and whether the container is on the nominated sailing. A booking confirmation or gate-in message does not prove it was loaded.

Communicate changes early

Advise the site/warehouse and customers when an ETA shift affects installation, labour or stock commitments. Delay irreversible arrangements until cargo availability and release are confirmed. Request realistic best/expected/worst scenarios when the route is disrupted.

Manage partial recovery

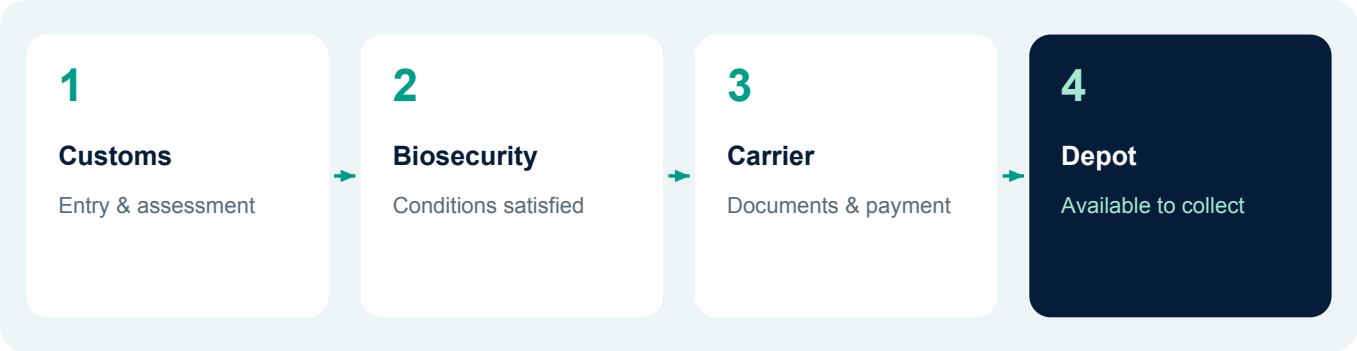
If production is late, compare a priority airfreight split, partial shipment, alternative service or local substitute. Recalculate documents, packing, compliance evidence and cost before approving. A split shipment can create extra minimum charges and two clearance/delivery processes.

Use a single status sheet shared by procurement, finance, broker, forwarder and receiver.

ARRIVAL • 30

Prepare before the ship arrives

The best time to fix most arrival problems is while the cargo is still travelling.



Give the broker a complete pack

Provide importer identity/authority, final invoice, packing list, transport details, origin claim evidence and conditional approvals. Disclose valuation adjustments and any changes from the order. Respond promptly to classification or document questions.

Fund and plan release

Confirm how duties, GST, government charges and broker/forwarder invoices will be paid. Obtain the arrival notice, current ETA and expected availability. Check carrier document release and any outstanding original-bill requirements.

Book the right destination support

If inspection or treatment may be required, coordinate an approved location and service through the broker/forwarder. Confirm receiver hours, unloading equipment and access. Request the last free day and empty-return deadline in writing.

Check the final controls

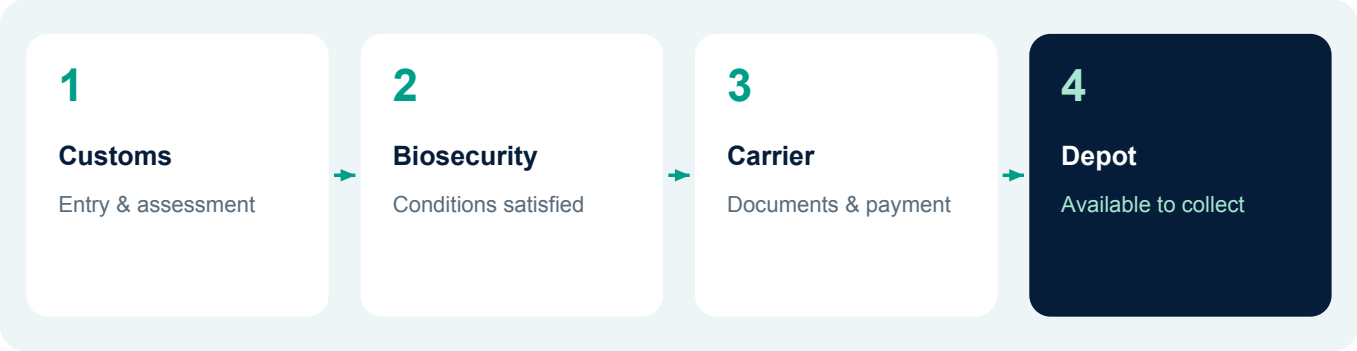
Ask separately: customs status? biosecurity status? carrier/commercial release? terminal/depot availability? final transport booking? A positive answer to only one is not enough to collect or deliver cargo.

