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Transcript
2CC BREAKFAST WITH MARK PARTON
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E&OE

Subjects: The Opposition's climate change policy; Tony Abbott.

PARTON: Political watchers are in absolute ecstasy. Those of us that are entertained by the theatre that is Parliament and an election year. The game's been reinvigorated by Tony Abbott the Opposition Leader. I think even those in government would be kind enough to say that that's the case. He has reinvigorated it. I can still remember chatting to Tony last year in the winter, telling him that I'd love to see him leading the party. And he is. Tony swept to the leadership by a solitary vote after a battle of conservative minds over climate change and emissions trading. Now, I hit the road yesterday and I spoke to a bunch of Canberrans randomly about: if this political year was a game of cricket, who's made the most runs early? Was it Tony, or was it Kevin? And you may be fascinated to hear some of the responses. I know Craig Emerson, who's listening now, maybe fascinated to hear. Have a listen to some of these.

PERSON 1: At the moment I'd have to say Tony Abbott.

PARTON: So he's played the sort of shots you want to see?

PERSON 1: He's just a more real person, yeah.

PERSON 2: Well I think Kevin Rudd's making him at a slower rate, so Abbott's come in late but he's got a better strike rate.

PARTON: All right, so the question's gonna be, do you want to see someone who's playing shots or do you want to see someone who's more dependable and build a bigger innings? [Laughs]

PERSON 1: That's a good question. I suppose we should see how Abbott goes with it because he's only just sort of started. But he's made a better start than his predecessors.

PARTON: What do you reckon, who's made the most runs early?

PERSON 3: I'm in agreement. I think it's Abbott.

PARTON: So you think it's a tough call?

PERSON 3: It is, it's very tough.

PARTON: So at this stage you think maybe they're on level pegging early?

PERSON 3: No I think maybe Tony Abbott might be a little bit behind, yeah, yeah.

PARTON: What about you, who do you reckon's made the most runs early?

PERSON 4: Oh Kevin Rudd I think.

PARTON: There you go, there's a sample of some of the comments yesterday. We've got Dr Craig Emerson, Minister for Small Business, Competition Policy and Consumer Affairs on the line. G'day Craig.

EMERSON: G'day Mark.

PARTON: Uh, you find those interesting?

EMERSON: Oh yeah I think we're accumulating runs solidly. You know, building an innings and I hope Tony Abbott doesn't for his sake turn out like Chris Gayle, you know...

PARTON: [Laughs]

EMERSON: ...a lot of talk and. I think he got a couple the other day and none last night. But I think that is the contrast, and that is we've been accumulating runs over the period - two years we've been in government. Not a long period. But you know, going through the deepest global recession since the Great Depression and working with business, mainly small businesses but also larger business, working Australians and getting ourselves through that, avoiding a recession and, created 112 000 jobs in the last year. Now it's not that the government alone has created those

jobs, business creates jobs. But you know, that's an accumulation of runs on the board.

PARTON: So you're standing proudly behind that record, but surely the emergence of...

EMERSON: Well you've got to keep scoring.

PARTON: [Laughs] Surely the emergence of Tony Abbott as leader must've meant that your game plan has changed in terms of selling that record to the general public.

EMERSON: Well I think it's more than selling a record to be frank, Mark. I don't think you can simply say 'Gee, we got a lot of runs in the first two years, and that's good enough'. We've got to keep performing and we're doing that in a planned and steady way. Now, Tony's team has come on, they're sort of, a bit flashy, you know they flash outside off stump. You know, occasionally a ball goes through the slips and gets to the boundary, Barnaby's doing a lot of those.

PARTON: I think he's Chris Gayle.

EMERSON: Yeah he's sort of slashing at every delivery.

PARTON: [Laughs]

EMERSON: And Joe Hockey caught him in the slips today. Joe was on our side and he said to Barnaby, 'Listen mate, you know, you can't keep running around saying that the Commonwealth's going to default on its debt', you know this is pretty spectacular stuff and...

PARTON: Yeah, it is and I think that even those staunch supporters or many staunch supporters of Barnaby Joyce are sort of saying hey, listen, um, we're going to have to think a little bit more before engaging the mouth.

EMERSON: Yeah well that's right. And to maintain that cricket analogy, Barnaby is slashing at everything, and he might get a streaky few runs on the board but Australia actually deserves better than that sort of approach.

PARTON: Craig, it's interesting because you're sitting here saying you know, talking up the record of this government. It's my perception that most members of the public are not all that happy with the record of this government. That there were, is a hell of a lot of talk and a lot of promises made and that perhaps we're heading in the right direction on a number of things but that not much has actually been achieved.

EMERSON: Well I think people give the government a lot of credit for the most important issue in their minds which is the management of the economy.

