



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

Transcript  
2CC Breakfast with Mark Parton  
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*Subjects: Christchurch earthquake, Libya.*

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- PARTON: Now, let's see what strife we can get into, myself and Dr Craig Emerson, the Federal Minister for Trade. My word, we got in it last week. G'day Craig, how are you going?
- EMERSON: Good morning Parto. Can I call you Parto again?
- PARTON: Oh, I don't know. Let's, for starters, focus on what's going on over the Tasman. Difficult to come to terms with the devastation in Christchurch, and obviously, it goes without saying that everyone in Australia sends regards and thoughts and whatever we can over there.
- EMERSON: Yeah, they are our brothers and sisters over there in New Zealand. This is a much more severe tragedy than occurred last year. There's obviously been loss of life, estimated at 65 at this stage, but with the very high likelihood of it going much, or considerably, higher than that. People are still trapped in buildings. We have sent urban search and rescue staff from Australia to New Zealand: 74 from NSW and 74 from Queensland. They are absolutely expert at doing the work that is required over there.
- PARTON: Craig, I wanted to move on from New Zealand and talk about what's going on in the Middle East, and in particular, the effect it's going to have on us here in Australia. Muammar Gaddafi is quite clearly a mad man and his address to state television overnight was extraordinary. He, it, certainly suggests that

things are going to get much, much worse in Libya before they get better. Where do we stand when it comes to Libya?

EMERSON: Well, we are absolutely, totally opposed and appalled at what Gaddafi is on about. In fact, Foreign Minister, Kevin Rudd, has just this moment pointed to the creation of the International Criminal Court that came out of massacres in Rwanda. These sorts of statements and actions would certainly attract the attention of the International Criminal Court because it deals with regimes that kill their own people. So I don't think that he can imagine that he would escape with impunity. This is terrible what is going on over there and we support the people.

PARTON: Do we have a direct trade relationship with Libya?

EMERSON: It's not very big. I don't really think in these circumstances that commercial considerations loom large in this. It's the human tragedy of, apparently, the Gaddafi regime there killing its own people with live rounds and reports of using aircraft to, military aircraft, to do the killing.

PARTON: It's unbelievable.

EMERSON: Appalling.

PARTON: Do we need to ask questions? Look, he's been in power for such a long time . . . .

EMERSON: 42 years.

PARTON: And various regimes have tolerated him in power because it suited them commercially and it was easier to just roll with the flow. Do we need to question that approach from so many countries along the way?

EMERSON: I think that the United Nations can always do more in this area. But you can't go attacking - and I don't think you're suggesting this, Mark - attacking countries because of the nature of their regimes.

PARTON: It's a fascinating one, isn't it?

EMERSON: Jimmy Carter, when he was President, tried to set up a human rights watch, or record, of countries and basically said the US wouldn't deal with countries that violated human rights. The problem was the list was growing longer by the day. We've got our democracy here in Australia, and while Labor and Liberal may go at it hammer and tongs in the chamber of the Parliament, I think we should be proud of our incredibly robust

and peaceful democracy here when you see what happens in those countries where there is no democracy at all.

PARTON: What are the diplomatic relations between Libya and Australia?

EMERSON: We do have a diplomatic presence in Libya, and they here. You probably saw reports of their Ambassador, or statements attributed to him, saying that he's disassociating himself from the regime in Libya. That happened yesterday. That's not been officially confirmed, in terms of his status, but it's just further evidence that the people are saying 'We will not tolerate this'. This is the Libyan people saying, 'We will not tolerate this sort of action against our people by a brutal regime'.

PARTON: Of course, one of the difficulties of this situation is that it's pretty hard to confirm anything, with no journalists on the ground and the flow of information, basically most of it coming through social media.

EMERSON: That's absolutely right.

PARTON: Al Jazeera [is] reporting of more clashes in Tripoli as we speak. And how's this report about the Interior Minister, whose name now eludes me, the Interior Minister announced that he's retiring, saying that he doesn't want any part of this. And according to reports, Gaddafi's men came to shoot him.

EMERSON: I haven't heard that.

PARTON: He had to scramble out of the building Bourne-style, and luckily survived. But, it's difficult to comprehend.

EMERSON: It is. And these people's movements are rising up, not throughout the Middle East, but obviously in a number of countries. It's occurring in, we've already spoken about recently, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Bahrain, and so it goes on. And so, a lot of these regimes were put in place 40 to 60 years ago in the post-colonial era, and the people have basically had a gut-full in a number of them. I think, when it comes down to it, Parto - I don't know if we've discussed this earlier, but - when young people have no prospects, no prospects of rewarding work and they are just told this is the best they can aspire to, well they don't see the funny side of that and in the end they rise up.

You know the original catalyst for what happened in Tunisia was a bloke who had a fruit stall on the side of the road, and he had to bribe the police every time to keep his stall open. One time he couldn't afford it and he went to the police station because they closed him down and they wouldn't talk to him and he wanted to pay them, and so he doused himself in petrol.

PARTON: Yes, he thought enough was enough. Thanks for your time, as always.

EMERSON OK, thanks Parto.