Sources: [2], [4] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Gate: releases, payment, availability and safe delivery arrangements all line up.

Customs clearance, step by step

The importer provides the facts; the broker prepares the entry and helps resolve questions. Accurate information is more useful than rushing an incomplete declaration.



1 | Prepare and lodge

The broker reviews goods, classification, customs value, origin/concessions and required information. A full declaration is generally needed for consignments over A$1,000 entered for home consumption. Low-value cargo uses applicable reporting/clearance pathways and may still face controls.

2 | Assessment and payment

The entry determines applicable duty, GST and charges. Confirm the payment/deferment arrangements and retain assessment details. A preferential-duty claim must have the required basis and supporting evidence.

3 | Queries or examination

ABF may request more information or inspect goods. Supply the actual contract, payments, product details and other requested evidence through the broker. Never revise facts merely to match an easier tariff or value.

4 | Release and reconciliation

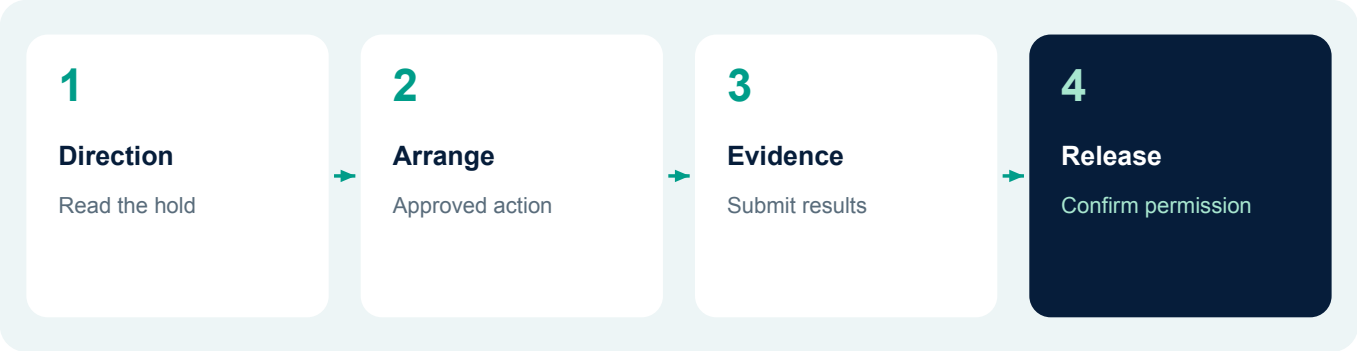
Confirm customs release and any separate biosecurity/other holds. Arrange carrier release and cargo collection only when all controls permit it. Check the lodged entry against the real goods and documents; have errors assessed and corrected through the proper process.

Sources: [2], [3], [14] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Keep the final import entry, assessment, payment evidence and supporting documents together.

Biosecurity holds and inspection

A hold is a direction to control the cargo. It is not permission to unpack, move, use or sell it as normal.



Understand the direction

Ask the broker for the written requirement, affected goods and permitted next action. It may involve more documents, an inspection, treatment, isolation or another action. Keep held stock identifiable and prevent unauthorised release.

Coordinate the practical work

Confirm the approved location, booking, access, unpack/repack labour, equipment and who pays. Inspection can require selected packages to be opened. Budget time for attendance, treatment availability, results and reinspection where applicable.

If food is involved

Food referred under the Imported Food Inspection Scheme must remain on hold as directed. Labels, visual checks and laboratory testing may apply. Biosecurity release alone does not necessarily clear the food-safety hold.

If conditions cannot be satisfied

Get advice on the authorised options, which may include treatment, re-export or destruction at your expense. Do not assume onshore treatment is always available. Record all directions, costs and communications and ask the supplier/insurer about contractual responsibility without delaying compliance.

Sources: [4], [21], [31] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Gate: obtain confirmation of release from the relevant control before moving to normal distribution.

ARRIVAL • 33

Storage, demurrage and detention

The terminology and charging clock vary by carrier and terminal. Read the actual tariff and booking conditions.



STORAGE

Space at terminal / depot



DEMURRAGE

Carrier terms apply



DETENTION

Check empty-return clock

Distinguish the charges

Storage is charged for cargo occupying terminal/depot space. Demurrage often refers to a carrier's container remaining in the terminal beyond free time. Detention often refers to container use outside the terminal until return. Combined schemes and different definitions exist.

