



MEDIA ALERT

Rally at VIVA ENERGY today

When:	12pm, Tuesday, 23 December
Where:	720 Bourke Street, Docklands, Melbourne
Contact:	Darrin Barnett 0428 119 703

Workers from the Maritime Union of Australia and other unions will rally tomorrow in support of retaining the Australian fuel tanker fleet. Losing the fleet will place the nation's fuel security and environment at risk.

The recent removal of the of the Tandara Spirit from the Australian coast has meant the crews of the remaining tankers have taken the unusual step of writing to all Federal MPs as part of the campaign to save their jobs.

In addition, the MUA believes that Viva Energy – which made the decision to remove the Tandara Spirit from Coastal Trade and replace it with a vessel where workers earn \$2 an hour - still carries sufficient volumes to justify an Australian-crewed vessel.

An extract from the Letter to MPs says:

“With the Tandara Spirit now sadly removed from service by the foreign-owned operator Viva Australia, we write to you today as the crews of the only four fuel tankers our nation has left.

“Obviously, we are deeply worried about our future. Yet the fact is that although we are writing to you out of concern for our livelihoods and our families - we are equally troubled by threats to the nation's fuel security and its natural environment.

“But by allowing Flag Of Convenience foreign vessels to undercut Australian vessels and Australian standards in supplying this fuel, we are creating an international race to the bottom in our domestic waters.

“This is obviously problematic from a workers' rights perspective. Yet it doesn't end there. Companies that pay their crew \$2 an hour tend to be equally unethical when it comes to environmental and safety standards.”

“With the closure of Caltex's Kurnell refinery and Shell's Clyde refinery in Sydney - as well as planned closures by BP in Brisbane - Australia now imports 91 per cent of its petroleum products by foreign tankers. That's up from 60 per cent in 2000.

“We believe that a serious environmental disaster in Australian waters is inevitable - whether it is by storing large volumes of petrol in large tankers in Port Phillip Bay or by moving tankers around the Great Barrier Reef - when run by those unfamiliar with Australian waters and conditions.”