MEDIA RELEASE

DR CRAIG EMERSON

Minister for Trade

14 February 2011

Leader of The Nationals, Warren Truss, should stick to stuffing up in his own shadow infrastructure and transport portfolio instead of stumbling into Julie Bishop's trade responsibilities and stuffing that up too, Trade Minister Dr Craig Emerson said today.

Responding to comments from Mr Truss on trade talks between Japan and Australia, Dr Emerson said he was "not surprised" to see Mr Truss working from Opposition Leader Tony Abbott's "play book on mindlessly opposing everything Labor does".

"Just as Mr Abbott's favourite word in the world is 'no', Mr Truss is already setting himself up to oppose any accord reached by Australia in its negotiations towards a free trade deal with Japan," Dr Emerson said.

"He was too lazy to read Friday's transcript of my joint media conference with Japan's Minister for Economy, Trade and Industry, Banri Kaieda, preferring instead to fabricate a silly claim that I wasn't seeking improved access to the Japanese market for Australia's rural producers."

Dr Emerson said Mr Truss's foray into trade policy was the latest demonstration of leadership instability in the Coalition.

"Just as Mr Truss seeks to undermine Shadow Trade Minister Julie Bishop, we are reminded that Shadow Finance Minister Andrew Robb covets the job of Joe Hockey, the Shadow Treasurer," Dr Emerson said.

He said Ms Bishop had been willing to engage constructively on trade policy issues, which set her apart from Mr Abbott and Mr Truss, who opposed up-front for the sake of opposing.

Dr Emerson urged Mr Truss to show some bipartisanship on trade policy, just as then-Opposition Leader John Howard had done during the Hawke-Keating reform era.

"When Bob Hawke opened Australia to global trade in the 1980s he won the support of Mr Howard, who saw it as sound economic policy," Dr Emerson said.

"Trade liberalisation was good for Australia then and remains so today."

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