



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**BUSINESS**

**Rearrangement**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 20 June 2013**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Page** 6531  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Katter, Bob, MP

**Source** House  
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**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr KATTER** (Kennedy) (15:21): I second the motion and exercise my right to speak. I represent the most populated area of the Great Barrier Reef, and we constantly have vessels losing their motors and smashing onto the reef, letting oil go free all over the place. I have said on many occasions that we need passages set out and we need nautical coordinates that are available to all vessels that go through these passages.

We have failed to get that off successive governments, but it is absolutely vitally important that when ships come into or operate in Australian waters we have someone there who knows what they are doing with respect to motors and engines. A lot of the vessels coming in now are flagged overseas vessels and the people that are on them simply do not have anything like the qualifications that are required. A person who gets on a boat in Australia should have some sort of guarantee that the person operating and responsible for those engines knows what they are doing. They need to have a piece of paper that says that they are a trained and certified person.

Any effort to lower that standard is very serious indeed. Vessels are coming into our waters now with no standards at all. I can tell you of a number of cases that have occurred where we found out the vessel floundered because there was no-one on board who could fix a motor or whatever else needed to be fixed to keep the vessel functioning. To give you one quick example, I was sitting with the head of the Coast Guard in Cardwell and he said, 'At 11:30 I have to vacate, I have to go out and get a vessel coming in.' I asked, 'Why? What is going in?' He said, 'A vessel has lost its motor and it is smashing up against the seven- or 14-kilometre pier, whatever it is, at Lucinda.' The vessel loses its motor and is smashing up against the pier. Not only will that do incredible damage to that very valuable piece of Australian infrastructure, but it is going to sink on the reef, leaving its oil all over the place.

There is, of course, loss of life. Most importantly of all, we have a lot of tourist vessels operating. When people get on those vessels, they should have the confidence that the person in charge—as the old varsity song used to say—of the engine room is a varsity engineer. We do not require him to go to university but we do require him to have technical tertiary qualifications that enable him to do the job. They need to be a little bit more than just a diesel fitter. I think we should be going in the opposite direction to people trying to say, 'No, we should not have these rules, anyone can go into an engine room.' That is not where we want to be going. In fact, we need to be going in the opposite direction. So I absolutely applaud the resolution on suspension of standing orders from the honourable member and back it very strongly.

It is a very serious issue for anyone, particularly anyone who represents marine tourism and commercial boats that are carrying coal, copper, beef and whatever in and out of North Queensland and over the Great Barrier Reef. We have a particular interest in this authorisation which we are acquiring here. So we plead with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority to realise that consideration of downgrading is completely out of the question. We must upgrade the requirements and licensing of these people. Vessels coming in from overseas should all have a certified engineer in the engine room. I very strongly support my colleague from Denison.