

**THE HON BILL SHORTEN MP  
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION  
SHADOW MINISTER FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS AND  
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS  
MEMBER FOR MARIBYRNONG**

**ADDRESS TO THE TOLL SHIPPING NAMING CEREMONY FOR THE  
VICTORIAN RELIANCE II**

**PORT MELBOURNE**

**SUNDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2019**

Good morning everybody. I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet.

The land, and the seas, and the waterways, and thanks Aunty Carolyn for her welcome.

I'd like to acknowledge amongst all of the distinguished guests, Chairman of Toll Mr John Mullins and his wife Jackie. Mr Michael Byrne, the CEO.

I'd also like to acknowledge my Parliamentary colleagues who are here, Mr Anthony Albanese, Senator Kim Carr and we hope the future Labor Member for Melbourne Ports, Mr Josh Burns.

I don't know how the rest of you are feeling this morning, but for me coming down to this ship launch brings back many fond memories.

I come from a family of seafarers.

Once upon a time, the launching of Australian ships was far more common than it is today.

My father was a seafarer from Newcastle upon Tyne in England.

He was at sea for 20 years and then he came ashore and worked the next 25 years in the Melbourne ship repair industry.

I remember as a little boy, my brother and I coming down to the docks - we would visit my father at his work.

I remember falling in love with the ships - the sheer scale of the machinery, the energy, and the productive nature of skilled workers going to work every day.

I remember meeting a lot of colourful characters on Melbourne's waterfront, and learning a few new words.

But I remember most of all though, the pride of the maritime industries.

Australia has a very good maritime workforce and maritime industry.

And the seafarers and the waterside workers that I would meet, knew that they were part of a camaraderie, a part of a team, a part of something big, and something worthwhile.

And as we walked along the deck this morning behind the very good Darebin

Brass Band, I looked at the faces of all of you in the audience, and I think we all feel a sense of pride, that here we are on the deck of a ship which carries the Australian flag.

I congratulate everyone who works at Toll, from the Chairman and the Managing Director, through to every participant, everyone who works at Toll.

I congratulate you in particular for supporting Australian shipping, Australian seafarers and Australian jobs.

Thirty years ago though, there were one hundred vessels who flew the Australian Red Ensign. One hundred vessels.

This magnificent ship today though, will just be one of 14. It does not have to be this way.

America, Japan, Germany, Greece, Norway, Italy, Belgium, Great Britain - they all have many more registered ships than Australia.

Switzerland has more registered ships and that doesn't even have an ocean.

Friends, whilst this is a fabulous morning, doing something fabulous, we all I think understand that we are an island nation.

We are the only country in the world upon whom is bestowed, the great, good fortune of being custodians of a continent.

We are an island nation. We are a seafaring nation.

We have the people, we have the skills, we have the know-how, the get up and go, to rebuild an Australian merchant fleet - a national strategic reserve.

And if we are elected, just as the company and the workforce here have shown the confidence to launch two ships, I promise you that the next Labor Government, if we are elected, will make Australia a seafaring nation again, with many more Australian ships.

This is a, these are great days, a great day today and a special moment.

This is a moment that the children here will remember the rest of their lives.

And let us just commit - just as Toll has done with its economic long-term thinking, its commitment to think big, to think long - let us hope that many more Aussie kids can attend many more of these days here in the Melbourne waterfront and right around Australia.

I'm honoured to wish the captain and the crew of this mighty vessel well. Congratulations everybody.

Thank you very much for inviting me to be part of such a fantastic nation-building day for Australia.

Have a lovely day. Thank you very much.

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