

Executive Brief

Organisation: Southern Ports
Position: Chief Operating Officer
Consultant: Lindsay Woods, Principal
Date: May 2026

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in exploring the Chief Operating Officer role with Southern Ports. As a trusted partner, we have produced this information to help you become more informed about the organisation's context, operations, strategy and culture.

About Southern Ports

Southern Ports is a Western Australian Government owned port authority working across four sites at Albany, Bunbury, Esperance and Perth.

The organisation underpins the state's economic growth and plays a pivotal role in facilitating more than 30 million tonnes of trade each year. While Southern Ports predominantly operates bulk export ports, its role in facilitating critical imports including project cargo and supporting cruise tourism is ever increasing.

Southern Ports works with its customers and port users to find solutions, connecting regional industries to global markets. Its trade facilitation is enabled by its commitment to its people and its internationally recognised asset management system, which covers its diverse infrastructure portfolio of 8,700 assets.

Beyond trade, Southern Ports is an integral part of its communities – building capacity and creating prosperity for its regions to deliver on its vision of *strong regional ports, strong regions*. Southern Ports employs more than 300 people, with 80 per cent of its workforce regionally based.

Southern Ports operates under the *Government Trading Enterprise Act 2023 (WA)*, in conjunction with the *Port Authorities Act 1999 (WA)*. An independent Board of Directors is its governing body, with members appointed by the Minister for Ports, Hon Stephen Dawson MLC. Its Executive Leadership Team reports to the Board of Directors and is accountable to the Minister for Ports.

The Opportunity

Having successfully transitioned to a position of 'building the future', the organisation is implementing a bold redesign of its Executive Leadership Team and regional leadership model to deliver sustainable growth and capitalise on emerging trade opportunities across regional Western Australia.

A comprehensive leadership structure review was recently undertaken, and in response, the Board endorsed a redesigned Executive Leadership Team of five chief-level roles supported by three regional General Managers with enhanced operational authority. The key changes are designed to decouple long-term infrastructure planning from day-to-day operations, professionalise project delivery and position Southern Ports to transition from a 'licence to operate' to a 'licence to grow'.

Southern Ports is seeking to appoint exceptional leaders to four critical roles to support the delivery of its five-year strategic roadmap and position the organisation for its next phase of growth:

