

## Wilkie on deregulating coastal shipping

Written by Andrew Wilkie

---



Canberra 1 December 2014. The Federal Government's move in Parliament to deregulate coastal shipping is in reality a confession that it doesn't want to do anything directly to remedy the high cost of moving passengers, vehicles and freight across Bass Strait by sea.

I will speak to Liberal Member for Lyons Eric Hutchinson's Motion on Coastal Shipping due for debate in the House of Representatives.

Deregulating coastal shipping is an attack on Australian workers who will be replaced by cheap foreign labour. It is also an ideological attack on unions and in particular the Maritime Union of Australia and the Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers.

Deregulating shipping will not significantly alter Bass Strait costs but instead line the pockets of the shipping lines. The Government's claim that deregulation will significantly help Tasmania is little more than a dishonest excuse to replace Australian workers with cheap foreign labour.

What is needed is a new scheme to directly subsidise the cost of moving people, vehicles and freight to and from Tasmania by sea. Yes this means more money upfront but it will translate to savings for Canberra over the long term.

The key point here is that Bass Strait is the most significant brake on Tasmanian economic development and bringing down the cost will boost the economy and community and reduce Tasmania's dependence on other federal handouts.

I call again on the Government to increase funding for subsidies for Bass Strait shipping and in particular to work cooperatively with other senators to achieve this important reform.