




Speech By  
**Steve Minnikin**

**MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH**

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### **TRANSPORT LEGISLATION (PORT PILOTAGE) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (4.05 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Transport Legislation (Port Pilotage) Amendment Bill 2013. The Newman government understands the importance of the maritime industry to Queensland's economy and future prosperity. The need to ensure our ports are performing effectively, efficiently and in a safe manner is of great importance. Maritime Safety Queensland is committed to keeping our maritime fleet, infrastructure and environment safe and risk managed.

It is entirely within our capability to create a more efficient shipping industry without compromising on the most rigorous safety expectations. These expectations are heightened by the geographic sensitivities of our northern ports, all of which border on and operate through the Great Barrier Reef. Achieving this objective requires a seamless alignment of commercial and navigational interests. The role played by our port pilots is absolutely critical to this expectation. Last financial year alone Queensland recorded an estimated 15,500 piloted movements—9,700 in ports north of Brisbane—all dependent on the expert navigational assistance of port pilots.

Despite the massive challenges posed by international market movements, particularly in the volatile resources sector, Queensland's port system remains robust, with a total throughput in 2011-12 of more than 260 million tonnes. This represents an increase of 3.9 per cent on the previous year. Furthermore, imports increased by more than two million tonnes to just under 45 million tonnes, an increase of 4.8 per cent. Exports rose by 7.8 million tonnes to more than 218 million tonnes, a 3.7 per cent increase.

Coal exports continue to be Queensland's largest traded commodity by tonnage, accounting for 62.7 per cent of the state's total trade, with approximately 165 million tonnes exported during the 2011-12 year. The movement through our ports of imports and exports—ranging from bulk coal and bauxite to sugar, livestock, motor vehicles and containerised freight and petroleum products—is vital to our future prosperity. While this growth places an increasing expectation on the port network to meet commercial demands of commodity and trading interests, it must be balanced against ensuring safety and meeting environmental expectations.

Our commitment to the commercial and environmental sustainability of our ports is demonstrated in no small part by the delivery of a safe, sustainable and reliable pilotage service. With pilots and pilotage services better integrated into regional port operations, there are opportunities to contribute to overall economic efficiency and safety. This is best achieved by moving responsibility for pilotage services from government to the port authorities. This is particularly effective in Queensland, where each of the ports has evolved with unique identities defined by their geography and the diverse requirements of their trade catchment areas. What changes will be the emergence of greater opportunities for regional port management to make decisions that are geared to the demands of their individual port users.

Put simply, the pilots know their local waters and the port corporations know their local businesses. Bringing those two core functions closer together under a single regionally based entity will allow for a more integrated network where individual port corporations can over time explore even more efficient commercial approaches to their unique service delivery.

Some members may remember that in 2002 pilotage services in Queensland were returned to the state government from port authorities. The need for that arose because there was a mismatch of port pilotage pricing levels and service delivery contracts and because there was some uncertainty where the responsibility for service provision lay. Under our model, the state will maintain the pricing function during the first stage. So the issue of pricing, which was a key matter in the earlier dispute, will be resolved separately and openly from service and the transfer of staff.

Furthermore, the legislation will define which port authorities are responsible for which compulsory pilotage area. So there will be no uncertainty where the responsibility lies for service provision. The skills of pilots will not be lessened. Pilots will continue to operate in the same ports with the same local knowledge and understanding of their area's shipping operations as they do now. The skills and knowledge they use to do their job now will be the same skills and knowledge they will use when this bill is passed.

It is important to note that Maritime Safety Queensland and regional harbourmasters will retain the standard setting and regulator. Our well-respected regional harbourmasters will continue to set the port-handling criteria, such as the maximum size of ships allowed into the port, minimum tug requirements and the necessary under-keel clearances. The essential vessel traffic services will continue to be operated under the strict and direct control of the regional harbourmaster. Oversight of the port pilotage function will not be compromised. Through these mechanisms we can be confident that the development of port pilotage functions will give our port corporations greater business opportunities without compromising navigational or environmental safety.

Before closing, I would like to also refer briefly to the proposed amendments to the documentation verification service for those businesses that must perform identity checks required under Commonwealth legislation. It is an important step in giving business the means to do business more easily. I support this proposal. I commend this important bill to the House.