Ask for exact dates

Obtain availability, last free day for storage, carrier free-time terms, calendar-versus-working-day basis and empty-container return deadline. Ask when each clock starts and stops. A public holiday or hold may not pause commercial charges.

Reduce avoidable waiting

Finish documents and payments early, coordinate release and transport slots, prepare unloading labour/equipment and confirm the empty-return depot. LCL cargo has depot availability and storage rules too; there may be no container at your premises, but charges can still accrue.

Escalate with evidence

If delay occurs, request cost exposure and any extension/waiver promptly. Keep booking terms, timestamps and instructions. Mitigate loss while responsibility is reviewed. Do not assume a customs/biosecurity hold automatically makes the carrier waive charges.

Put every last-free-day and empty-return deadline into the shipment tracker with a named owner.

DELIVER • 34

Plan the final delivery properly

Give the transport provider site facts before dispatch. A truck arriving does not guarantee the load can be safely unloaded.



Match the truck, site and unloading plan.

Confirm the location

Provide the exact address, contact, receiving hours, booking rules, height/width/weight restrictions, turning space and access photos. Identify construction-site inductions, permits and traffic-control needs. Confirm whether the address is residential, remote or restricted.

Choose the handling method

Arrange a suitable forklift, crane, tail-lift, side-loader or depot unpack/redelivery as required. Match equipment capacity and fork spacing to package weights and load geometry. Have qualified operators assess heavy, fragile or unusual loads.

Agree the delivery scope

Clarify kerbside versus inside delivery, live unload versus drop container, included waiting time, labour, packaging removal and failed-delivery costs. Tail-lift delivery has weight and size limits; “door to door” does not necessarily mean upstairs or installed.

Close the equipment loop

For FCL, confirm unloading time, empty-container condition, return depot, return booking and deadline. Keep the equipment interchange/return receipt. For project deliveries, prepare a dry, secure storage area and prevent damage from other trades.

Gate: the receiver confirms a safe unloading plan, equipment and booking before the truck leaves.

DELIVER • 35

Receive, count and inspect

The receiving team creates the evidence needed to resolve shortages and damage. Give them the packing list before the truck arrives.



Before opening

Photograph the load and packaging, record vehicle/container/seal details where applicable and check visible condition. Note mismatches or damage factually on the delivery record. Do not put people at risk to obtain photographs or open an unstable load.

Count at package and SKU level

Reconcile package numbers first, then inspect contents against the packing list and order. Separate short shipment, transit damage and product non-conformity. Record carton numbers, quantities, batch/model and photographs for each exception.

Test before distribution

Carry out agreed receiving checks and any installation/commissioning checks appropriate to the product. Hold stock with safety or compliance concerns. Keep good and damaged stock separate and retain protective packaging until the claim process is understood.

Record the outcome

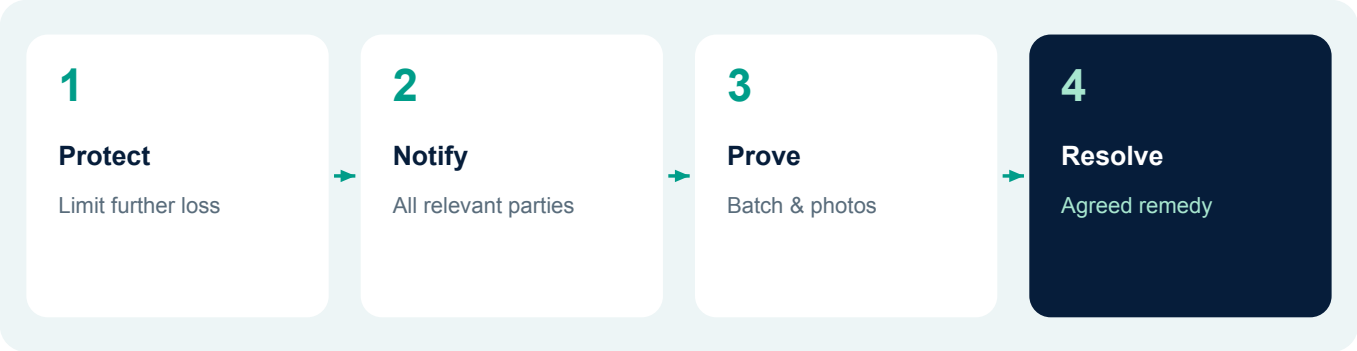
Create a goods-received report with date, receiver, counts, condition, exceptions and supporting photos. Notify the relevant parties promptly and within contractual/insurance deadlines. A signed clean delivery receipt can make a later claim harder; follow your carrier/insurer’s requirements.

