



THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP
MINISTER FOR TRADE

Transcript
ABC News with Marius Benson
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E&OE

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Federal Parliament resumes this afternoon. It's the first sitting of the year which will see Labor battling to drive legislation on issues like carbon price and the National Broadband Network in a Parliament where they are in a minority in both houses. For a government view on the Parliamentary battle ahead this year, Marius Benson has spoken to the Trade Minister Craig Emerson.

BENSON: Craig Emerson, there will be a subdued tone in Parliament today with condolence motions, but tomorrow it will be on again for the Opposition and the Government with the Government's flood levy at the top of the list of actions to be undertaken.

EMERSON: I think there will be a subdued tone all week given the natural disasters we have had and the further disasters that have occurred in WA. But there will be a debate about the flood levy. Tony Abbott said two weeks ago that it's easy to find savings and as such this flood levy would not be needed. Well, they were still squabbling about it in Shadow Cabinet last night. There was a donnybrook about where they were going to find these savings for the flood levy. Bear in mind that Mr Abbott's already \$11 billion in the red because of the black hole which was discovered by the Departments of Finance and Treasury just after the election.

BENSON: Now the Prime Minister was briefing Cabinet yesterday and one of the points she made was that she vowed to pursue

work, not welfareism. Is that a surprising list of priorities for a Labor Prime Minister?

EMERSON: Julia Gillard has said all along in Opposition and as Deputy Prime Minister and as Prime Minister that she wants to afford the opportunity of the dignity of work for all Australians and that's what we are doing. We want to remove impediments to people, either rejoining the workforce or increasing their hours of work. This is exactly what Labor Governments have done going back to the years of Bob Hawke and Paul Keating. The whole issue of moving off welfare into work are all core Labor business and that is what Julia Gillard is keen to do; we want to make sure that every Australian has the opportunity of the dignity of work.

BENSON: The Labor Government has appointed John Fahey, a former Liberal Minister and a former Liberal NSW Premier, to oversee the spending on the flood recovery programs. The Opposition has portrayed that as an admission that Labor can't do it right and the public has no faith in Labor with money.

EMERSON: Oh well, of course people expect value for money from their taxpayers' dollars. That's what we will be providing. And I notice Mr Abbott continues to criticise the Building the Education Revolution, yet his own MPs in the holiday break were out there opening these buildings, opening the schools' Science Centres and Learning Centres. So at the local level, the MPs know they are value for money. But if Tony Abbott had any guts he would instruct his Liberal MPs not to attend these ceremonies. He's not doing that, because he is two-faced. In Canberra they criticise the Building the Education Revolution and in their local electorates they go and celebrate it.

BENSON: Craig Emerson, thanks very much

EMERSON: Thanks

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