

Labor has successfully moved to establish a Senate inquiry into Australian Shipping

Posted by Mua communications on December 06, 2018

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LABOR PUSHES FOR BIPARTISANSHIP ON SHIPPING POLICY

Labor has successfully moved to establish a Senate inquiry into Australian shipping to build bipartisan support to reverse the ongoing decline of our nation's maritime industry.

Over the past 30 years, the number of Australian-flagged vessels operating domestically and internationally has fallen from about 100 to 14, with resulting job losses and a decline in our national skills base.

In July 2012, following extensive consultation with industry and unions, the former Labor Government attempted to revive shipping with a reform package including tax concessions and training assistance.

But in 2013 the incoming Coalition Government took a new approach, proposing changes that would have destroyed the domestic shipping industry by allowing foreign vessels paying crews third world wages to compete with Australian vessels paying their crews Australian-level wages.

Since the Senate rejected that legislation in 2015, the Government has allowed the industry to drift.

As an island nation which relies on shipping to move 99 percent of its imports and exports, it is in Australia's economic, environmental and national security interests to maintain a vibrant maritime industry.

It is time for all political parties to work with industry and employee representatives to end the policy inertia and collaborate to find an approach that will secure the future of Australian shipping.

The inquiry by the Senate's Rural Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee offers a genuine opportunity for the Parliament to put the national interest ahead of political considerations and find a way forward.

The inquiry will examine:

The policy, regulatory, taxation, administrative and funding priorities for Australian shipping, with particular reference to:

- 1. New investment in Australian ships and building a maritime cluster in Australia;*
- 2. Establishment of an efficient and commercially oriented coastal ship licensing system and foreign crew visa system;*
- 3. Interaction with other modes of freight transport, non-freight shipping and government shipping;*
- 4. Maritime security, including fuel security and foreign ship and crew standards;*
- 5. Environmental sustainability;*
- 6. Workforce development and the seafarer training system;*

7. *Port infrastructure, port services and port fees and charges; and*
8. *Any related matters.*

WEDNESDAY, 5 DECEMBER, 2018

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