> **Complete a receiving report before stock is released for sale, installation or use.**

PROBLEMS • 36

Damage, shortage and defect claims

Act quickly, preserve evidence and separate the cause from the commercial remedy you want.



Stabilise and notify

Make the area safe, prevent further loss and isolate affected goods. Notify the forwarder/carrier, insurer and supplier as relevant. Ask about survey instructions and deadlines. Do not wait for one party to accept blame before notifying the others.

Build the evidence pack

Include the order/specification, invoice, packing list, inspection report, loading photos, transport documents, delivery notes and photos at unpack. Record package/SKU/batch, affected quantity and estimated loss. Keep damaged goods and packing available for examination.

Choose a practical remedy

Compare repair, replacement, local rework, credit or partial refund, including freight, downtime and testing. Obtain approval before disposing, returning or altering goods. A supplier replacement can still create a new import, freight bill and compliance/document requirement.

Prevent recurrence

Identify whether the cause was specification, manufacture, packing, loading, carriage or receiving. Update the control that failed. Document the settlement and reconcile actual recoveries; do not count a promised credit as received cash.

Use one claims log: issue, quantity, evidence, notified parties, deadline, remedy, owner and status.

PROBLEMS • 37

Delays: recognise the cause early

Treat a delay as a chain of consequences: new dates, additional costs and decisions needed now.



Production or quality delay

Ask for the unfinished quantities, root cause and dated recovery plan. Avoid paying the balance merely to keep a booking alive. Consider approved partial dispatch, rework or an alternative source, with document and cost implications reviewed first.

Holiday, capacity or routing delay

China-side shutdowns, supplier backlogs, blank sailings, rollovers, congestion, weather or transshipment changes can affect the schedule. Confirm the current year's closure dates with each party. Ask whether the cargo is booked, received, loaded or actually departed.

Document or border delay

Identify the exact missing field, certificate, permit, value evidence or regulatory concern. Nominate the person who can supply it. Track inspection/testing availability and potential storage. An estimated response date is not a guaranteed release date.

Delivery delay

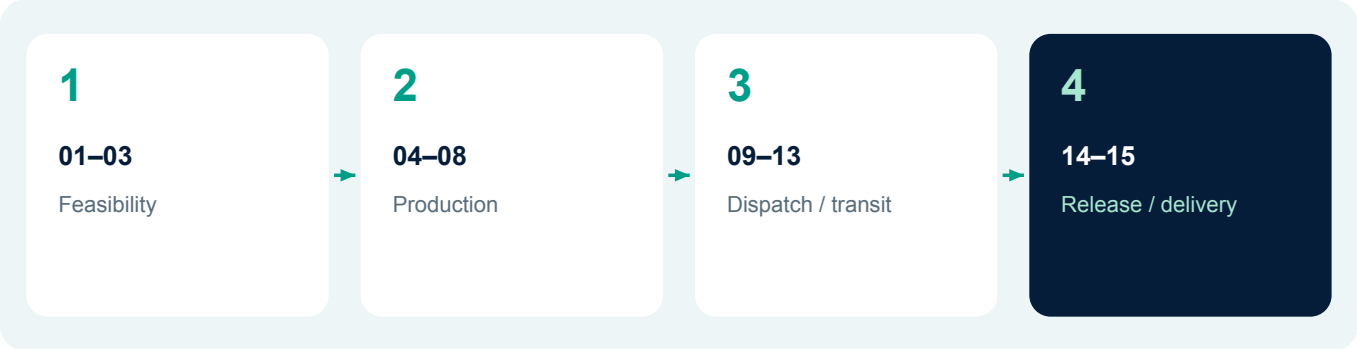
Check terminal/depot availability, carrier release, truck slots, unloading readiness and empty-return arrangements. Tell the customer/site what is confirmed and what remains pending. Avoid committing installation labour against an unconfirmed arrival forecast.

Update three items whenever a milestone slips: expected delivery, cost exposure and mitigation decision.

PROBLEMS • 38

A realistic planning schedule

This is an illustrative first-order programme for standard non-controlled goods. Actual timing must come from your suppliers, service providers and regulators.



Weeks 1–3 | Feasibility and samples

Allow time for specification, supplier checks, preliminary classification/BICON review, samples and evidence assessment. Custom tooling, testing or permits can take much longer. Do not start a production clock before approvals and required inputs are complete.

