




Speech By
Shane King

MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

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TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (3.10 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Transport and Public Works Committee report No. 23 titled *Inquiry into a sustainable Queensland intrastate shipping industry* tabled on 24 May 2019.

I am pleased today to be able to speak briefly on the Transport and Public Works Committee's inquiry into a sustainable Queensland intrastate shipping industry. This topic generated a lot of interest from stakeholders, and we held public hearings throughout Queensland. The House will no doubt hear disappointment from some committee members that we could not travel to Weipa and Thursday Island to talk to stakeholders due to committee budget restraints. However, we were able to speak to those stakeholders in Cairns and we visited the Queensland government owned amazing Smartship simulator to see what the ports we could not visit were like. I do think we managed to get a fair idea of the issues the industry faces despite those constraints.

The committee made a number of recommendations and I will speak briefly to those. Firstly, we proposed that the Minister for Transport and Main Roads encourage industry to use Australian seafarers where at all possible and to investigate methods to provide incentives. That tied into the second one which recommended that, in order to protect against expected skills shortages, the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, together with federal and interstate jurisdictions, investigate methods of expanding the maritime industry to provide training opportunities. Due to the changes to cabotage in federal legislation, lower paid foreign workers have been able to be employed in our domestic shipping transport industry. We heard heartbreaking evidence from submitters of some of the shocking conditions these seafarers work and live in while at sea. I would like to put on the record my thanks for organisations like Mission to Seafarers, which certainly have their work cut out for them.

We heard from Rio Tinto, which have over a dozen ships transporting ore from Weipa to Gladstone, that they staff only four ships with Australian workers. That is despite evidence we heard that they promised far more. That being said, at least they have some; others do not even bother and have none. The analogy was used several times that we would never allow foreign companies to staff domestic flights and fly domestic routes, but on the ocean it is okay. The fact is that without having local seafarers trained in our local shipping routes we would find it hard to recruit our future Maritime Safety Queensland, port, pilot and tug operators. The fact that our local resource and other industries are not working harder to train workers to help keep our shipping industry sustainable is outrageous. The committee's fourth recommendation addressed this, suggesting the Minister for Transport and Main Roads investigate the conditions attached to government subsidies and concessions with a view to increasing the employment of Queensland based workers.

The third recommendation we made suggested the Department of Transport and Main Roads work with port authorities to reduce potential barriers to allow for expanded intrastate shipping trade. We heard in a few circumstances the interface between ground transport and the shipping industry can be a bottleneck that can be overcome to help our industry become more viable. We heard again and again that RORO—roll-on roll-off—shipping helps make the industry more agile.

The fifth recommendation we made works to address the equity issues identified with regard to the communities situated in Cape York Peninsula and the Torres Strait Islands. These communities struggle as they rely exclusively on shipping for even their basic needs. We identified that increased competition would not only help them with their cost of living, but it would expand their options for making their future more sustainable. The sixth recommendation we made asked the minister to report to the parliament during this term on the progress made on recommendations in this report.

The blue highway, as it is known, is not susceptible to the major weather events that our state's other transport sectors face year after year. Apart from some silting at ports, shipping could help our transport needs during these events. We heard that, as opposed to trucking for major equipment haulage up and down the east coast and even over to the west, shipping is more environmentally friendly and efficient if the bottlenecks are taken out and if the will is there. As our highways become more congested, the shipping of large loads over road transport would certainly help with less wear on our roads and it would help them flow more smoothly.

I would like to thank all those who took time to submit—councils, industry, the mighty Maritime Union of Australia and the International Transport Workers' Federation. As always, I say thanks to our committee members for the largely bipartisan way we did this and also the hardworking secretariat staff for—dare I say it—steering the ship through this inquiry.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr KING: I am here all week! This industry has copped a kicking over the years and has great value to our nation. As an island nation, we should be doing all we can to help make it grow. Our committee was unanimous in its support for it.