



**THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP**  
MINISTER FOR TRADE

Transcript  
2CC Breakfast with Mark Parton  
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E&OE

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*Subjects: Asylum seeker funeral costs, Paul Howes*

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PARTON: We've got the Federal Trade Minister on the line. Craig, we've been taking emails and calls from people suggesting what it is that they never want to hear a politician say again.

EMERSON: Oh yeah. What's that?

PARTON: Well, Jim sent us an email and he says 'you know what I never want to hear again? I never want to hear Craig Emerson call you 'Parto' cos he's not your mate.'

EMERSON: Oh right. Well, I'm suitably chastened, Mr Parton.

PARTON: You haven't caught up with Ray Hadley, have you, since last week?

EMERSON: No, I haven't. He seems to be pretty well preoccupied with my hair colour. I thought I'd sent him a box of Just for Men, see what he thinks about that. But I can tell you this, it tastes bloody awful. Makes your teeth black. So you've just got to be very careful with that sort of stuff.

PARTON: Craig, I've got to touch on the thing that is dominating discussion on talk radio at the moment and that was raised by Scott Morrison among others in the Opposition – the criticisms of the money spent on these funerals of the asylum seekers. And I believe, despite what the likes of Alan Jones and Ray Hadley are saying, that Joe Hockey's probably got it right.

EMERSON: Yes, and I do acknowledge very much Joe Hockey's contribution to this. Scott Morrison unfortunately presents himself as a decent and compassionate guy, but underneath it all is just a hard right-winger. You know, these people are...

PARTON: I don't know that I agree with you on that, Craig. He's just got this wrong.

EMERSON: Well, he consistently comes out with statements like this, in my view. And he is just dancing to the tune of One Nation, that's the truth of the matter.

PARTON: And see it's not to say, Craig, that I agree with the money that's been spent here and the way that it's been spent, but I happen to think that it's un-Australian for us to drag this out and debate it publicly at a time when people are mourning a loss.

EMERSON: At a funeral! At a funeral! And I know what Scott Morrison is going to do, because you just have to check out the emails that are distributed by One Nation ahead of him making the statement. Apparently he was the one who recommended that, with the aid budget, that we either cut or defer aid to these Islamic schools in Indonesia – which actually was a John Howard program and it was to moderate Islam, not to promote radical Islam – but One Nation was into that like a big, brown, hungry dog, and so was Scott Morrison. One Nation was into this issue of paying the fares of people to farewell their relatives, their sons, their daughters, their fathers and – right on cue – Scott Morrison, dancing to the tune of One Nation, is into it, too. So, I don't agree with you that he's a decent, compassionate guy. He likes to present himself that way.

PARTON: I wouldn't expect you to.

EMERSON: Oh well, I'll say this about Joe Hockey. He is a decent, compassionate guy. And Joe Hockey did the right thing on this matter. And I think that it's true that the Coalition rose above politics at the time of the tragedy – and I thank them for that. But when they've seen some opportunity here to maybe harvest a few votes from the far-right – yes, there's Scott Morrison, happy to do so. I think it's a disgrace.

PARTON: I've got to, before I let you go, and I know it's a question without notice, but such is the way it works here. The Australian have gone with a big story this morning – well, they see it as a big story – regarding Paul Howes, the prominent union leader, who's re-opened this feud with mining giant Rio Tinto and launched a tirade against the company's management and declared a major push to increase union membership across the resources sector. Do you think that there will be some businessmen who are panicking about that this morning?

EMERSON: Oh I doubt it. I mean, everyone will have to operate under the law – that is, the Fair Work Act – and that law has proven to be very balanced in terms of rights of union membership, freedom of association and all of that. But Paul, you know, has made some very colourful statements. They're not the sort of statements that I would have made personally. But, on the other hand, I can assure you that Rio Tinto and the other major mining companies are pretty tough and robust people. I'm sure that they won't be, you know, weeping into their Weeties as a result of

these sorts of statements. It's really the policy that matters, and the policy is one that is very well-balanced.

PARTON: Can you see a future for Paul in the party, when he gives the whole union game away, Craig?

EMERSON: Maybe as a lofty orator, perhaps? Look, it's a particular type of language and, you know, Paul likes to use this language. I'm more, I suppose, in 'Bob Hawke mode' of trying to achieve progress through agreement where possible and every now and again you are going to have arguments, but...

PARTON: Bob never put colour in his hair, did he?

EMERSON: No, no! Not that I know of.

PARTON: I'm not saying anything, I'm just asking!

EMERSON: Not that I know of.

PARTON: Craig, I'm going to get out of your face, but thanks for coming on again this morning, I appreciate it.

EMERSON: Thank you, Mr Parton. I appreciate it.