



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILLS

**Protection of the Sea (Prevention of Pollution
from Ships) Amendment (Oil Transfers) Bill 2011**

Second Reading

SPEECH

Wednesday, 25 May 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Wednesday, 25 May 2011
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Questioner
Speaker Albanese, Anthony, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr ALBANESE (Grayndler—Leader of the House and Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) (09:07): I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Australian transport relies almost entirely on oil products. A significant amount of Australia's oil is imported as crude oil for refining at one of Australia's seven oil refineries.

On occasions, crude oil is transported in supertankers. Because of their size, these large ships are unable to enter most ports. To enable their cargo to be taken to an oil refinery, it will often be transferred to two or more smaller tankers. There may also be other times when oil cargo is transferred between tankers.

While such transfers are rare in Australian waters, indeed the first and, so far, only such transfer was successfully carried out off the New South Wales coast in March of this year, it is important that they be carried out in a responsible manner.

The Marine Environment Protection Committee of the International Maritime Organisation has recognised the potential for pollution damage resulting from an oil spill during a ship-to-ship oil transfer operation. In July 2009, the committee adopted amendments to annex I of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, MARPOL, to regulate ship-to-ship oil transfers. The purpose of this bill is to implement those amendments in Australia.

The key provision of the bill is the requirement for all tankers with a gross tonnage of 150 tons or more to have on board an operations plan setting out how ship-to-ship oil transfer operations are to be conducted. The carriage of such a plan indicates that a tanker is fully prepared to undertake ship-to-ship oil transfers in accordance with the requirements of annex I of MARPOL. Transfers are to be carried out in accordance with the plan.

Should a plan not be in place for a tanker involved in an oil transfer operation, then the risk of an oil spill would be greatly increased. Failure to have a plan would be an indication that the tanker may not have sufficient safeguards in place to avoid an oil spill and that there is the potential for major environmental damage resulting from the escape of oil during the oil transfer operation.

The ship-to-ship operations plans for Australian oil tankers will be checked and, if found to comply with the requirements of the amendments contained in this bill, will be approved by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

The master of an oil tanker involved in a ship-to-ship oil transfer operation will be required to notify the administration of the country in whose waters the transfer is to take place. Notification is required at least 48 hours before oil transfer operations begin. This is to allow sufficient time for authorities to ensure that pollution response equipment is on standby in case of an oil spill during the transfer.

The requirements set out in the bill will apply to all ship-to-ship oil transfer operations carried out from 1 April 2012. The requirements will also apply to any tanker which has undergone a survey to check compliance with safety and marine pollution prevention requirements between the date of royal assent of this bill and 1 April 2012.

Since coming to power in 2007 this government has significantly improved the protection of Australia's marine environment, and this bill continues that work. I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.