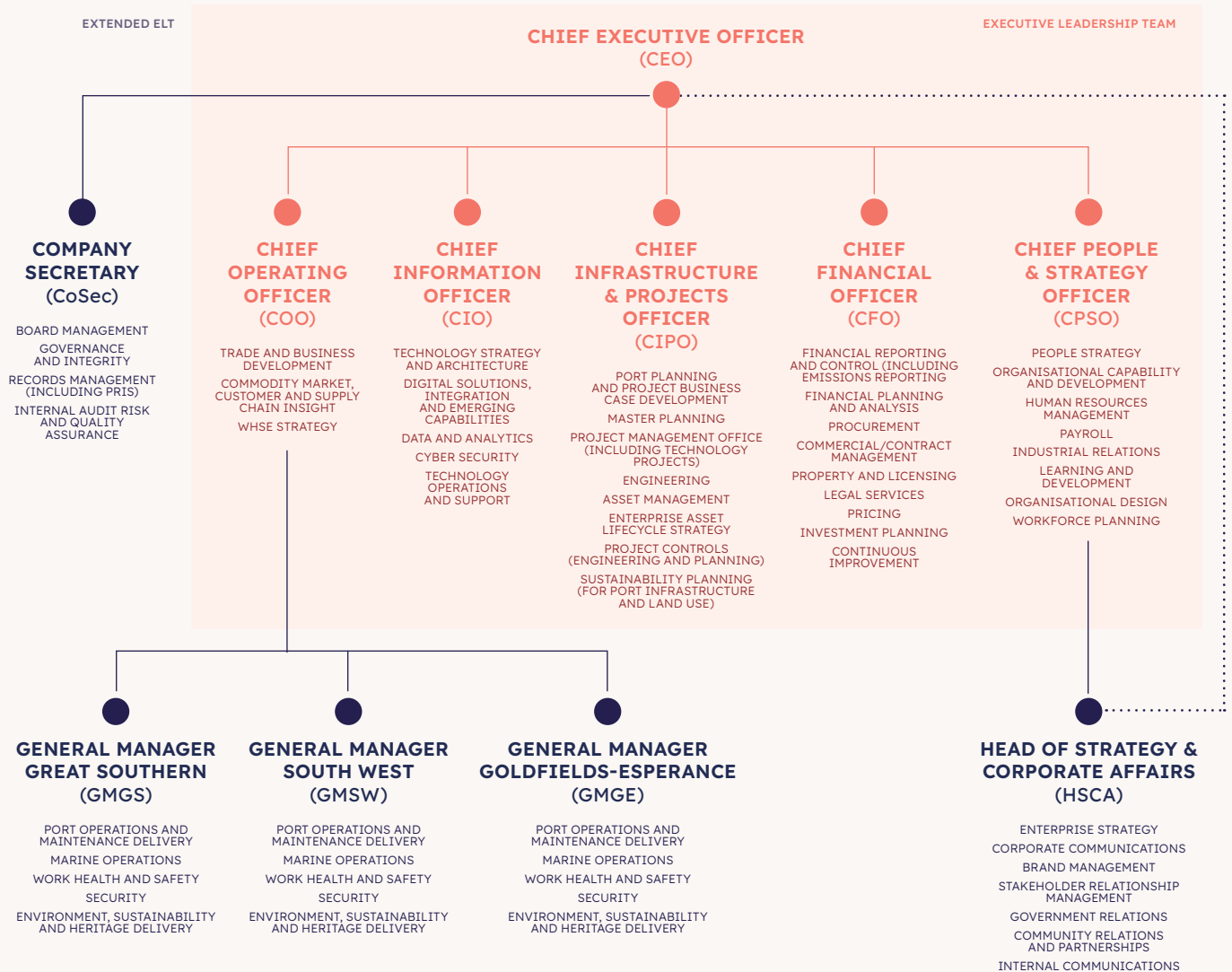
- **Chief Operating Officer** – reconfigured to integrate trade and business development with port operations, creating a single customer contact point.
- **General Manager South West** – strengthened regional leadership to match Bunbury's increasing operational complexity and growth trajectory.
- **Chief Infrastructure & Projects Officer** – consolidating oversight of the entire asset lifecycle from port planning through to project delivery.
- **Head of Strategy & Corporate Affairs** – unifying enterprise strategy with high-level government advocacy and stakeholder relations.

Chief Operating Officer

The Chief Operating Officer is central to this next chapter. Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer as a member of the Executive Leadership Team, the role has been redesigned to bring trade, customer outcomes and port operations under a single point of executive accountability. The COO will integrate business development with operational delivery and lead enterprise operations through regional General Managers, driving sustainable growth, asset utilisation and commercial performance.

The successful candidate will be an enterprise leader with executive experience in ports, logistics, infrastructure or related sectors. They will be commercially astute and operationally credible, with a track record of integrating commercial strategy with operational delivery across complex, multi-site environments. Strong judgement, resilience, and a deep understanding of operational risk, safety, marine and regulatory environments are essential.

Organisational Structure



Our Ports

Southern Ports' ports are strategically located along the Western Australian southern coastline, readily accessible by a third of the state's mining and agriculture industry.

Port of Albany



4.9mt trade



152 vessel visits



37 people

The Port of Albany is located on Menang Boodjar, 400km south of Perth, within the Great Southern region of Western Australia. The gateway port offers four berths, leases for port-related industries, and access to port infrastructure and facilities. Adjacent to the city of Albany, the Port encompasses a landholding of 84 hectares surrounded by the waters of Princess Royal Harbour and King George Sound. As Western Australia's oldest port, it is historically significant to the region and state. Key commodities include grain, woodchips, silica sands and fertiliser. The Port is also a premier cruise ship destination with significant heritage and tourism offerings and has a strong environmental and sustainability focus.