PARTON: Yep...

EMERSON: ...And they'd say "they've done a good job over those two years, we want them now to manage the recovery", and I will use one more time, the phrase 'we're not out of the woods yet' simply because I think that is the view of small businesses in particular. They were terrified about this global recession and while the Australian public generally probably feel their jobs are more secure than they were a year ago there's still a lot of them have their hours cut back by business which was a way of avoiding unemployment, better to have your hours cut back than to lose your job altogether. So we've got to manage this period now and we are doing that through responsibly maintaining the stimulus for a time and we've got again, Joe Hockey and Tony Abbott saying "well all that's school building stuff should stop." Now, that would put out of work thousands of tradies and small businesses in this country and would be irresponsible to do so.

PARTON: Tony Abbott has put on the table a fascinating suggestion providing six months paid leave for new parents and I guess the question that hasn't been answered on this is 'where the money's going to come from?'

EMERSON: Exactly. Another example of Phony Tony's Funny Money scheme where he comes up with these grand plans, Tony, make it twelve months, look make it two years? If you don't have to fund it talk's cheap and that's what he's doing, he's just coming up with these ideas then we say to him on this very important issue of managing the economy "where are you going to get the money" and in 'Joh speak' he basically says "don't you worry about that, you people down there you don't know how to count, it'll be okay". So we've got a pretty whacky team with their whacko economics. What they've got to do is the hard work, and it's come up with these schemes like their \$10 billion climate change con job and Barnaby Joyce was asked in Canberra at the Press Club about where you're going to get the money for this and he said "Oh we'll we've had the Henry Tax Review". Now what he's saying is and he said "that's where we'll get the whole thing". In other words, increased taxes or new taxes to fund \$10 billion climate change con job that wouldn't even be effective in reducing emissions and then within days Tony Abbott leaks a six month paid parental leave floating the idea of possibility in his book *Battlelines* of small businesses paying for that?

PARTON: We do need more detail. Craig I've seen you on the football field so I know that you don't lack courage.

EMERSON: We had a game this morning. It's time for true confessions. We got beaten 9-3 and we had Gary Ella on our side. But it was a touch footy game. The real game is on the 21st, I think, of February, the Sunday before we resume Parliament so if you see me hobbling up to the dispatch box at Question Time you know I got smashed by the New South Wales lawyers in the game we're playing against them.

PARTON: Well what I was going to ask with courage, is are you courageous enough, I've got Dell standing by on the other line are you courageous enough for me to put her to air because I think she's got a question for you.

EMERSON: Yeah of course.

PARTON: All right now hang on a second, how do I do this? I go with that button there, and then that one, and then that one. Hello Dell?

DELL: Hello, how are you?

PARTON: Not too bad, I've got Craig Emerson on the other line.

DELL: Oh have you really?

PARTON: Yes.

EMERSON: Hello Dell.

DELL: Mr Emerson, I think you've forgotten a few things. Before the previous election every time Mr Rudd was asked 'where the money was coming from' he said "you'll find out before the election". So please let's remember our short term memory and another thing I'd like to say is whilst I'm not an apologist for Barnaby Joyce I distinctly remember an interview with Lindsay Tanner when Mr Rudd was giving away his money hand over fist. I can't remember whether it was on Lateline or PM but Mr Tanner said and I quote "I lie awake at night wondering how we're going to pay the money back."

EMERSON: Well let me explain...

DELL: I can't hear you I'm sorry...

PARTON: Well Dell what I might do is I might just get you to go and listen to the radio for the response and I'll just...

DELL: ...but I assure you that interview is available somewhere. But it's on the ABC, there's no chance of it coming to light.

PARTON: Thanks Dell.

DELL: Thank you.

EMERSON: Okay I can respond to Dell in these terms. Before the last election we did explain where the money was coming from under the Charter of Budget Honesty and we put forward our new policy proposals and we put forward the funding sources of those. So that information was publicly available under what's called the Charter of Budget Honesty and both sides are meant to do that. In relation to the period we've just been through, as I said a little earlier, the deepest global recession since the Great Depression. There is one view that we should have done nothing, we should have let the market take its course. That would have resulted by Treasury estimates in 200,000 working Australians losing their jobs. The International Monetary Fund, the OECD and the other major global institutions have actually pointed to the Australian Government's response to the economic downturn as arguably the best in the world and we still have at the end of that preserved Australia's triple A rating, that is our triple A rating with the ratings agencies. So I think most people would say that the Government has managed this crisis pretty well. But Dell is entitled to her point of view and I fully respect it.

PARTON: That's what talk radio is all about. Thanks very much for your time this morning.

EMERSON: Okay, thanks a lot Mark.

PARTON: Dr Craig Emerson from the Government's front bench.

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