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From: Sutton Michael
Sent: Wednesday, 2 December 2015 2:17 PM
To: FINLAY Jess
Cc: ZIELKE Judith
Subject: FW: Political Alert - Transcript of press conference, Canberra (FED)
[SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Attachments: 336S1743.PDF
Categories: Charges

UNCLASSIFIED

Jess - just wanted to advise that the 14 December court case referred to in albo's release is the action being taken by the MUA against the department that is referred to in the background of the qtb. A directions hearing on Monday determined that the case is to be heard by a full court of the federal court on 14 December.

We would recommend caution in any public comments on the issues involved in the case - happy to discuss

Michael

UNCLASSIFIED

Sent with Good (www.good.com)

-----Original Message-----

From: Wieland Donna
Sent: Wednesday, December 02, 2015 12:09 PM AUS Eastern Standard Time
To: Sutton Michael; Pitt Geoffrey; Zielke Judith
Subject: FW: Political Alert - Transcript of press conference, Canberra (FED) [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

FYI

-----Original Message-----

From: CCH Parliament [<mailto:politicalalert@cch.com.au>]
Sent: Wednesday, 2 December 2015 12:08 PM
To: politicalalert@cch.com.au
Subject: Political Alert - Transcript of press conference, Canberra (FED)

Please find attached:

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE, CANBERRA (FED)

Shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Anthony Albanese, discusses MV Portland workers ordered to sail to Singapore to be sacked; need for Government to revoke license for foreign workers; and the Federal Court case.

336S1743

Total number of pages 5

SUPPORT: politicalalert@cch.com.au or 02 6273 2070. Twitter: https://twitter.com/political_alert

Labor



TRANSCRIPT

**THE HON ANTHONY ALBANESE MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT
SHADOW MINISTER FOR CITIES
SHADOW MINISTER FOR TOURISM
MEMBER FOR GRAYNDLER**

E&OE TRANSCRIPT

**PRESS CONFERENCE WITH MUA AND *MV PORTLAND* CREW MEMBERS
CANBERRA
WEDNESDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2015**

Subjects: MV Portland workers ordered to sail to Singapore to be sacked; need for Government to revoke license for foreign workers; Federal Court case

ANTHONY ALBANESE: Good morning, I am joined today by the Maritime Union of Australia's Ian Bray as well as two crew members of the *MV Portland* - senior crew member Warren Hopkins and Michael Pawson, who is the chief cook on the vessel.

The 38-member crew of the *Portland* has been ordered to sail the vessel to Singapore. This is about the transferring of the vessel overseas for its sale. It's a one-way journey. But it's also a one-way journey for Australian jobs because when they get to Singapore they will be made redundant.

It's extraordinarily cruel to ask anyone to sail a vessel – a vessel they have worked on for years, improving the productivity of this nation to then hand over the ship to foreign interests and hand over their jobs to foreign workers.

But that is precisely what is happening here. And it is happening here in direct contravention of the existing legislation. The existing legislation says that temporary licences can only be granted where Australian vessels are not available. Well, an Australian vessel is available. It is the *Portland*. It has been conducting work - domestic freight work - from Victoria to Western Australian on a continuous basis for many years.

And yet what we have is Alcoa making a decision, perhaps in anticipation of the change of legislation that was foreshadowed by the Coalition, to sell the ship, to use temporary licences for work that is anything but temporary. This is the day-to-day work that Alcoa conducts from Victoria to Western Australia.

So the government needs to, through the department, reassess and stop the issuing of a temporary licence because it isn't temporary. And it needs to defend Australian jobs because that's what the Senate did last week. The Senate overwhelmingly rejected the legislation that was before the Parliament for WorkChoices on Water. It rejected that legislation because it very explicitly said that it would result in the replacement of Australian ships with foreign flagged ships and the replacement of Australian jobs with foreign workers being paid foreign wage rates.

That's not Australian. That is unilateral economic disarmament. None of the G20 nations conducts activity like that – has a free-for-all on its coast - because they all recognise the importance to the national economic interest but also for issues of national security and the environment that we have an Australian shipping industry.

Well, last week in this Parliament there was a debate that was about the issues between senators. Today what we are doing is putting a human face to what the policy implications are. And that human face is Warren and is Michael, people with families, people doing work, people creating jobs in regional Australia.

That's what this is about. This is about Australian workers and their right to have employment with decent living standards and not be undercut by foreign workers being paid foreign wages. It's that simple. I'll ask Ian to make some comments on behalf of the union.

IAN BRAY, MARTIME UNION OF AUSTRALIA: Thanks. On behalf of the union we just want to say to say in terms of what is going on down in Portland with the *Portland*, this is a ship that carries product that is mined by Alcoa domestically, it is refined by Alcoa domestically, it is transported by Alcoa domestically and then it is smelted in Victoria by Alcoa domestically.

There is no international component to this operation but yet Alcoa are determined to introduce a foreign flagged vessel with a foreign crew with that crew paid as little as \$2 an hour purely to replace the Australian workforce.

We find that this is incomprehensible and it's unacceptable and given last week the Senate's rejection of the Turnbull Government's shipping policy, we request the Turnbull Government not only revoke the temporary licence that has been issued to Alcoa to run the foreign flagged vessel with a foreign crew.