Port of Bunbury



17.1mt trade



423 vessel visits



86 people

Located on Wardandi Boodjar, 175km south of Perth in the waters of Koombana Bay, our Port of Bunbury is a gateway port with seven active berths. It provides leases for port-related industries and access to port infrastructure and facilities. The diverse commodities traded through the port extend to alumina, grain, spodumene, caustic soda, woodchips, mineral and silica sands, copper concentrate, coal, fertiliser and fuel. The Port also welcomes cruise vessels and has laydown capacity for breakbulk and project cargo. Optimally located in the South West region and with a large landholding of 470 hectares, the Port is also primed for growth.

Port of Esperance



8.2mt trade



171 vessel visits



125 people

The Port of Esperance is located on Wudjari Boodjar, approximately 720km east-southeast of Perth in the Goldfields-Esperance region and within the waters of Esperance Bay. The Port of Esperance is a gateway port offering full port and terminal services with three berths and landholding of 75 hectares. It is the only deepwater port in southern Western Australia. The second-largest employer in the region, the Port has a diverse trade profile with iron ore, grain, spodumene, fuel, sulphur, woodchips, fertiliser, copper concentrate and nickel, as well as containers and cruise ships.

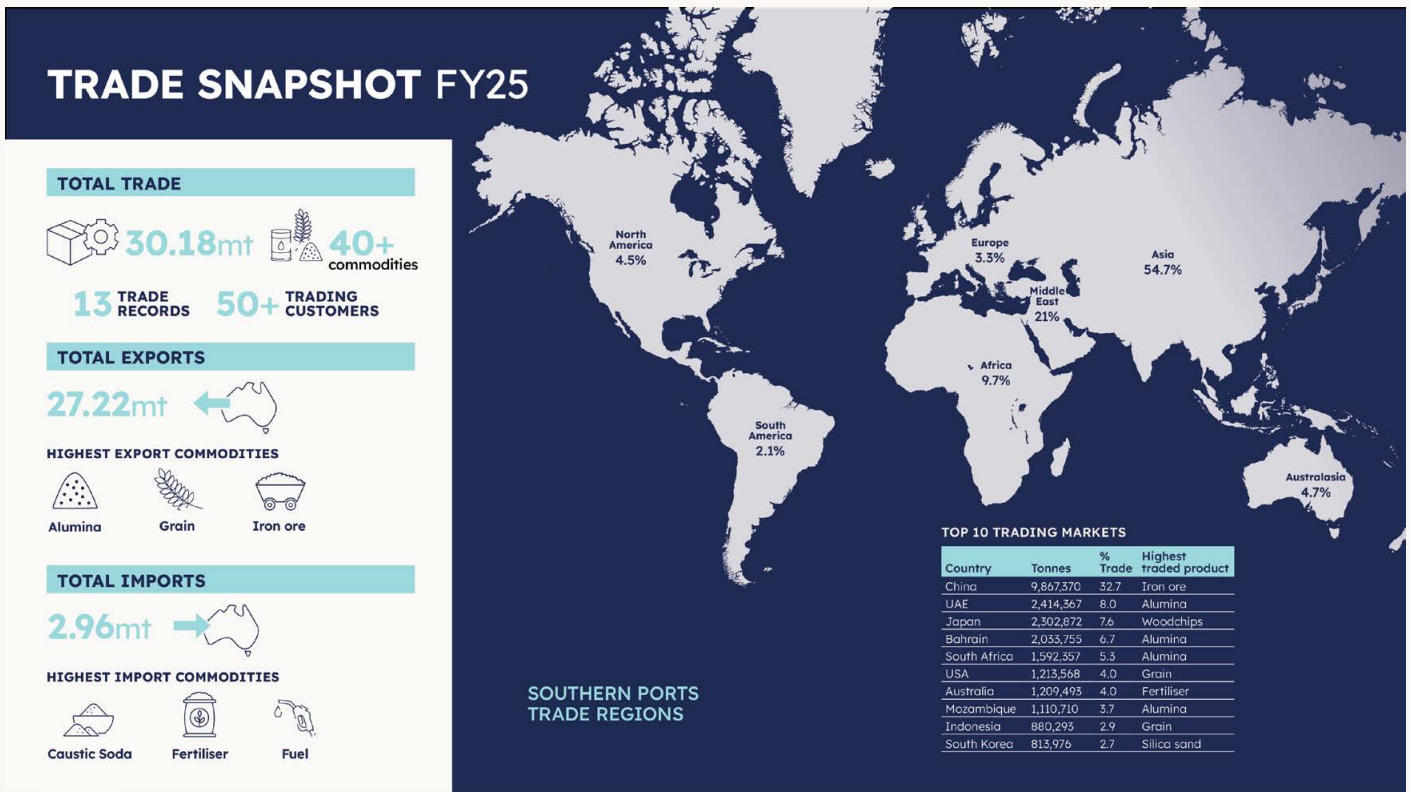
Trade Profile

Southern Ports facilitated more than 30 million tonnes of trade in 2025. Diversification continues to be a strong driver in Southern Ports’ trade strategy, with our ports facilitating trade in bulk commodities, breakbulk and project cargo, and cruise operations.

The majority of Southern Ports infrastructure is dedicated to facilitating bulk commodity trades, connecting agriculture, mining and forestry industries to global destinations.

Bulk commodity imports and exports accounted for 99.7 per cent of Southern Ports’ trade profile across Albany, Bunbury and Esperance comprising 40 different commodities including alumina (33.3 per cent), grain (24.2 per cent), iron ore (12.5 per cent), caustic soda (5.7 per cent), and mineral sands (2.2 per cent).

Southern Ports also has a key role in facilitating the state’s transition to clean energy, primarily through the import of breakbulk cargo and the management of the largest and third largest lithium export ports globally (being the ports of Bunbury and Esperance respectively).



