

The Front Fell Off

Interviewer: Senator Collins, thanks for coming in.

Senator Collins: It's a great pleasure, thank you.

Interviewer: This ship that was involved in the incident off Western Australia this week...

Senator Collins: The one the front fell off?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Senator Collins: Yeah, that's not very typical, I'd like to make that point.

Interviewer: Well, how was it un-typical?

Senator Collins: Well there are a lot of these ships going around the world all the time, and very seldom does anything like this happen. I just don't want people thinking that tankers aren't safe.

Interviewer: Was this tanker safe?

Senator Collins: Well, I was thinking more about the other ones.

Interviewer: The ones that are safe?

Senator Collins: Yeah, the ones the front doesn't fall off.

Interviewer: Well, if this wasn't safe, why did it have 80,000 tons of oil on it?

Senator Collins: I'm not saying it wasn't safe, it's just perhaps not quite as safe as some of the other ones.

Interviewer: Why?

Senator Collins: Well, some of them are built so that the front doesn't fall off at all.

Interviewer: Wasn't this built so that the front wouldn't fall off?

Senator Collins: Well, obviously not.

Interviewer: How do you know?

Senator Collins: Well, because the front fell off and 20,000 tons of crude oil spilled into the sea caught fire. It's a bit of a giveaway. I'd just like to make the point that that is not normal.

Interviewer: Well what sort of engineering standards are these oil tankers built to?

Senator Collins: Oh, very rigorous maritime engineering standards.

Interviewer: What sort of thing?

Senator Collins: Well, the front's not supposed to fall off for a start.

Interviewer: And what other things?

Senator Collins: Well, there are regulations governing the materials they can be made of.

Interviewer: What materials?

Senator Collins: Well, cardboard's out.

Interviewer: And?

Senator Collins: No cardboard derivatives.

Interviewer: Like paper?

Senator Collins: No paper. No string. No sellotape.

Interviewer: Rubber?

Senator Collins: No, rubber's out. Umm, they've got to have a steering wheel. There's a minimum crew requirement.

Interviewer: What's the minimum crew?

Senator Collins: Oh, one I suppose.

Interviewer: So the allegations that they're just designed to carry as much oil as possible no matter the consequences, I mean that's ludicrous isn't it?

Senator Collins: Absolutely ludicrous, these are very very strong vessels.

Interviewer: So what happened in this case?

Senator Collins: Well, the front fell off in this case by all means, but it's very unusual.

Interviewer: But Senator Collins, why did the front fall off?

Senator Collins: Well a wave hit it.

Interviewer: A wave hit it?

Senator Collins: A wave hit the ship.

Interviewer: Is that unusual?

Senator Collins: Oh yeah. At sea? Chance in a million!

Interviewer: So what do you do to protect the environment in cases like this?

Senator Collins: Well the ship was towed outside the environment.

Interviewer: Into another environment?

Senator Collins: No, no, it's been towed beyond the environment. It's not in the environment.

Interviewer: No but from one environment to another environment.

Senator Collins: No it's beyond the environment. It's not in an environment. It's been towed beyond the environment.

Interviewer: But it must be somewhere... Well what's out there?

Senator Collins: Nothing's out there!

Interviewer: Well there must be something out there.

Senator Collins: There is nothing out there - all there is is sea, and birds, and fish.

Interviewer: And?

Senator Collins: And 20,000 tons of crude oil.

Interviewer: And what else?

Senator Collins: And fire.

Interviewer: And anything else?

Senator Collins: And the part of the ship that the front fell off. But there's nothing else out there.

Interviewer: Senator Collins, thanks for joining us.

Senator Collins: It's a complete void.

Interviewer: Yeah, we're out of time.

Senator Collins: The environment's perfectly safe. We're out of time?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Senator Collins: Can you book me a cab?

Interviewer: But didn't you come in a commonwealth car?

Senator Collins: Yes I did but...

Interviewer: What happened?

Senator Collins: Well, the front fell off.

