




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

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TRANSPORT OPERATIONS (MARINE SAFETY-DOMESTIC COMMERCIAL VESSEL NATIONAL LAW APPLICATION) BILL; TRANSPORT OPERATIONS (MARINE SAFETY) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumbidgee—ALP) (9.05 pm): I rise in support of the Transport Operations (Marine Safety) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the Transport Operations (Marine Safety—Domestic Commercial Vessel National Law Application) Bill. I believe these bills are necessary to create a continuity of law across Australia. It ensures that the national law applies to all domestic commercial vessels operating in Queensland, particularly those that are beyond the constitutional reach of the Commonwealth. It ensures that we have a national scheme that can be administered seamlessly for all domestic commercial vessels in Australia. I think when reading this it does help get rid of red tape and all sides of politics do agree with that.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr WHITING: We have had an interjection that it creates more, but by reading through this bill I can see that it actually makes things easier for many Australians. Over the last 30 years many of our national economic reforms have included the reduction of overregulation and in the 21st century we can continue making sure that our regulations and laws, the ones that protect all Australians, are the same all over Australia. In 2011 we had an intergovernmental agreement signed by all Australian governments, and in this the Commonwealth takes over the safety regulation of domestic commercial vessels in Australian waters. We are allowing the Commonwealth to apply this law across Queensland. Already the Commonwealth regulations apply to 95 per cent of the vessels in Queensland and obviously, as we have heard, this makes sure that it is 100 per cent. In that five per cent there were vessels that operated on inland lakes and rivers, mostly tourism vessels or river fishing boats. A good example of this are the boats that take tourists over the beautiful lakes on the Atherton Tablelands. What I also like is that section 153 of the national law now applies to all of our commercial vessels. This section provides immunity against criminal and civil liability for various persons involved in the administration of the law. This means our hardworking marine safety inspectors, a job that I imagine would be risky at times, have a greater degree of protection. It allows them to get on and do their job.

I think that these laws are important as we have always been a maritime nation. Modern Australia, the one that dates from 1788, was a creation of the British Navy. Governor Phillip and the early governors were all naval officers. Naval justice was the first justice system in colonial Australia. Our early modern Australian culture was essentially a British Navy culture—the attitudes, language, working habits and culture. Early Australian expressions were nautical terms and our first national drink was rum. But it goes earlier than that. Many of our first nations in this country were saltwater people. There is a strong tradition of coastal and seaborne trade right here in Moreton Bay by the traditional owners of the lands and waters of Moreton Bay. The commercial vessels we had in Australian waters were Macassan traders who would come annually to the northern waters of Australia chasing beche-de-mer.

That maritime focus is still strong in our country, it still dominates what we do in many ways and it makes a strong case for having the safest possible marine regulations. Obviously, we look out over the sea. It is where we want to holiday and it is where we like to live. We are a nation of surfers and seagoers and we have a very strong tradition of small boat ownership. Part of the Australian dream is to own a tinnie or Hobie Cat for the kids. I think for many Australians it must be a treasured dream to start a business that involves getting on a boat. We know that these laws will make it easier to start a business on the waters anywhere in Australia. The same laws will apply all over Australia. It will make it easier for people all over Australia to know exactly what the regulations are and it will make the waters safer for Queenslanders as well. I commend the bills to the House.