Southern Ports' supply chain network



Vision and Values

Vision: Strong regional ports, strong regions.

				
<p>Put people first.</p> <p>Above innovation, above achievement, above ambition comes the safety and wellbeing of our team, our customers and our communities.</p>	<p>Believe in better.</p> <p>We set the bar high, then go about raising it again every day. We are driven and determined, constantly striving for excellence.</p>	<p>Embrace curiosity.</p> <p>Curiosity is a powerful tool. It leads us to look at things through new eyes. To explore new possibilities. To discover better ways of doing things for our customers and our communities.</p>	<p>Find your voice.</p> <p>We don't judge failure. For it is only through failure that we learn to excel. So go ahead. Stand up. Speak up.</p>	<p>Be greater together.</p> <p>We are collaborators. Champions of inclusivity. When we work together as one we can make great things happen. Together we are stronger.</p>

Strategic Direction

In 2025, Southern Ports introduced a bold new strategic direction, providing a clear framework to realise its vision of *strong regional ports, strong regions* – driving trade, empowering its people, strengthening its communities and embracing innovation to meet the evolving needs of its regions and to deliver value to the state.

<p>STRATEGIC PILLARS</p> <p>AMBITION</p> <p>FOCUS AREAS AND GOALS</p>	<p>Proactive trade facilitation</p> <p>To drive trade facilitation, working collaboratively with customers and partners.</p> <p>1</p>	<p>High performance organisation</p> <p>To build an agile, future-focused culture that values workplace safety, equity, diversity and inclusivity; enhances employee experience and engagement; and engages best-in-class systems and processes.</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Enduring value</p> <p>To create enduring value for our communities and positively impact our regions through trust, engagement and the protection of heritage and the environment.</p> <p>3</p>	<p>Connection and future focus</p> <p>To forge opportunities for connection and drive business excellence through innovation, technology, and forward-thinking strategies.</p> <p>4</p>
				
