



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILLS

**Shipping Registration Amendment (Australian
International Shipping Register) Bill 2012**

Consideration in Detail

SPEECH

Thursday, 31 May 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Thursday, 31 May 2012
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Questioner
Speaker Truss, Warren, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of The Nationals) (12:32): The government is introducing quite a large number of amendments, it seems, to all of the bills and we have not had a lot of opportunity to examine those amendments. However, from what discussions we have been able to have with industry, they seem to make improvements to what is a flawed package. The government has responded to some of the concerns that have been raised by industry but not all. Among those issues which have been raised are issues in relation to workers compensation, and they are being dealt with at least to some extent in this set of amendments. For instance, in my speech in the second reading debate I referred to Allianz, who had identified limitations in the workers compensation available for seafarers on Australian International Shipping Register vessels while engaged in the coastal trade. The department at the time acknowledged that there were flaws there and I can only assume that these amendments deal with that issue and hope that they deal with them in a satisfactory way.

A number of other issues have been raised concerning the detail of the package. I welcome the fact that the government has at least been prepared to consider some of those issues and therefore remove some of the measures that were of particular concern to industry, especially the very livelihood of both the domestic and, for that matter, the international shipping industries in our country.

I will make a brief reference also to the compact, which the minister referred to earlier. It was a key part of the government's package—the unions would agree to productivity reform in return for the government providing taxation concessions and a range of protective measures for the domestic shipping industry. However, on what little information we have about the compact, it does not seem to me to be any kind of significant productivity breakthrough. There is not going to be any reduction in manning numbers, for instance; in fact, manning numbers are likely to go up. There are no changes in productivity that I can see. There are going to be shipboard management committees. No doubt we will have the Maritime Union sitting alongside the captain and deciding whether to go forwards or backwards. It does not seem to me as though you can have an arrangement which effectively has everybody stopping and sitting down for a committee meeting about what sorts of decisions are going to be made onboard. It mandates union involvement in decision-making processes. I am concerned also about the proposed 11-hour day on duty. That clearly means that there will be a guarantee of overtime having to be built into it to man the ship for the full period of time. For attempts to resolve disputes, again, this is essentially mandating a massive new role for the union to be involved in all of these sorts of things. On crewing levels, it enshrines the one-for-two crews and, in effect, guarantees the six months on, six months off arrangements.

These are things that have made our industry uncompetitive. Tax concessions and other things are not going to make a difference unless there is a genuine improvement in productivity on board our vessels. The minister has said he wants genuine productivity. If in fact this productivity is being built around the so-called compact, I do not believe it actually delivers the kinds of changes that are going to be necessary. It concerns me that we are not going to get the genuine productivity gains and for that reason this bill will not result in there being a stronger Australian domestic shipping industry. In addition, as I said before, I have serious concerns that one job saved in the shipping industry may well cost 100 jobs on shore. That does not really make much sense. There does need to be flexibility. These amendments, and some of the other amendments to other bills that the government is proposing, will make an improvement. I accept that. But I still do not think that the government has a package in front of us that is going to make a real difference for the domestic shipping industry. But what I know for certain is that it is going to be much more difficult for us to get the lowest price for moving goods around Australian ports. This objective needs to be about doing a better freight job—*(Time expired)*

Question agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.