



Sharon Grierson MP
Federal Member for Newcastle

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ANDERSON'S PIRACY IS NOT THE INFRASTRUCTURE ANSWER

Speaking in Parliament last night, Federal Member for Newcastle Sharon Grierson said that Australia desperately needs Labor's national leadership on infrastructure planning - not the kind of ad-hoc infrastructure piracy attempted by Transport Minister John Anderson when he sailed into Newcastle Harbour last month and floated the idea of a federal takeover.

Minister Anderson said Newcastle's Port Waratah was our "premier coal exporting port", and an example of "very good practice."

Our local approach is successful because of the cooperative culture that has existed for many years between all regional stakeholders - Port Waratah Coal Service, the mining, maritime and transport unions, Pacific National, Queensland Railways, coal mine owners and operators, stevedores, the Newcastle Port Corporation and the Port Users Group.

If the Government was serious about emulating Newcastle's success at other ports around the nation it would actually get involved in some real consultation and some real investment.

Labor's approach complements what has worked in Newcastle. It actually involves real consultation with the States and industry, and it actually invests real money.

Labor's Infrastructure Australia - an independent Statutory Authority - would, in partnership with state, territory and local governments and the private sector, develop a blueprint for our future infrastructure needs. Labor's Building Australia Fund would be used to enhance the productivity of our economy through investment in infrastructure projects.

The Howard Government's share of public infrastructure investment has dropped from 56 percent in 1998 to 30 percent this year. The Committee for Economic Development of Australia estimates that Australia now needs \$25 billion worth of investment in infrastructure to make up for it.

Minister Anderson is right to think that Port Waratah works well. But he is wrong if he thinks his flattery can hide the fact that he has sailed in far too late in this debate for anyone to take him seriously.

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