	<p>FLEXIBLE CAPACITY We invest in flexible capacity to support current and new trade while leveraging our organisational strength to fund the growth of our assets.</p> <p>CUSTOMER FOCUS We maintain a customer-focused approach that is responsive and balanced with commercial and risk imperatives to facilitate trade.</p> <p>TRADE ENABLEMENT We actively seek new trade opportunities beyond our current footprint and invest responsibly to diversify our services and stimulate new trade.</p>	<p>SAFETY AND WELLBEING We cultivate mutual care and respect, where we prioritise the safety and wellbeing of our people and foster an environment where individuals contribute to the organisation's wellbeing.</p> <p>WORKFORCE EMPOWERMENT We ensure our workforce is equipped with the knowledge, skills, and mindset to thrive.</p> <p>VALUE-ADDING EXCELLENCE We optimise our operations and services and implement efficient systems and processes to deliver value to our people and stakeholders.</p>	<p>ENRICHED REGIONS We develop the economic capability and resilience of our communities by facilitating trade through local employment, training, and business opportunities.</p> <p>TRUSTED COMMUNITY PARTNER We strive to be a valued and trusted community partner through social investment, reconciliation and community development initiatives.</p> <p>CUSTODIANSHIP We safeguard the health of our assets by maximising their lifecycle, preventing degradation, and preserving their value for future generations.</p>	<p>TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED PORTS We drive transformation through efficient, technology-enabled ports, leveraging near real-time data to enhance decision-making.</p> <p>SOLUTIONS-FOCUSED We anticipate the evolving needs of our customers and communities and deliver innovative solutions supported by advanced technologies.</p> <p>ENERGY TRANSITION We advance Western Australia's energy transition by playing our role in the global clean energy trade and adopting leading sustainable technologies and practices within our operations.</p>

2025 Results and Profile

TOTAL TRADE



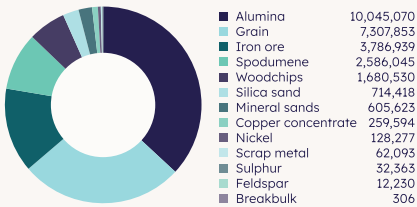
TOTAL EXPORTS



HIGHEST EXPORT COMMODITIES BY REVENUE YIELD



EXPORTS (TONNES)



TOTAL VISITS



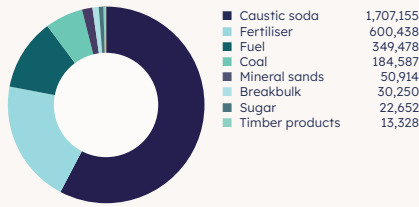
TOTAL IMPORTS



HIGHEST IMPORT COMMODITIES BY REVENUE YIELD



IMPORTS (TONNES)



FINANCIAL

\$206.12m
total revenue

\$47.79m
profit before tax

\$33.15m
profit after tax

7.4%
return on assets



COMMUNITY AND CUSTOMERS

\$329k
invested in 121
community projects

\$25k
supporting 21,760
Foodbank meals

20
active peppercorn
and community leases

58
customers

22
new trade and
customer agreements



PEOPLE

312
people

79%
regionally located

\$687k
training investment

1.3
Lost Time Injury
Frequency Rate

\$220k
for employee
health and wellbeing

VALUE-ADDING EXCELLENCE

3 ISO
certifications

7 industry
awards



Record capital investment
\$59m invested in 152 projects
(of which 60 projects were completed)



8,700
assets maintained
across 14 asset classes

16,000
maintenance
requests completed

Executive Leadership Team

Keith Wilks, Chief Executive Officer

With three decades' experience in the port and maritime sectors, including many years at sea, Keith brings valuable operational experience in leading complex port operations, backed by proven strategic and leadership skills.

Keith was appointed Chief Executive Officer in 2023. He was formerly Southern Ports' Chief Operating Officer for more than three years and has also held a range of senior and advisory roles at the Port of Newcastle, Port Authority of New South Wales and Svitzer.

Keith is a Director of Ports Australia, and holds a Bachelor of Commerce, Master Mariner certification, and a Diploma of Applied Science (Nautical Science) from the Australian Maritime College.