We call on the government to get involved with the industry, to have a look at a proper shipping policy that guarantees the future of Australians and seafarers alike. Thank you.

ALBANESE: I'd now ask Michael to make some comments on behalf of the workforce on the *Portland*.

MICHAEL PAWSON, SHIP'S COOK, MV PORTLAND: Just as a normal Australian worker, six weeks ago I got handed a thing from Alcoa stating that my job was going to be made redundant. My leave runs out December the 24th.

As I said, like every other Australian worker, I pay taxes etc. I've got mortgages, the whole nine yards. When I run out of leave on December the 24th, I have to start a fire sale on Christmas Day because I'm 55 years old now. I can't see that I'll be getting a job in a restaurant or anything like that. So yeah, life's not looking too flash right now. Thank you.

ALBANESE: Thanks Michael. Any questions?

REPORTER: What happens if the Federal Court on the 14th of December, I understand, makes the same sort of decision that has come down already? Is the ship going to sail or is it going to sit there?

BRAY: The case with the Federal Court is separate to the crew's determination to bring this to an end. The crew want to sit down. They want Alcoa at the table to sit down and consult, to have a look at meaningful cost measures to ensure that there is a viable trade or a viable place for Australian seafarers in that trade.

The issue with the Federal Court case that will occur on the 14th of December, and I do need to be careful here because the matter is before the court; what will happen is if the union's application is successful, it will say that the vessel that's currently running the foreign vessel with the foreign labour, that would be operating illegally in this country.

REPORTER: When does the foreign vessel arrive in Portland, by the way? I understand it's in Kwinana at the moment, or has been.

BRAY: My understanding is it's en route from Kwinana to Portland and I believe on the latest schedule, it's due into Portland on the 2nd of December.

REPORTER: For the crew members, what are you actually doing at the moment? You're on the ship? You've been sitting on the ship, waiting?

CREW MEMBER: We're actually on leave at the moment.

REPORTER: You're on leave, both of you?

CREW MEMBERS: Yes.

REPORTER: Right. So, there is a crew manning it at the moment?

CREW MEMBER: Yes, manning and working.

REPORTER: Maintaining it, and so forth. How long have you blokes been at sea on the *MV Portland*?

WARREN HOPKINS, SENIOR CREW MEMBER: I've been at sea 32 years but I've worked on the Alcoa vessels for just over 22 years.

MICHAEL PAWSON, SHIP'S COOK: I've been at sea for 27 years but I actually had the option of being made redundant off of the BP tanker the *Loyalty* and ASP gave me the opportunity to work on this one, because the chief cook had -

REPORTER: The BP ship, it floated out of Brisbane back overseas in March, isn't that right?

PAWSON: Yes, so ASP found me a job on the *Portland* and you know, I've only got two swings into that. Life was looking pretty good, you know, because after facing the redundancy and then getting a job again so yeah, I've sort of been kicked in the teeth twice this year.

REPORTER: Mr Bray, has there been any suggestion that Alcoa will actually sit down with you and talk?

BRAY: There's been no suggestion from Alcoa but we never give up hope. The door is always open. The union is very keen to sit down with Alcoa to try to find the solutions and address their concerns, but it would be good if they actually come to the table in the first instance to have that discussion.

REPORTER: Well, they of course say that this ship needs almost recommissioning in the next year or whatever, which would cost them a huge amount of money. Would you have an alternative proposal? For example, could they charter a vessel with an Australian crew, or what?

BRAY: That's precisely what they could do. They could charter a vessel for a 10 or 15 year period given that they've given a commitment for the smelter to remain open for 20. They have a transport legacy that requires it to continue. There is no reason why you can't get a vessel chartered - newer technology, greater fuel efficiency, to turn around and ply that trade and the newer technology assist along with the workers on board in refining cost reduction to ensure that it's a viable trade.

ALBANESE: Which is precisely the concern that we have of how a temporary licence could be given for tasks that quite clearly aren't temporary. This is an abuse of the existing legislation and an application not in accordance with the existing legislation we believe. It's there very clearly. The Government's whole argument in trying to change the shipping legislation last week was that the temporary licence system wasn't flexible enough.

Well, here we have a task that is purely domestic and yet a temporary licence being granted for what is a permanent activity for Alcoa. We just call upon Alcoa - I believe there needs to be continuous productivity improvements. Employers and employees sitting down working out what is in their common interest. What we have here is a unilateral decision which is impacting on these gentlemen here, and impacting on that local community in Portland as well. You take away these jobs from that community, that has a very big impact on what is a small regional centre.

REPORTER: Of course, most of these crewmen don't live in Portland.

ALBANESE: Sure, but in terms of the economic impact, because it's based there, they work there, that's where they leave from, that's where they return to, that's where the supplies go onto the ship, as well as the cost in terms of the national economy. These blokes pay Australian taxes. The foreign crews will not pay Australian taxes.

REPORTER: Warren Truss says that the MUA didn't actually lodge a protest before the temporary licence was given. Is that right?

BRAY: That's correct, however, that's the matter that's before the courts on the basis of how the notification for that temporary licence was made available to industry. It wasn't only the MUA that didn't pick it up. It was the whole of industry that didn't pick it up and I'll leave that there because it's before the courts.

ALBANESE: Thanks very much. Thank you.

[ENDS]

WEDNESDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2015

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