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**LABOR WILL REVIVE AUSTRALIA'S SHIPPING INDUSTRY AND CREATE
A STRATEGIC FLEET**

A Shorten Labor Government will enhance Australia's economic sovereignty and national security by creating a Strategic Fleet to secure our access to fuel supplies, even in times of global instability.

Australia relies on shipping to move 99 per cent of our imports and exports - it is in Australia's economic, environmental and national security interests to maintain a vibrant maritime industry.

But Australia's own merchant fleet, as well as the skilled workforce it trains and employs, is fast disappearing.

Over the past 30 years, the number of Australian-flagged vessels has shrunk from 100 to now just 14 – and it is in our national interest to change that.

For the past five years the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Government has stood idle as large multinationals dumped Australian flagged and crewed vessels so they could hire overseas crews.

This has destroyed the jobs of Australian seafarers and created a situation where none of the vessels our nation relies upon to deliver its essential supplies of crude oil, aviation fuel and diesel are registered in this country or crewed by Australians.

So as a first step, an incoming Labor Government will appoint a Taskforce to guide it on the establishment of the Fleet, which is likely to include up to a dozen vessels including oil tankers, container ships and gas carriers.

The Australian-flagged and crewed vessels will be privately owned and operate on a commercial basis. But they will be available to be requisitioned by the Government in times of national need.

Labor's Strategic Fleet Taskforce will examine the fine details of the establishment of the fleet.

It will include representatives of oil companies, ship owners and operators, industry body Maritime Industry Australia Ltd, maritime unions and the Department of Defence.

Labor will also enforce existing laws around coastal shipping. That means for trading within Australia where domestic freight is moved between Australian ports, we will require firms to seek out an Australian operator. When none are available, foreign flagged vessels can be used so long as they pay Australian-level wages on domestic sectors.

A Strategic Fleet will put an end to this unilateral economic disarmament, while also providing a platform for the training of more Australia seafarers.

In addition to creating the Strategic Fleet a Shorten Labor Government will address skills shortages in the Australian maritime sector by re-establishing the Maritime Workforce Development Forum, abolished by the Coalition

Government after it took office in 2013.

We would also order the Department of Infrastructure to resume proper oversight of the issuance of temporary licences that allow overseas-flagged and crewed vessels to work around our coasts where no Australian flags are available.

Other first-world nations have established shipping fleets - Australia should too. Over the past 30 years, the number of Australian-flagged vessels has shrunk from 100 to now just 14. Compare that to Norway with 519 vessels carrying the Norwegian flag, the United Kingdom with 1157 flagged vessels and China with 4608 flagged vessels.

The Coalition, as part of its attempts to undermine Australian shipping, has been abusing the system by issuing licences for work that is not temporary and in cases where Australian vessels have been available.

The existence of a vibrant Australian shipping industry serves the nation's economic, environmental and national security interests.

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