Chief Operating Officer (*Vacant*)

Amber Smith, Chief Information Officer

Amber's extensive experience in the critical infrastructure and finance sectors spans two decades at the highest levels, including senior leadership roles at Australian Gas Infrastructure Group and the ASX-listed BNK Banking Corporation.

Her skills extend to strategic planning and delivery, technology integration and innovation, operations management, risk management, project management, financial performance optimisation and people development.

She holds a Bachelor of Business Studies with Honours, an Advanced Diploma of Management, and relevant qualifications in change management, cyber security, enterprise architecture, project management and leadership. She is also a graduate of the London Business School Development Program.

Chief Infrastructure and Projects Officer (*Vacant*)

Aditya Asthana, Chief Financial Officer

Appointed as Chief Financial Officer in March 2024, Aditya joined Southern Ports after holding several leadership roles for large complex and geographically dispersed organisations such as Orica, Qantas and First Graphene Limited.

With more than 20 years' international experience in finance and commercial management across Australia, Europe and Asia, Aditya's skills extend to strategic planning, business turnaround, major projects, capital raising, working capital management, mergers and acquisitions and risk management.

He holds a Bachelor of Business in Accounting and Finance and is a Certified Practising Accountant.

Monica Birkner, Chief People and Strategy Officer

Monica is a skilled corporate and business services professional with extensive public sector experience.

Joining Southern Ports in 2020 after more than two decades in senior roles with the Northern Territory Government, Monica has high level skills in human resources, organisational design, governance, leadership, change management and strategic planning, backed by a strong understanding of policy and legislation.

She holds a Bachelor of Behavioural Science, a Diploma of Project Management and a Master of Business Administration. She is also a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Board of Directors

Ian Shepherd, Chair

ASSOC CIVIC ENGINEERING, GRAD DIP BUSINESS, HARVARD ADVANCED MANAGEMENT PROGRAM, HON FELLOW IE AUST, MAICD

Ian is an experienced CEO and director, bringing varied and direct experiences in governance, business, finance, leadership, risk and public relations to the role as Chair of Southern Ports.

Ian spent 17 years as a director and eight years as CEO/Managing Director of GHD Group Pty Ltd, an infrastructure services company operating across all facets of planning, project management and engineering. This experience cemented Ian's strong commercial and strategic capabilities in relation to company growth and transformational changes. Ian is a member of the Department of Transport's Steering Committee for the proposed Westport project. Ian was also a Director of Perth Children's Hospital Foundation and the past Chair of the Curtin University School of Civil and Mechanical Engineering Advisory Board.

Gaye McMath, Deputy Chair

BCOMM, MBA, AMP HBS, FAICD, FCPA

Gaye has extensive business experience in a broad range of industries including mining, resources, energy, infrastructure, property, engineering services, financial services, treasury, higher education, aged care, culture and arts. Gaye's executive experience includes 23 years of finance and commercial roles with BHP, 12 years as CFO/COO with The University of Western Australia and three years as CFO at Murdoch University. Gaye served as Deputy Chair of Commissioners for three years at the City of Perth.

Gaye has over 25 years of board experience on a broad range of listed companies, Government Trading Enterprises and not-for-profit community organisations. Other current boards include BG&E Group Limited, Dementia Australia and Edith Cowan University.

Jane Cutler

BE (HONS), MENVSCI, MBA, FAICD, FICHEME

Jane has a diverse range of experience in the resources, oil and gas, financial services, maritime, environment and technology industries. Her executive experience includes senior executive roles in public companies in the oil and gas sector, and as CEO of industry regulator National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority.

Jane has over 30 years of board experience, including with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, ChemCentre, President of the WA Division of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, President of Institution of Chemical Engineers, and as a local government councillor.

Wiebke Ebeling

MSC (HONS), PHD NEUROSCIENCE, MAICD

Wiebke has a strong research, education, and communication background in various science areas, including biocybernetics, neuroscience, astrophysics, marine observing, and ocean engineering. Based at The University of Western Australia – Albany Campus, she leads the innovation hub 'Marine Energy Research Australia' and its headquarters at the Great Southern Marine Research Facility. She recently added a second portfolio to her work at UWA Albany, as the Project Manager to develop a Regional Health Strategy.

