

# Interview

## Federal Opposition leader, the Hon. Bill Shorten MP

Following a site visit to Australian Peak Shipper Association (APSA) member Manildra Group, Paul Zalai, Director FTA, had the privilege to speak to the Federal Opposition leader, the Hon. Bill Shorten MP



Photograph by Andrew Meares Andrew.Meares@aph.gov.au

### 1. PAUL ZALAI - What will Australian trade policy look like under a Labor Government?

Labor supports trade. We know that it opens up opportunities for our economy and we want to help businesses access the global marketplace that trade provides. Australia is a trading nation with one in five Australian jobs are currently linked to trade. The more we export the more jobs we create, and better paying jobs. But we want to see improvements in the way Australia negotiates free trade agreements, more independent scrutiny and ensuring Australian workers get a fair go.

Labor wants better quality (free trade) agreements. As a start, we won't sign agreements that include labour market

testing waivers or in investor state dispute settlement provisions.

We will also:

- conduct an independent economic analysis of each new free trade agreement before it is signed;
- independently review free trade agreements 10 years after they are signed to see what the impact of them has been, where they have worked and where they have not - good companies do this, it is the best way to learn and improve - governments should do the same thing; and
- increase the role of business, unions and civil society in trade negotiations for all future bilateral free trade agreements to make sure we get the right outcomes

- one model we will closely examine is an Accredited Advisor program, enabling advice on each round of negotiations.

We will also provide public updates on each round of negotiations and release draft texts during negotiations where this is feasible.

Critically, we will task a team in DFAT to remove labour market testing waivers and investor state dispute settlement provisions from existing trade agreements.

### 2. PAUL ZALAI - Given that many Australian businesses are calling for coastal shipping reform, is that an area that Labor is willing to revisit?

Shipping is a smart industry for Australia, it's economically efficient in terms of fuel, in terms of climate change, in terms of congestion. I've consistently said that I think we need to address the decline of Australian-flagged vessels. Over the past 30 years the number of Australian flagged vessel operating internationally has fallen from 100 to 13. There's a significant loss in jobs and skills that comes with this decline. That's why in late 2018, Labor successfully moved to establish a Senate inquiry into Australian shipping to look at the ongoing decline of Australia's maritime industry.

In mid-2012, the then Labor Government announced a reform package to revive and revitalise shipping, including tax concessions and training assistance. This package followed extensive consultation with industry and unions.

Unfortunately, this work was abandoned by the Liberals in 2013, pushing changes that would have decimated the domestic shipping industry by enabling foreign vessels paying crews third world wages to

compete with Australian vessels paying their crews Australian-level wages.

The Senate rightly rejected this legislation, but since then, the Government has allowed the industry to simply drift. We're an island nation, it's only common sense to maintain a vibrant maritime industry. We rely on shipping for over 95 per cent of imports and exports.

### 3. PAUL ZALAI - Do you see that the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources are sufficiently resourced to protect and Australia's Biosecurity concerns and what are your views on the proposed Biosecurity Import Levy?

Australia's natural environment is incredibly precious and the Australian Government's most critical responsibility in agriculture is maintaining and enforcing strong biosecurity controls.

Responsibility for biosecurity is shared between the Commonwealth and the states. In government, Labor created a new Biosecurity Act and developed a historic intergovernmental agreement with the states and territories to coordinate a national approach.

Labor wants to ensure biosecurity is a high priority and we want to make sure it is properly resourced. Recent outbreaks of White Spot Disease in our prawn sector and Fruit Fly in our horticulture sector are critical reminders of the need to have the very best harmonised biosecurity framework. There have been significant biosecurity lapses during this term of government.

The Government's planned biosecurity levy is yet to be introduced into the Parliament even though it's due to commence on July 1. We'll look at the details and provide more information when the legislation is actually introduced.

### 4. PAUL ZALAI - Would a Labor government support the concept and expansion of the Australian Trusted Trader program?

Reducing red tape and making it easier for Australian businesses to trade overseas is important to our economy, and we support the Trusted Trader program. But we'll also listen to businesses and the industry about increasing uptake and making the program as effective as possible.

### 5. PAUL ZALAI - What is your policy on anti-dumping and what measures could we see under a Labor government

Labor has announced a comprehensive package to strengthen anti-dumping provisions. These include:

- tripling penalties for circumventing trade remedies;
- better resourcing the Anti-Dumping Commission by increasing funding by \$3.5 million a year, which will increase staff numbers at the Commission by around 30;
- transferring responsibilities for safeguard measures from the Productivity Commission to the Anti-Dumping Commission;
- introducing a mechanism that will allow businesses in anti-dumping investigations to nominate the form of duty that should be applied, this will form part of the recommendation to the Minister by the Anti-Dumping Commissioner;
- restricting the time available for cited dumpers to request a review of ADC decisions to prevent them gaming the system to their own advantage; and
- amending the Census and Statistics Act to improve access to trade and import data held by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

### 6. PAUL ZALAI - Is there any validity to concerns that waterfront unions may flex their muscle under a Labor government threatening business continuity.

Labor wants to see a labour market that provides secure jobs and decent pay, now and for the future. We know that collaborative and cooperative workplaces are more productive and that is what Labor wants from the industrial relations system. Labor is talking to employers and unions about problems in the current enterprise bargaining system. We want to make sure that good employers are not undercut by employers who cut wages to increase profit.

We know that the current multi-employer low-paid bargaining stream has not worked. Workers need and deserve a seat at the bargaining table, but too many are not afforded that right. Too many workers, often low paid with

insufficient industrial strength, are missing out. We will look at how we improve the existing multi-employer bargaining provisions, particularly for those workers, so it is an effective pathway for fair outcomes.

Most of the best performing economies in the world have a mix of some form of multi-employer or sector bargaining with local and enterprise agreements.

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