

Australian Greens

Additional Comments

1.1 The report is an excellent summary of the risks that Flags of Convenience (FOC) shipping poses to national security, fuel security, minimum employment law standards and our marine environment. The Greens support all the recommendations of the Chair's report.

1.2 It is pertinent that the majority (58 per cent) of the vessels detained by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) on environmental grounds between January 2014 and August 2015 sailed under FOCs. We fully endorse the position taken by the Maritime Union of Australia of the importance of a highly skilled and well trained maritime workforce, noting that Australian seafarers:

...go far beyond... the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers—which is the IMO standard... We want to do better than the minimums... because in our view, as a nation, we want to be better than the minimum at risk mitigation against environmental catastrophe and the consequential economic flow-on effects.¹

1.3 This is in contrast to many FOC ships where the flag states may have poor governance and compliance regimes and fail to adhere to international maritime conventions and standards. These factors can compromise biosecurity, for example through poor ballast water management or by causing marine pollution.

1.4 We support the contention of the International Transport Workers Federation - Australia that the recent increase of international ships operating in Australian waters makes pollution of our environment more likely, including by:

...the release of biocides from toxic chemicals used in anti-fouling paints of all ships, dumping of wastes including oily wastes, and the transfer of invasive alien species through ballast water. Increasing ship traffic also increases the risk of maritime accidents including oil spills.²

1.5 We also endorse the views of the Australian Council of Mission to Seafarers and the Maritime Union of New Zealand, who outlined the broader effects of environmental accidents, as well as noting the potential cost to the Commonwealth for clean-up operations.³ This includes physical damage to reefs; pollution of the sea and coastline; the safety of ship and crew and those who go to assist; the emotional impacts on coastal communities; the cost of clean-up operations, costs due to loss or delay of ship cargo on Australian industry and commerce; and the difficulties of recouping these costs from their owners.

1 Mr Paddy Crumlin, National Secretary, Maritime Union of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2015, p. 6.

2 International Transport Workers' Federation – Australia, *Submission 22*, p. 49.

3 Australian Council of Mission to Seafarers Inc., *Submission 16*; Maritime Union of New Zealand, *Submission 24*.

1.6 These risks were exemplified in the environmental and financial cost of the *Shen Neng* running aground in Queensland on 3 April 2010, an accident caused by crew fatigue. This grounding caused irreparable damage to the Great Barrier Reef, and clean-up costs of \$192 million which were funded by the Commonwealth.

Recommendation 1

1.7 That the review of the Australian maritime sector specifically include a review of risks to the marine environment of flags of convenience shipping and specifically include consideration of how shipping can be more responsive to Australian environmental laws

Senator Janet Rice

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