

# What transport or logistics career path is right for you?

Are you best suited to sourcing, transportation, storage, production or distribution?  
Or being a transport planner or manager?



From the breakfast cereal you ate this morning, to the mobile phone or computer you're reading this on, to the clothes on your back, global transportation and logistics industries have ensured particular products got to you on time, in the right condition and at the right price.

Logistics isn't one of those sexy industries that get lots of media attention. Nonetheless, it employs an estimated 1.2 million Australian workers and accounts for around eight per cent of Australia's GDP<sup>1</sup>. In a large, sparsely populated nation there's always going to be a demand for people who can get goods from Point A to Point B. And despite these industries blue-collar images (think truckies and warehouse workers), there are plenty of exciting opportunities for grads.

## The six stages of logistics

Before deciding to specialise in one area, it's important to understand the six stages products pass through in the supply chain. They are:

**Sourcing:** This involves finding the necessary inputs and making sure they're the appropriate quality and available at the required time. It also requires sourcing quotes from suppliers and bargaining to keep costs as low as possible.

**Transportation:** This involves deciding on the most efficient means to transport raw materials from the supplier to the site where they're required.

**Storage:** Post the 'just in time' revolution, which spread from Japan to the West in the 1980s, businesses usually want items delivered 'just in time', to minimise storage costs. While this is more efficient, it risks the supply chain breaking down if it's not managed well.

**Production:** This is all about creating the product efficiently to meet demand on time and without wastage. This usually involves managing staff and equipment. (Later stage) **storage:** After a product is completed it needs to be stored somewhere prior to distribution. Again, it's more efficient to hold stock for only a short time and, again, this requires organisational nous to avoid the system breaking down.

**Distribution:** The final stage of the process is transporting products to customers in the most efficient manner.

## Who's doing the hiring?

Significant employers of grads include:

Third-party logistics companies. Supermarkets, hospitals, prisons and other such organisations often outsource the business of moving the supplies they need around to one or more 'third parties' rather than keeping it in house. Some third-party logistics companies will concentrate on supplying a specific product, such as pharmaceuticals.

Others are generalists, moving a range of goods for a variety of clients. The big Australian companies – or Australian branches of multinationals – are always on the lookout for talent, particularly now many are trying to secure a foothold in booming Asian markets. Third-party logistics companies often also employ graduates in finance, IT and business. So, start by checking out the careers section of the following companies' websites: Agility, CEVA, DHL, Interfreight Logistics, Ixom, Kagan Logistics, Linfox, SCT Logistics, Swire, VISA Global Logistics, WA Freight Group, Yusen Logistics.

### **The logistics divisions of major corporations.**

While many organisations outsource their logistics, especially if it's not part of its core business, plenty of organisations don't. Companies that are big grad employers in general will also often be in the market for people to work in their logistics division. Qantas, for example, has no fewer than four logistics divisions that require staff: Qantas Freight, Qantas Courier New Zealand, Express Freighters Australia and JETS Transport Express.

### **Companies in the supply chain that sell directly to consumers.**

These tend to be retailers, such as clothes stores and supermarkets. For online sales, which are becoming increasingly common, they either distribute the goods themselves or contract a third-party logistics company.

### **Logistics consultancies.**

As the name suggests, these are consultancies that advise businesses on making their logistics more efficient. Some of the bigger players in the Australian market include Logistics Bureau, GRA, Henderson Logistics and Warehouse Logistics Consultants.

## **What are the graduate routes into logistics and supply chain careers?**

Depending on where you are employed and what your qualifications are, you can expect to get a role in areas such as supply chain management; warehouse operations; health and safety or engineering.

As would be expected given the size of the industry, there is a wide range of job opportunities. Grads can find themselves doing anything from managing a warehouse, to overseeing HR functions, to working in business development, to selling their employer's service to potential customers, to managing projects, to providing recommendations to businesses on how they can improve their logistics.

There are lots of entry paths into logistics but third-party logistics companies and retailers snap up many grads. Their grad programs vary but will often have a rotational element so you can gain a better understanding of what aspect of the business you find most engaging.

Some schemes are open to graduates with degrees in any subject. Others require a degree related to the industry, such as business, management, logistics, or supply chain management. (You'll need to check with individual employers about their requirements.)

As with most industries, experience is looked upon favourably. Consider doing an internship while at university to help get your foot in the door.

## **Transport careers**

For obvious reasons, transportation is closely related to logistics. Two transportation roles that typically require university qualifications are transport planner and transport manager.

## **Transport planners**

Transport planners create strategies to improve transport and mobility. They do this by designing new systems and upgrading existing networks. They also examine the impact of new developments on transport systems. Their aim is to increase accessibility in general and, in particular, ensure that important facilities such as hospitals and shops are easy for people to get to.

Transport planners may be involved in one or several of the following processes:

- Public consultation and market research,
- Environmental assessment and mapping
- Civil and structural engineering
- Construction
- Project management

Some employers, such as construction companies and councils, will have a transport planning department; other employers may be consultancies specialising in transportation. (Often certain processes involved in creating or improving transportation networks, such as market research, will be outsourced to a specialist firm.)

## **Transport managers**

- Transport managers help plan or oversee the day-to-day operations of transport systems. That can encompass rail, road, air or sea transport and can be passenger or goods related. They may be involved in one or several of the following processes:
- Operations management. (Ensuring passenger or freight transport systems are safe, efficient and punctual.)
- Facilities management. (Managing bus and train stations, freight depots, seaports and airports.)
- Infrastructure. (Designing new networks and updating old ones. This usually requires a civil engineering degree.)
- Fleet management. (Making sure a company or government department's trains, buses, trucks, ships or aircraft remain in working order.)
- Design. (Designing and new cars, planes, trains and ships).Traffic management. (Responding to accidents and facilitating smooth traffic flows.)
- Logistics. (Working out the best means of transportation for goods.)

## **Where are the transport planner jobs?**

Graduate employers include specialist transport planning consultancies, councils, engineering consultancies, planning consultancies, urban design practices and architects, management consultancies and transport providers. Graduate schemes aren't the only entry route into this career as some employers recruit graduates as trainees on an ad hoc basis. Companies as diverse as IKEA, Coles and Boral require transport planners so you should be able to find a position if you put your mind to it.

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