




Speech By
Steve Minnikin

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

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TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (3.15 pm): I, too, rise to make a brief contribution to the report on the committee's inquiry into a sustainable Queensland intrastate shipping industry. It is fair to say that the port network in Queensland is quite distinct from many other regions in that along the 1,800 kilometres of coastline between Brisbane and Cairns there is a port every few hundred kilometres or thereabouts. Something also very special to Queensland is the magnificent Great Barrier Reef stretching along the coast. That is certainly a major consideration for the operation of 15 trading seaports. These include major trading ports like Brisbane, Gladstone, Abbot Point, Townsville and Ports North as well as smaller ports up and down the coastline.

There is also an historical nature to the ports in that traditionally they have been geared around the export of Queensland's agricultural and bulk commodities rather than interstate or intrastate trade. This feature is reflected in the current state of our local shipping industry, and it poses plenty of food for thought about what needs to be done to lift the performance in this area.

The terms of reference for the inquiry were sufficiently broad to allow a detailed examination of the factors involved in a sustainable intrastate shipping industry in the great state of Queensland. It is noted that in 2017-18 our ports had a throughput of 354 million tonnes, which was a 5.2 per cent increase over the previous year. Of this figure, Queensland's international trade by ship was 303 million tonnes. This figure is particularly relevant in that it reinforces the role of our major ports in international trade. In this regard it will come as no surprise that the export of coal was a stand-out in terms of tonnes exported. The much smaller tonnage representing the balance of the total was more associated with intrastate and interstate shipping, which has not received the same amount of attention.

In terms of intrastate and interstate freight, stronger competition between service providers across transport modes would lead to the development of a multimodal freight system and a more efficient freight network overall. This could only be a positive development for consumers as the cost of freight is baked into everyday goods. The good news is that, unlike the Bruce Highway and related roads that require constant upgrades and maintenance, the blue highway, as the previous member outlined, already exists and is an under-utilised and a valuable asset to the people of Queensland. In terms of intrastate and indeed interstate coastal shipping, if we are able to shift freight from road to sea not only will it reduce freight costs; it would also lead to a reduction in the number of road accidents, stronger economic growth and more local employment opportunities. However, these and other benefits can only be fully realised if the full potential of coastal shipping is explored through a fundamental rethink of the role an environmentally sustainable alternative to road and rail can play in the overall freight system.

It is clear that, while a significant opportunity exists for the intrastate shipping industry in Queensland, there is a range of barriers which needs to be overcome to reinvigorate coastal shipping and place it on a more sustainable footing, for example, costs—crew, fuel, port costs, government

charges, asset costs—maintaining the logistics supply chain, ensuring access to and from ports from land and sea, suitability of infrastructure and government regulation. There is a need for the government to continue to work with the stakeholders to identify measures designed to further support the development of coastal shipping services in Queensland, for example, collaboration with the private sector to develop common user infrastructure at regional ports.

The committee's recommendation goes some way to addressing the current obstacles preventing the intrastate shipping industry from expanding; however, it is clear that much more work is required. Queensland needs an efficient, effective and sustainable interstate shipping industry, and being internationally competitive is fundamental to achieving this objective. Any advocacy by the trade union movement for the introduction of additional protection measures has the potential to impede productivity and should therefore be avoided.

Importantly, we encourage the Labor government to look to best practice in coastal shipping and not impose unnecessary industrial relations measures such as heavy-handed, union inspired restrictions that would add further cost but bring very little or, indeed, no benefit. Of course, we always want to see a strong emphasis placed around safety. We would certainly encourage companies using our ports and benefiting from the facilities to continue the support of training for our local seafarers.