



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

**PROOF**

**BILLS**

**Shipping Legislation Amendment Bill 2015**

**Second Reading**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 25 November 2015**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

<p><b>Date</b> Wednesday, 25 November 2015</p> <p><b>Page</b> 29</p> <p><b>Questioner</b></p> <p><b>Speaker</b> Abetz, Sen Eric</p>	<p><b>Source</b> Senate</p> <p><b>Proof</b> Yes</p> <p><b>Responder</b></p> <p><b>Question No.</b></p>
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**Senator ABETZ** (Tasmania) (12:38): Shipping is the economic lifeblood of any island population, and so it is with our island nation continent, Australia. If it is the economic lifeblood for our island nation continent, it is even more so for our island state, the jewel in the crown—namely, my home state of Tasmania.

Australia has a large landmass with its population hubs and centres of production strewn across the 7.692 million square kilometres that make up Australia. As our national anthem reminds us, our land is girt by sea. The mainland enjoys a coastline of 35,876 kilometres. On top of that there is another 23,859 kilometres of island coastlines. We have 758 estuaries. So it will not surprise that Australia has a deep and rich maritime history. Put simply, we are reliant on shipping. Indeed, we export two-thirds of our production.

My home state of Tasmania and our nation, Australia, require, need and are entitled to an effective shipping service. Despite this national imperative, our waterfront and shipping services have been held to ransom from time to time and far too often. Dr Hal Colebatch's excellent work, *The Secret War*, exposed the sabotage and treacherous activities of certain elements during World War II—something for which the Maritime Union of Australia still needs to apologise. That aside, it seems that today's elements are not jeopardising our national sovereignty and integrity in the face of threatened invasion, but they are prejudicing our jobs and economic wellbeing in the face of international competition as we grapple with the imperative of job creation, especially for our young Australians. We need the very best shipping service we can get. To opt for anything less, to be satisfied with second-best or even the world's worst shipping service is to do a great disservice to our workers, our farmers, our producers, our manufacturers and, indeed, every single Australian consumer, because we all pay the price.

The Liberal-National coalition aspires to provide the very best for our nation in all our public policy endeavours that we have introduced. As a result, we have introduced and are now debating the Shipping Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This bill is designed to make the goods we buy cheaper and the goods we export more saleable; in other words, it is designed to lower our cost of living and create even more jobs. Every extra dollar charged for shipping compromises Australian jobs and our cost of living.

Until the changes championed by Mr Shorten's Labor Party and the Greens, we had a somewhat acceptable regulatory framework for our shipping services. But as was and remains the Labor-Greens wont, they had to fix it. And fix it they did, their policy inspiration coming direct from the ugly and extreme Maritime Union of Australia. The Labor-Greens changes were at best recklessly foolhardy but predictably disastrous. Having seen the predictable consequences of these reckless changes, one may have been excused for thinking that Labor and the Greens would quietly allow our rectifying legislation through the parliament and not draw attention to their policy failure. But no, they are incapable of acknowledging the glaring and obvious policy failure because they rely on the Maritime Union of Australia for numbers at meetings of Labor Party conferences, for their endorsement and for funding for their campaigns. So what did Labor's changes to the coastal trading licensing system inflict upon us?

For starters, Labor's current trading licensing system resulted in—as just one example from my home state of Tasmania—a substantial increase in the freight rates experienced by Bell Bay Aluminium. It recorded a 63 per cent increase in freight costs in one year—a cost of approximately \$4 million per annum. And Bell Bay Aluminium provides the jobs, the household income, for 435 of my fellow Tasmanians. In the past, the Labor Party used to champion the blue-collar workers whose livelihood we on this side are trying to champion and support. Indeed, the Australian Greens, allegedly concerned about the environment, would know that the process of making aluminium is highly energy dependent. In Tasmania we make that with clean hydro.

Debate interrupted.