

Pier 2 privatisation still “up in the air”

Durban port equipment failure is a worry

Only seven out of sixteen ship-to-shore cranes are operating at Durban Container Terminal (DCT) which are, remarks an independent logistics advisor, "nowhere near enough" and the straddle carrier issue is continuing, he says. "It's very disturbing that we often have around 55 straddle carriers available, though 67 are planned to be available by mid-June. Such equipment shortages result in exactly what we don't want: issues on the landside when trying to get containers delivered."

Reefer containers are prioritized through a dedicated reefer lane and a helpline, and the terminals do try to look after reefers, he says. "The port is reasonably busy reefer-wise, well over a thousand in stock at DCT and another 600 at pier 1. Pier 1 is really struggling with truck turnaround times."

The peak of citrus volumes moving through Durban is five or six weeks away. "We are really concerned about this port specifically. We really hope the situation improves by June, otherwise this citrus export season could be badly impacted."

Much of the equipment at DCT is past its sell-by date, he notes, while others have suffered engine failures before reaching mid-life.



Durban Container Terminal

Pier 2 privatisation in limbo

The handover of pier 2 management to ICTSI is still in limbo, pending the outcome of APM Terminals' legal contest. "It's all up in the air. We were hoping it would've been a done deal by the end of last year or latest April 2024."

He observes: "We've got to keep moving with what we've got and it's not enough. It's very concerning that they're struggling with so many issues."

The alternative to Durban on fruit destined to the Middle East and non-steri markets in the East is Maputo, but in his opinion, Durban still offers a number of advantages. One main cost difference with Maputo is cargo dues (wharfage) where the South African rate is lower on exports than imports and considerably lower than that at Maputo.

Also, he points out, trucks are often able to pick up a return load at DCT; a load in both directions is a real saving.

Publication date: Mon 20 May 2024

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