Wiebke is a recognised role model in STEM and sustainability and a community leader in the Great Southern region, and is also involved in volunteer organisations as an Executive Member of the Great Southern Science Council and the Albany Family & Domestic Violence Action Group.

Robyn Fenech

BED SOC SCI, GAICD

Robyn has an extensive background in regional economic development, tourism, agriculture and infrastructure planning. In addition to Robyn's experience managing tourism associations and working in business development within the water industry, Robyn has managed and owned a consultancy practice for over 20 years, which has built skills in strategic planning, governance, and industry and community consultation.

Robyn has been involved in strategy development and delivery within the South West region for many years, and was previously the Chair of the Bunbury Development Committee.

Hon Ben Morton

BA, GAICD

Ben is a former elected member of Federal Parliament, representing the Western Australian electorate of Tangney. He served as a Minister in the Australian Government between 2019 and 2022, including as Minister Assisting the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Minister for the Public Service, and Special Minister of State.

Before entering Federal Parliament, Ben worked for Western Australian builder and building supply company BGC, and was State Director of the Liberal Party of Western Australia between 2008 and 2015.

Ben is Chair of the Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research, Chair of the Perth Bears Rugby League Club, Commissioner of the Insurance Commission of Western Australia, Director of Celebrate WA and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

David Welch

BCOM (HONS)

David is an experienced and well credentialed senior executive with a successful track record in the planning, development and operation of logistics and infrastructure supply chains for commodities markets, including coal, iron ore, grain and industrial products.

For a decade, he held senior executive positions within Aurizon Holdings Limited, including VP Iron Ore, VP Market Development and EVP Strategy and Business Development. He has had direct responsibility for strategy, business transformation and performance, commercial negotiations, stakeholder engagement, major projects, joint venture management, merger and acquisition and business development.

David was previously the Managing Director of The Millennium Group from 1998 to 2006 and was a marketing manager of CSBP Limited (part of the Wesfarmers conglomerate) in the development of mining reagent and agriculture products from 1989 to 1994.

Veronica Jeffery

BA (HONS)

Veronica has more than 30 years of senior government leadership experience across diverse disciplines, in roles including Deputy Chief of Staff to Premiers Roger Cook and Mark McGowan, and Chief of Staff to Ministers in Transport and Planning and Culture and Arts.

She has held executive positions at the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority and East Perth Redevelopment Authority where she played a central role in shaping and activating urban renewal precincts including Elizabeth Quay and Yagan Square. In these roles, she led activation, leasing and precinct management while aligning government, community and commercial interests to deliver successful outcomes.

Veronica's expertise spans strategic marketing and communications, stakeholder engagement and community relations, supported by strong capability in shaping policy and strategy.

Veronica currently serves on the Boards of the Arts and Culture Trust and Connect Victoria Park Inc.

Additional Information

Southern Ports website [Click here](#)
2025 Annual Report [Click here](#)
Southern Ports LinkedIn [Click here](#)

Locations:

Perth Level 4, 679 Murray St, West Perth WA
Bunbury 54 Casuarina Drive, Bunbury WA
Albany 85 Brunswick Road, Albany WA
Esperance The Esplanade, Esperance WA

Strong regional ports,
strong regions

Position Information	
Position title	Chief Operating Officer
Department	Executive
Location	Albany, Bunbury, Esperance or Perth
Classification	Contract

Position Summary
<p>The Chief Operating Officer (COO) is a key member of the Executive Leadership Team and is accountable for the strategic leadership and integration of trade, customer outcomes and port operations to deliver sustainable growth, optimal asset utilisation and strong commercial performance across Southern Ports.</p> <p>The COO ensures alignment between market demand, customer commitments and operational capability, translating strategic intent into safe, efficient and reliable operational outcomes.</p> <p>The role provides enterprise leadership of port operations across Albany, Bunbury and Esperance through regional General Managers, with a focus on performance, customer delivery and regional economic impact.</p>

