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Committee Secretary
Transport and Public Works Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Sir or Madam

Submission to the Inquiry into a sustainable Queensland intrastate shipping industry

My name is Ric Granieri, and I have worked as a seafarer for more than 30 years. I first went to sea in 1986. I became an able seaman, and then did my training to become an integrated rating in around 1990. These days I have my Chief Integrated Rating ticket, as well as various others, including advanced firefighting.

I did a lot of work on tugs, towing and barge work, until about 1998. In 1998, I separated from my wife, and spent a few years ashore to look after our children. I returned to work on tugs in around 2002 or 2003, casual at first, but with a permanent position from 2004 onwards. Around 2010 I started doing mostly dredging work, and from 2012 I did a mix of work, much of it for the offshore industry.

I have done all sorts of work during my career as a seafarer, including coastal shipping, international ships, offshore work, dredging, and more.

However, Australian crews have been mostly kicked off the coastal ships, replaced by foreign ships and foreign workers. Our coastal shipping is nearly all gone. I think it is ridiculous that an island nation such as ours does not have its own shipping, especially in an age when fuel security is so important. I do not understand why poorly-paid foreign labour should be allowed to operate on coastal ships transporting goods and cargo around Australia. My understanding is that foreign shipping companies enjoy other unfair advantages in terms of taxation as well. We cannot compete with the lower wages and conditions for foreign seafarers, but why should we have to for work that is completely within Australian territory?

Foreign ships were originally allowed to obtain a 'single voyage permit' to allow them to do a single coastal trip. This system was manipulated so that foreign ships would obtain multiple "single voyage

permits” which would allow them the make multiple trips. My understanding is that this system has been changed or replaced, because it now seems foreign ships are just allowed to operate on our routes. There is no reason that Australian crews should not be doing this work.

I am also concerned that foreign crews, as well as being poorly paid, are not trained to the same standards as Australian seafarers, which has important implications for safety. I remember one trip in 2016, when I and other Australians were flown to an overseas port to pick up a vessel that required some installation and other work performed on it. The ship had to be taken out to sea for the work to be done. When we had finished the installation work, the shipping company replaced us mid-journey with a cheaper Filipino crew to complete the trip, telling us we were “too expensive.” The Filipino crew must have been a minimum crew, and there is no way there had the same level of skill or training as Australians. I remember thinking at the time, if there was a fire on board ship they would be in serious trouble – they would not have enough people, let alone the skills or training to deal with such a situation. I have nothing against the Filipinos, they are good seafarers, but they do not get anything like the training Australian seafarers receive.

For most of my career I have had no problem finding work whenever I wanted it. The state of the industry today is very different. For the last few years work in the industry has been hard to come by. I have been able to obtain about six months of seafaring work in the past two, two and a half years: maybe 3 swings in 2017, and 2 swings in 2018. With a lack of seafaring work, I have been forced to go back to my earlier trade in ship repair (I am a boilermaker). While I have been able to get some occasional work in this field, the ship repair industry is also pretty tight, with much less work available than before. As you might expect, the decline of our shipping industry has also meant that industries like ship repair are also feeling the effect.

Signed by:

Ricardo (Ric) Granieri