Weeks 4–8 | Production and checks

Use the supplier's confirmed lead time after the agreed trigger. Add inspection and a rework window. Track critical materials, subcontractors and packaging rather than checking only the final completion date.

Weeks 9–13 | Dispatch to arrival

This example allocates five weeks for pickup, consolidation, cut-offs and sea transport. It is not a China–Australia sailing-time claim. Direct and transshipment services vary; request a current route-specific forecast.

Weeks 14–15 | Release and delivery buffer

Allow an illustrative buffer for availability, clearance, inspection and final transport. Complex goods, laboratory work, disruptions or missing permits can push the programme well beyond it. Back-calculate from the required date and confirm feasible buffers with each provider.

For a deadline-driven project, agree a latest safe dispatch date and a fallback plan.

PROBLEMS • 39

Three shipment scenarios

These fictional examples show how to apply the controls. They are not Spotyard client case studies or guaranteed outcomes.



Furniture order: compliant goods, problematic pallets

The buyer verifies the furniture, but the packer substitutes unverified solid-timber pallets. A packaging query creates inspection/treatment and storage exposure. Better control: approve packaging materials, verify the actual packer's declaration and review evidence before dispatch.

ACP order: the finish matches, the application does not

A developer approves colour samples but lacks evidence for the panel system and intended facade application. Customs clearance would not resolve building suitability. Better control: involve the project's qualified designer/fire engineer/certifier before ordering and link evidence to the exact product and system.

Retail stock: a cheap freight quote becomes expensive

An LCL quote omits destination depot fees and assumes a business dock. The actual delivery is to a restricted site without unloading equipment. Better control: obtain an itemised scope, confirm access/equipment and compare landed cost to usable units.

The common lesson

The visible product is only one part of the purchase. Evidence, packaging, documents, transport scope and receiving capability need to be approved as deliberately as price and finish.

Before approving your order, ask which of these problems could still happen to it.

AFTER ARRIVAL • 40

Your responsibilities continue after delivery

An imported product needs traceable stock, correct information and a workable after-sales process.



Control release to customers

Confirm applicable product-safety, labelling, technical and installation requirements before supply/use. Keep batch/model traceability and approved instructions. Some goods must remain held until a regulator releases them. Do not treat a paid customs entry as product approval.

Prepare warranty and support

Keep spare parts, instructions and supplier escalation contacts. Set a process for defects, returns and repairs. Review Australian Consumer Law obligations with an adviser; an overseas supplier’s warranty does not determine all responsibilities to Australian customers.

Respond to safety concerns

Stop distribution of affected stock while the issue is assessed. Consumer-product suppliers have mandatory reporting obligations for associated death, serious injury or serious illness, generally within two days of awareness. Safety-related recalls also carry notification requirements. Follow the correct regulator pathway promptly.

Learn before reordering

Review defects, damage, delivery performance, true landed cost and customer feedback. Confirm that the supplier, materials, process and model remain unchanged. Reassess evidence when a product or regulation changes; a successful first shipment is not permanent approval.

Sources: [5], [8], [32], [33], [39] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Keep a traceability and recall contact plan before your first sale or installation.

AFTER ARRIVAL • 41

Close the file and keep the evidence

A shipment is finished when the goods, money, documents and exceptions reconcile—not simply when the truck leaves.



Reconcile the actual landed cost

Match supplier payments, currency conversion, freight, duty/GST, government charges, inspection, storage and delivery to the shipment. Allocate cost consistently across SKUs. Record unusable units and compare against the original business case.

Check the customs and tax record

Review the import entry and origin claim against the invoice and actual goods. Ask the broker to assess corrections or refund eligibility where needed. Have the accountant confirm GST credits/deferment and accounting treatment.

Retain an audit-ready file

ABF guidance requires relevant commercial records to be retained for five years. Other tax, product, timber, insurance or contractual requirements may call for their own periods; apply the longest relevant requirement with professional advice. Store searchable files with secure backup.

Close remaining obligations

Confirm empty-container return, claim settlements, supplier credits, warranty/spares and final inspection actions. Record lessons and update the next order’s specification, packing and delivery plan. Maintain access to records even when a staff member or service provider changes.

Sources: [24], [34] • Reference directory: pages 51–53.

Final gate: quantities, costs, entries, claims and equipment returns all reconcile.

WORKSHEET • A

Product and supplier approval sheet

Copy this structure for each product family. Use “not applicable—with reason” rather than leaving compliance fields blank.