Key Relationships
<p>Internal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive Officer (CEO) • Executive Leadership Team and the extended Executive Leadership Team • Functional Managers
<p>External</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers and Port Users • Relevant Federal & State Government Departments • Industry stakeholders and supply chain partners • Community and regional stakeholders

Key Accountabilities	
Accountability	Major Activities
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the effective execution of Southern Ports' strategic direction by integrating market demand, customer outcomes and operational performance, delivering sustainable growth and value from Southern Ports' asset base.
Leadership and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the operations team and support Southern Ports cultural objectives by role modelling Southern Ports values and behaviours. • Champion the roll out and delivery of Southern Ports strategies and organisational improvement initiatives. • Lead the operations team and the development of workforce plan to ensure that the operations function has sufficient capacity and capability to meet the current and future needs of the business.
Commercial and Port User	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align trade opportunities, customer commitments and operational capability to optimise throughput and revenue outcomes. • Provide a single point of executive accountability for the delivery of customer outcomes across the port network. • Lead engagement with key customers and industry stakeholders to support trade growth and long-term partnerships.

Key Accountabilities	
Accountability	Major Activities
Operational performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the safe, efficient and reliable delivery of port operations across all locations. • Drive continuous improvement in operational performance, service delivery and asset utilisation. • Ensure operational systems, processes and resources are aligned to current and future demand.
Regional Leadership and Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead and enable regional General Managers with full accountability for day-to-day port operations. • Ensure consistent application of enterprise frameworks while maintaining local responsiveness. • Foster a high performance, accountable and collaborative leadership culture across regions.
Market Insight and Capacity Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise commodity market and supply chain insights to inform operational and commercial decision making. • Align trade forecasts with operational capacity and constraints. • Ensure operational readiness to support growth opportunities and changing market conditions.
Financial Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver operational financial outcomes in line with organisational objectives. • Identify and realise opportunities for efficiency, cost optimisation and revenue growth. • Contribute to the development of business cases supporting trade and operational improvements.
Enterprise Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with the Chief Infrastructure and Planning Officer to ensure alignment between operational requirements and long-term asset planning. • Work closely with the Chief Financial Officer to ensure effective commercial, contract and financial government. • Collaborate across the ELT to deliver integrated organisational outcomes.
Governance, Risk and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the safe and environmentally responsible operation of all port activities. • Maintain oversight of operational risk, including safety, environmental, marine and commercial risk. • Uphold governance frameworks, policies and statutory obligations. • Provide clear, timely reporting to the CEO, ELT and Board.
Stakeholder and Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with the Corporate Affairs team in building strong and constructive relationships with government, industry and community stakeholders. • Enable regional General Managers to act as the primary representatives of Southern Ports within their regions. • Ensure alignment between operational delivery and regional development priorities.

Selection Criteria

Leadership Profile

- Demonstrates enterprise leadership aligned to organisational values.
- Drives collaboration, innovation and delivery excellence across functions and regions.
- Maintains a strong focus on customer outcomes and organisational performance.
- Leads with integrity, accountability and sound judgement.

Essential

- Extensive executive leadership experience in ports, logistics, infrastructure or related industries.
- Demonstrated ability to integrate commercial strategy with operational delivery.
- Provide track record in driving growth, customer outcomes and financial performance.
- Experience leading complex, multi-site operations through senior leadership teams.
- Strong commercial acumen, negotiation and stakeholder engagement capability.
- Deep understanding of operational risk, safety and regulatory environments.
- Demonstrated resilience, composure and sound judgement in complex and high-pressure environments, with the ability to navigate ambiguity, competing priorities and stakeholder tension.
- Current C Class Driver's Licence
- Ability to obtain a Maritime Security Identification Card (MSIC).

Desirable

- Experience in commodity markets and supply chain dynamics.
- Experience in organisational transformation or operating model redesign.
- Postgraduate qualifications in business or a related discipline or demonstrated extensive experience in a relevant field.