



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services

**MEDIA RELEASE**

Issued: June 21 2004

Chair: Paul Neville MP

## Report of the Inquiry into Maritime Salvage in Australian Waters tabled

The House of Representatives Transport and Regional Services Committee have completed the inquiry into Maritime Salvage in Australian Waters.

The inquiry arose out of a Productivity Commission report on the Economic Regulation of Harbour Towing and Related Services that touched on the issue of maritime salvage. Despite the Productivity Commission's belief that market forces will continue to provide the necessary salvage capability, evidence before the Committee indicated that this may not be the case for much longer.

The Committee believes that the Productivity Commission's Report made unfortunate comments on a serious matter and paid insufficient attention to Australia's national security and environmental integrity.

Two salvage capable tugs have already left Australian waters due to economic pressures.

Due to the fact that the ships coming into Australian waters are in better condition than they have ever been before salvage operations are becoming less frequent. The Committee takes some satisfaction in this outcome given that its 1992 report *Ships of Shame* made many seminal recommendations relating to improving the quality of ships in Australian waters. The committee compliments the former chair of the committee, the Hon Peter Morris, for his continuing involvement in this field.

The Committee made recommendations in its report relating to the assessment of strategic placement of salvage tugs, the revenue needed to support salvage capability, maintaining salvage standards, the development of a salvage national plan and the provision of salvage related training.

The Committee Chair, Mr Paul Neville MP, stated that the report highlighted the need for a national salvage capability.

"It is important that Australia have a salvage capability in order to secure the vital economic and environmental resources contained in our 17,000 kilometre coastline." Mr Neville said. "We have recommended that an assessment be made of Australia's ports to determine the most strategic placements for salvage capable tugs and their equipment."

"We have also recommended that a subsidy funded equally by an increase in levies and contributions from the Australian government, the States and the Northern Territory be provided to ensure that an adequate and economically viable salvage capability is maintained in the designated ports".

During the course of its inquiry, the Committee received evidence from a wide variety of stakeholders, including governments, industry bodies and concerned citizens, and carried out a number of interstate inspections. It received twenty six submissions and held an industry round table in Melbourne on 28 April 2004.

For **media comment**, please contact:

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Further information, including copies of the report can be found at

[www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/trs](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/trs) or obtained by phoning the Committee secretariat on (02) 6277 2352 or emailing at [trs.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:trs.reps@aph.gov.au)