☐ OWNER ☐ EVIDENCE ☐ DATE ☐ DECISION

Product brief

Project/PO: _____ SKU/model: _____
Intended use and installation location: _____
Materials/finish/dimensions: _____
Specification/drawing revision: _____ Approved sample: _____

Supplier verification

Registered legal name and ID: _____
Factory address / subcontractors: _____
Exporter and bank beneficiary verified by/date: _____
Audit/reference checks and evidence location: _____

Compliance decision

ABF restrictions checked: ____ BICON case/date: _____
Permits / technical / safety / labelling requirements: _____
Exact model evidence verified by: _____
Unresolved conditions and owner: _____

Approval

Landed budget: _____ Latest acceptable delivery: _____
Sample and packaging accepted by/date: _____
Commercial terms signed: ____ Payment checks complete: ____
Decision: HOLD / APPROVE Approver/date: _____

Do not approve while a safety, legal-entry or essential application question remains unresolved.

WORKSHEET • B

RFQ and freight brief

Send the product section to suppliers and the packed-cargo section to forwarders. Keep all replies on the same basis.

☐ OWNER ☐ EVIDENCE ☐ DATE ☐ DECISION

Supplier RFQ

Please quote the attached specification revision ____ for quantities ____ by model/colour. State price/currency, MOQ, sample/tooling cost, production lead time and trigger, payment terms, inspection access, warranty/remedies and quote validity. List all deviations explicitly.

Evidence and packing request

Please provide exact-model reports/certificates and issuer details, proposed carton/pallet dimensions and weights, total CBM, packaging materials, stackability, labelling and export arrangements. No material/component/packing substitutions without written approval.

Forwarder brief

Origin/pickup: ____ Destination/postcode: ____ Ready date: ____
Goods/material/function: ____ Pieces/weights/dimensions: ____
Incoterm/named place: ____ Batteries/chemicals/DG: ____
Unloading/access requirements: ____ Delivery deadline: ____

Ask the forwarder to confirm

Itemised origin, freight and destination charges; exclusions; routing/service; estimated milestones; document/cargo cut-offs; chargeable weight/volume basis; free time and clocks; customs/biosecurity services; insurance option; final delivery scope; validity and amendment/cancellation terms.

Attach the same specification and cargo facts to every competing quote.

WORKSHEET • C

Pre-shipment release checklist

Use this before authorising dispatch. One person should sign the release after the responsible specialists complete their checks.

☐ OWNER ☐ EVIDENCE ☐ DATE ☐ DECISION

Product and commercial

[ ] Exact model/specification and sample approved
[ ] Required evidence and permits checked for this shipment
[ ] Inspection passed; deviations closed in writing
[ ] Quantity/SKU mix confirmed; balance payment authorised
[ ] Supplier/exporter/beneficiary differences resolved

Packing and freight

[ ] Goods and container clean; packing specification met
[ ] Timber/bamboo and seasonal requirements checked
[ ] Actual dimensions/weights and stackability confirmed
[ ] DG/batteries disclosed and accepted where relevant
[ ] Booking, cut-offs, VGM responsibility and insurance confirmed

Documents and destination

[ ] Invoice, packing list and origin evidence reconciled
[ ] Packing/treatment/conditional documents available
[ ] Transport-document draft and release method reviewed
[ ] Broker has documents and valuation/classification facts
[ ] Arrival funds, delivery access and unloading arranged

Release record

Open issues: _____
Evidence folder / shipment ID: _____
Authorised decision: HOLD / RELEASE
Name, date and conditions of release: _____

A vessel deadline is not a reason to override an unresolved compliance or safety issue.

WORKSHEET • D

Arrival and issue-control checklist

Keep this with the shipment tracker so logistics, finance and receiving teams work from the same status.

☐ OWNER ☐ EVIDENCE ☐ DATE ☐ DECISION

Before collection

[ ] Arrival/availability and all holds checked
[ ] Customs, biosecurity and carrier release confirmed
[ ] Required payments or approved deferral completed
[ ] Storage last free day / empty-return deadline recorded
[ ] Truck slot, receiver and safe unloading confirmed

At receipt

[ ] Seal/packages/condition photographed as applicable
[ ] Visible exceptions noted factually on delivery record
[ ] Package and SKU counts reconciled
[ ] Damaged/suspect stock isolated; packaging retained
[ ] Goods-received report and notifications completed

Issue log

Issue ID / package-SKU / affected quantity: _____
Evidence and likely cause: _____
Notified supplier/carrier/insurer/broker at: _____
Deadline / next action / owner: _____
Proposed remedy and cost exposure: _____

