



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILLS

**Coastal Trading (Revitalising
Australian Shipping) 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
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Responder
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Mr TRUSS (Wide Bay—Leader of The Nationals) (12:43): The government has produced 19 amendments that overall make a significant improvement to the Coastal Trading (Revitalising Australian Shipping) Bill 2012 and get rid of, or at least mitigate, some of the really serious objections that there were to this legislation. There was genuine concern about the inability of some freight forwarders to be able to deliver on their task at all. For instance, Sugar Australia said that they had a number of concerns about these sorts of issues and the loss of a capacity to use Australian sugar in markets in other parts of the country. For instance, it is cheaper to take sugar from Thailand to Perth, even now, than it is to take Australian sugar to Perth. But under the legislation that was proposed by the government—without these amendments—it would have been almost impossible to move Australian sugar anywhere around our coast, and so it would have been cheaper to bring it on from overseas to Melbourne rather than take Mackay sugar to Melbourne. There are still some barriers here and I will refer to them when I get to the amendments that the coalition intends to move.

One example is the movement of ethanol from place to place. Again, there are occasional shipments that are required. The government has put in place a bureaucratic process which seems to be designed to prevent anyone from getting a single-permit voyage. In fact, you cannot get them anymore; you can only get the permits five at a time. Those sorts of issues were causing concern. The government has mitigated that to some extent but I have to say that I am not convinced that there is a genuine capacity for all Australian domestic shipping operations to take advantage of this method of shipping, even when there is no alternative available.

We readily agree that if there is a suitable Australian vessel available at approximately the right time they should be given priority for the voyage, but some of the restrictions that are in place would seem to mean that if there were no Australian vessel available the only other option would be to not undertake the task at all. I will be referring to that a little bit more later on, as well.

I have to say I have been very surprised by the attitude of the member for Kennedy. He clearly has not listened to the sugar growers that he often seeks to defend. He has not listened to them, because he is putting in place and agreeing to mechanisms that are going to make it much more difficult for the Australian sugar industry to compete on the Australian market. In essence, it will be more effective to take Australian sugar overseas and use an international vessel and ship it back than it would be to take it from one port to another.

That is the kind of nonsense that is likely to occur under the arrangements that the government has put in place. I acknowledge that there are amendments here, which we will not be opposing. I hope that they will mitigate these concerns but I certainly give notice that we will be looking very closely at the operation of these measures over the years and months ahead. And if they do not work—if they do not deliver—we will be making changes.

Question agreed to.