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Transcript  
2CC BREAKFAST WITH MARK PARTON  
Wednesday, 3 February 2010

E&OE

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*Subjects: The Opposition's Climate Change policy*

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**PARTON:** Craig Emerson, one of the genuine parliamentary brawlers, I think of the Government. I love to see him in action.

He's the Minister for Competition Policy, Consumer Affairs and Small Business and he's fired up for a big political year ahead, and he joins us on the line right now.

G'day, Craig.

**EMERSON:** G'day, Mark.

**PARTON:** It's already been interesting after one day, hasn't it? It's great theatre [laughs].

What's it like down in the bear pit?

**EMERSON:** Oh well, there was a long debate and I caught much of the thoughts of your previous caller, but the debate really was about climate change. I think in the...

**PARTON:** But it's not really a debate, is it?

**EMERSON:** Sure is.

**PARTON:** But there are so many constraints to it in the House.

**EMERSON:** I don't think Tony Abbott felt that he was holding back. I doubt that Kevin Rudd or Wayne Swan, Julia Gillard or anyone else felt that they were holding back.

What happened is that Tony Abbott moved a motion to enable a debate to occur for half an hour, I think, each side. That started about quarter to three, finished at half past eight last night. So it

was a forum; anyone who was interested in the arguments on both sides of politics would leave that debate understanding the position of two parties.

Of course we don't agree with Tony Abbott, we think that this is a climate change con job and it always was going to be once he described climate change as crap.

**PARTON:** Mmm. I bet - we were talking earlier about the fact that if - I bet if he could march back and erase those words...

**EMERSON:** [Laughs]

**PARTON:** ...he would.

**EMERSON:** Yes, but he was asked about it last night on The 7.30 Report...

**PARTON:** And he still deflected then. He can't...

**EMERSON:** Yeah, he said, oh well, I was just being candid, or someth....

**PARTON:** Yeah.

**EMERSON:** Well, I think you do need to be candid with the Australian people and Tony Abbott's views are well-known. It's not the first occasion on which he's had a position on climate change and on the passage of the ETS.

He's had many, many positions which made Malcolm Turnbull pretty giddy, I think, trying to work out where Tony was. But it turned out that Tony was right behind him with a knife in his back. So [laughs]...

**PARTON:** Now, your esteemed leader's - in fact it wasn't Kevin, it was Anthony Albanese, suggesting that there is - I can't remember the exact word that he used - but a lot, a lot of Liberals who are going to cross the floor on the ETS. Is there really?

I mean [laughs] - like, I worry and wonder about what it is that Malcolm's trying to achieve.

**EMERSON:** Well, whatever you say about Malcolm, he's been very consistent on his support for an emissions trading scheme. And one of the reasons for that, Mark, is that he supported it when the Coalition was in government. He supported the development of it by John Howard who supported emissions trading scheme.

And what Malcolm Turnbull is saying is, I have to be true to myself and I will cross the floor in support of an emissions trading scheme.

There's a couple of Liberal senators who haven't ruled out crossing the floor. But we won't know until we know, 'til the vote's actually taken. But the fact is, you know, the Coalition has a very, very deceptive policy on climate change. And that is, Tony Abbott reckons that it's crap. He put together a policy that is meant to basically delude the Australian people into believing that he's got something rather than nothing. But they'll

understand that this is just an unfunded policy that has no cap on emissions and no requirement on the polluters to pay.

Now your listeners would understand the polluters pay principle. Now Tony Abbott doesn't believe the polluters should pay. He believes the taxpayer should pay. And if - and I know this is a bit of a long answer but if I could make this point.

**PARTON:** Yes.

**EMERSON:** Last night on Lateline when Barnaby Joyce, the Shadow Finance Minister was asked how are you going to fund it, he said, oh, we want to see the Henry tax review. In other words...

**PARTON:** Yes.

**EMERSON:** He's saying it will be funded by higher taxes. Over the weekend Tony Abbott ruled out higher taxes, yet another split, the Opposition leader saying it won't be higher taxes, Barnaby Joyce saying it will be higher taxes and he'll be at the National Press Club today and he'll be able to clarify and hopefully, for the Coalition, clean up the mess that he's created.

**PARTON:** But okay, the big question out of that is when are we actually going to get to see the Henry tax review? Because you've had it since December.

**EMERSON:** Yes, and government ministers are working through that.

**PARTON:** [Laughs]

**EMERSON:** It is a very large document

**PARTON:** All right.

**EMERSON:** And the point is that it is a blueprint prepared by an independent review team, it's an independent report. Obviously if you're looking at just about the entire tax system it is complex but the point of Barnaby saying, look, we want to have a look at that, is he is indicating very clearly that they will fund their \$10 billion climate change con job...

**PARTON:** Out of new taxes.

**EMERSON:** ... through increased taxes which Tony Abbott tried to rule out. And who's being honest here, Tony Abbott or Barnaby Joyce? I reckon it's Barnaby Joyce.

**PARTON:** All right. Let's got to the other system and that's the one that's been put forward by your party and the suggestion is that it's going to increase the cost of living by 1.1 per cent and I think, to quote Tony Abbott, that that's absolute crap because it's just going to be an endless cycle of pay or price rises and price increases because of the increases in costs.

**EMERSON:** The fact is, under our policy it's the polluters who pay. There will be, according to Treasury, a small impact on the cost of living, namely 1.1 per cent but the big difference between our policy

and the Coalition's policy is Tony Abbott doesn't want the polluters to pay and we think the polluters should pay.

**PARTON:** I've noticed a - I don't know, a repositioning from Rudd Government ministers on the way that you talk about the ETS in that, I don't know, there's a perception apparently that it has to be simplified which I think is long overdue. Is that - is that the sort of - the advice that you've been given, dumb this down and make damned sure that everyone understands what it is?

**EMERSON:** I think I've been pretty consistent on this, Mark, that the ETS is firstly the putting of a limit or a cap on emissions then obliging the polluters to pay and, to the extent that there is any impact on the cost of living, compensating lower and middle income households for that.

So it's pretty simple as a concept. The Coalition's, on the other hand, is an unfunded \$10 billion policy designed to address what Tony Abbott describes as crap and now we've got this split between Barnaby Joyce and Tony Abbott as to how it's going to be funded.

**PARTON:** Does Tony Abbott scare you?

**EMERSON:** Not at all. I've known Tony for a long time. I played rugby union with him in the parliamentary rugby union team, so we've been on the same side from time to time but most often we find each other on the opposite side.

**PARTON:** We look forward to further debate today. Thank you so much for your time this morning.

**EMERSON:** Okay, thanks a lot, Mark.

**PARTON:** Dr Craig Emerson, the Minister for Competition Policy, Consumer Affairs and Small Business.

**ENDS**