Close-out

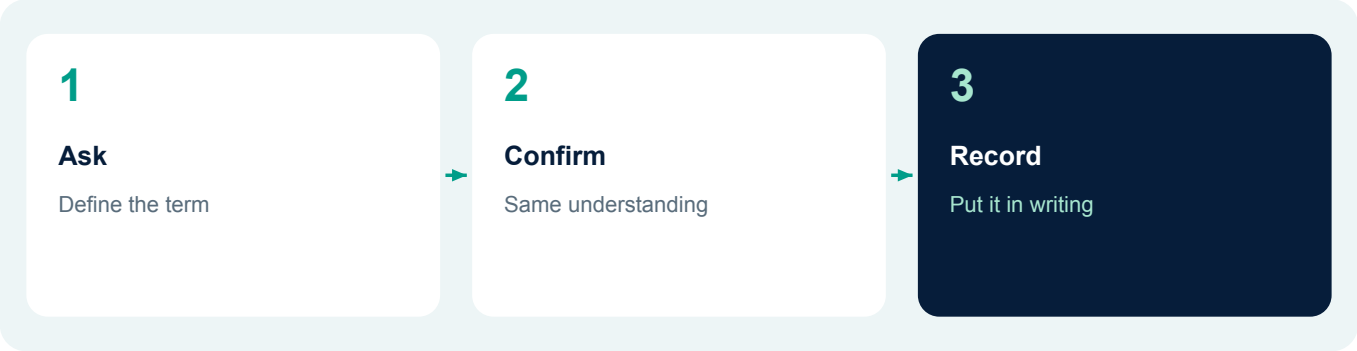
[ ] Empty return receipt saved where applicable
[ ] Actual landed cost and GST reviewed
[ ] Claims/credits and stock adjustments reconciled
[ ] Final entry and evidence securely archived
[ ] Next-order corrective actions assigned

> **If there is a safety issue, escalate to the appropriate specialist/regulator immediately.**

REFERENCE

The terms you will see

Use these definitions to ask clearer questions. The applicable contract or regulation determines the precise meaning in your shipment.



People and controls

ABF: Australian Border Force. DAFF: Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. BICON: biosecurity import-conditions system. Broker: licensed customs broker. Consignee: party identified to receive the shipment. Shipper/exporter: confirm the actual contractual/legal role. ABN: Australian Business Number; CCID: Customs Client ID.

Transport and documents

FCL: Full Container Load. LCL: Less than Container Load. CBM: cubic metres. ETD/ETA: estimated departure/arrival. BL/BOL: bill of lading. AWB: air waybill. VGM: verified gross mass. POD: proof of delivery, or port of discharge in some contexts—ask which is meant.

Customs and commercial

HS: Harmonized System tariff framework. Customs value: value established under customs valuation rules. ChAFTA: China–Australia Free Trade Agreement. COO: certificate of origin. Incoterms: agreed delivery rules allocating specified responsibilities, costs and risk. Landed cost: cost to the agreed destination on stated assumptions.

Quality and time

SKU: stock-keeping unit. MOQ: minimum order quantity. Golden sample: approved physical reference. AQL: acceptance-quality-limit terminology, not a zero-defect promise. ACP: aluminium composite panel. RCM: Regulatory Compliance Mark. IFIS: Imported Food Inspection Scheme. BMSB: Brown marmorated stink bug. Free time: verify the applicable charging clock.

> **When a quote uses an unfamiliar abbreviation, ask the provider to define it in writing.**

SOURCES & FURTHER READING

Verify the rules for your shipment

Official regulator and ICC guidance consulted for this edition. Links are clickable. Always check the live requirements before ordering or shipping.

[1] ABF — requirements to import goods
abf.gov.au/imports/Pages/How-to-import/Requirements.aspx

[2] ABF — import declarations
abf.gov.au/importing-exporting-and-manufacturing/importing/how-to-import/import-declaration

[3] ABF — prohibited goods
abf.gov.au/importing-exporting-and-manufacturing/prohibited-goods/

[4] DAFF — how to import goods
agriculture.gov.au/import/before/how-to-import

[5] ACCC — product safety standards
productsafety.gov.au/business/understand-product-safety-rules/product-safety-standards-an…

[6] ABCB — evidence of suitability handbook
abcb.gov.au/sites/default/files/resources/2022/Handbook-Evidence-of-suitability.pdf

[7] EESS — manufacturers and importers
eess.gov.au/responsible-supplier/manufacturers-and-importers-responsible-suppliers/

[8] ACMA — supplier obligations
acma.gov.au/know-what-you-must-do

[9] ABCB — WaterMark frequently asked questions
watermark.abcb.gov.au/sites/default/files/download/2022-04/FAQs-LOOK-WaterMark-Tapware.pdf

