

## **Abbott exposed by bureaucrat's 'sack the Aussie workers' advice admission**

by Malcolm Farr via jess - Courier Mail *Tuesday, Sep 8 2015, 12:53am*

international / prose / post

A Senior federal official has confirmed a cruise line was advised to sack 60 Australian workers and hire foreigners to avoid the consequences of Government legislation.



***Fraud***

And an executive of the company has blasted Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss, who denied the advice was ever given.

"I'm not trying to pick a fight with the Prime Minister or the Deputy PM," Bill Milby, an executive with North Star Cruises, told a Senate inquiry last night.

"But I don't like being told I'm lying and I took offence at that ... I take very strong offence at that."

At issue are proposed laws which would allow foreign shipping companies to work on Australian coastal services for half a year without paying Australian wages.

The Government says the legislation is needed to boost competition and lower freight costs. The shipping industry says it will struggle to compete with companies paying significantly lower wages bills.

A Department of Infrastructure bureaucrat, Judith Zielke, confirmed the suggestion had been made to West Australian cruise company True North, which owns North Star Cruises. She said the company was told it could re-register overseas and hire and train a crew overseas to cut costs.

It had been among "various options" canvassed at two meetings officials had with Mr Milby, Ms Zielke told the Senate's Rural and Regional Affairs committee.

"I don't have an issue with the people who told me that because if you read the legislation and the explanatory memorandum, they were telling me the truth," Mr Milby told the inquiry.

The claim, revealed last week in a written submission to the committee, had been denied by Mr Abbott and the Infrastructure Minister Mr Truss.

The row over Australian jobs has embarrassed the Government just as it is telling voters employment

is a major policy objective, and is defending its free trade agreement with China against claims it could cost Australian jobs.

Shadow transport minister Anthony Albanese today said the committee also had been told by department officials the government's own research indicated the changes would leave only two Australian-flagged vessels working interstate coastal trade routes.

And he accused Prime Minister Abbott of publicly questioning Mr Milby's honesty. "Australia deserves more than a Prime Minister who wants to destroy jobs and, when an employer raises concerns, publicly questions the man's honesty.

"It is shameful that any government would openly canvass replacing the Australian flag with the white flag on Australian jobs.

"But the real disgrace is that officials were simply providing an honest account of the real effect of Mr Abbott's ideologically driven reform proposals, which will destroy the Australian shipping industry."

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