[10] DAFF — imported food
agriculture.gov.au/import/goods/food

[11] AICIS — who must register
industrialchemicals.gov.au/business/getting-started-registration-importing-and-manufactur…

[12] TGA — importing and supplying medical devices
tga.gov.au/products/medical-devices/supply-and-distribution/importing-and-supplying-medic…

[13] ICC — Incoterms 2020 checklist
library.iccwbo.org/content/clp/Others/incoterms_2020_checklist_2024-update.pdf

SOURCES & FURTHER READING

Verify the rules for your shipment

Official regulator and ICC guidance consulted for this edition. Links are clickable. Always check the live requirements before ordering or shipping.

[14] ABF — valuation of imported goods
abf.gov.au/importing-exporting-and-manufacturing/trade-and-goods-compliance/valuation-of-…

[15] Australian Trade Remedies Commission — dumping commodity register
industry.gov.au/australian-trade-remedies-commission/current-measures-dumping-commodity-r…

[16] DFAT — using ChAFTA
dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/chafta/doing-business-with-china/guide-to-using-cha…

[17] DFAT — ChAFTA certificates of origin
dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/chafta/doing-business-with-china/chafta-certificate…

[18] ABF — GST and other taxes
abf.gov.au/importing-exporting-and-manufacturing/importing/cost-of-importing-goods/gst-an…

[19] ATO — paying GST on imported goods
ato.gov.au/api/public/content/0-5cfa3e60-d95b-41aa-9be1-cea62009de33

[20] ABF — import processing charges
abf.gov.au/importing-exporting-and-manufacturing/importing/cost-of-importing-goods/charge…

[21] DAFF — preparing for import
agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/before/prepare

[22] DAFF — timber and bamboo packaging
agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/goods/timber-packaging

[23] DAFF — timber and wooden articles
agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/goods/timber

[24] DAFF — illegal logging due diligence
agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/forestry/policies/illegal-logging/importers/due-dilig…

[25] DAFF — seasonal BMSB measures
agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/before/brown-marmorated-stink-bugs

[26] DAFF — 2026–27 BMSB season notice
agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/import/industry-advice/2026/151-2026

SOURCES & FURTHER READING

Verify the rules for your shipment

Official regulator and ICC guidance consulted for this edition. Links are clickable. Always check the live requirements before ordering or shipping.

[27] ABF — asbestos supply-chain assurance
abf.gov.au/importing-exporting-and-manufacturing/prohibited-goods/asbestos/ensuring-the-g…

[28] ABF — import labelling
abf.gov.au/importing-exporting-and-manufacturing/importing/how-to-import/requirements/lab…

[29] AMSA — container weight verification
amsa.gov.au/vessels-operators/cargoes-and-dangerous-goods/container-weight-verification

[30] DAFF — documentary requirements policy
agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/minimum-documentary-and-import-declarati…

[31] DAFF — imported food inspections
agriculture.gov.au/import/goods/food/inspection-compliance

[32] ACCC — mandatory incident reporting
productsafety.gov.au/business/make-a-mandatory-report/how-to-submit-a-mandatory-report

[33] ACCC — deciding on a recall
productsafety.gov.au/business/recall-an-unsafe-product/determine-if-a-recall-is-needed

[34] ABF — customs valuation guidance
abf.gov.au/help-and-support-subsite/files/instructions-guidelines-customs-valuation.pdf

[35] BICON — live import conditions
bicon.agriculture.gov.au/

[36] BPC Victoria — lead-free plumbing requirements
vba.vic.gov.au/plumbing/new-lead-free-plumbing-product-requirements

[37] ICC — Incoterms questions and answers
library.iccwbo.org/clp/clp-incoterms-qa-2020.htm

[38] ABF — import declaration comprehensive guide
abf.gov.au/help-and-support-subsite/Guides/doc-import-declaration-guide.pdf

[39] ACCC — consumer rights and guarantees
accc.gov.au/business/selling-products-and-services/consumer-rights-and-guarantees

About the visuals

Original editorial imagery and vector diagrams illustrate the process. They are not evidence of completed client shipments, product certification or regulator endorsement. Practical workflows, worksheets and numerical examples are explanatory material.

Spotyard

SOURCING & LOGISTICS

Plan your next import with clarity.

From the first product brief to final delivery, start with the right questions and a clear shipment plan.

Tell us what you need

Product or drawings • Quantities • Intended use
Destination postcode • Target delivery date

Scan to message us

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