



THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP
MINISTER FOR TRADE

Transcript
2GB with Ben Fordham

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E&OE

Subjects: Carbon price, heated exchange between Craig Emerson and Peter Dutton

BEN FORDHAM:

There was a decent slanging match on live TV today over the carbon tax. In one corner, Labor's Craig Emerson, in the other Liberal Peter Dutton, and in the middle political correspondent Kieran Gilbert from Sky News.

[excerpts from AM Agenda programme of that day]

GILBERT:

...why would the Prime Minister say on the eve of the election that there won't be a carbon tax and contradict most other statements that she's made? It just seems the two statements are contradictory.

EMERSON:

Because whatever, whatever it is, it will be described as a carbon tax by people. Okay, we accept that. Whether it was a floating price,

a fixed price, it will be described as a carbon tax. It is not...

GILBERT:

So she was wrong to say there wasn't going to be a carbon tax, and she knew it.

EMERSON:

...actually a carbon tax. It is not actually a carbon tax. It is putting a price on carbon, which is a fixed price permit that, after three to five years, becomes a floating price.

FORDHAM:

That's Labor's Craig Emerson saying it's not a tax, which is the complete opposite by the way of what Julia Gillard has admitted. Now listen to what happens next. It starts with Craig Emerson and listen out for Peter Dutton comparing Emerson to Colonel Gaddafi in Libya and Comical Ali in Iraq. You may remember Comical Ali was the bloke who claimed that it was all business as usual even as the tanks rolled in. Have a listen as thing heated up on Sky News.

GILBERT:

So she was wrong to say there wasn't going to be a carbon tax, and she knew it.

EMERSON:

It is not actually a carbon tax. It is not actually a carbon tax. It is putting a price on carbon, which is a fixed price permit that, after three to five years, becomes a floating price. However...

DUTTON:

Craig sounds like Colonel Gaddafi at the moment...

EMERSON:

...however...

DUTTON: *...saying that "everybody's in favour of me, nobody's rising up against me..."*

EMERSON: *...however...*

DUTTON: *I mean, it's like Comical Ali.*

EMERSON: *I'm sure we'll get to it.*

DUTTON: *Honestly, honestly, Craig. I mean, there's no credibility in what you're saying.*

EMERSON: *I think that's pretty offensive.*

DUTTON: *Well, you should take it, you should take it...*

EMERSON: *I would rather you not make comparisons with a killer in Iraq and me...*

DUTTON: *You're calling, you're calling, you're calling...*

EMERSON: *...all right? You might think that's flippant and funny. I think it's bloody disgraceful.*

DUTTON: *...black is white. You're saying black is white, you're saying black is white...*

EMERSON: *Do you understand that? I think that is bloody disgraceful.*

DUTTON: *The problem is, Craig...*

EMERSON: *And there is a line here, Peter...*

DUTTON: *...but you are, you are completely without credibility.*

EMERSON: *...across which you should not pass.*

DUTTON: *Completely and utterly without credibility, and you can't sit...*

EMERSON: *And you just passed it.*

DUTTON: *...you can't sit here and call black white. That's the problem with this debate and why Julia Gillard...*

EMERSON: *Yeah, and you can't sit here and call me Chemical Ali, pal.*

DUTTON: *...has absolutely...*

EMERSON: *Now, I'm telling you that was a disgraceful comment for you to make.*

DUTTON: *...has absolutely... Comical Ali...*

EMERSON: *Oh, that's much better, that's much better!*

DUTTON: *...if you remember the debate, he was the bloke who stood up and said, you know...*

EMERSON: *Yeah, sure.*

DUTTON: *...there's no forces invading.*

EMERSON: *Yeah, sure. Yeah, yeah, okay. Thanks...*

DUTTON: *This is exactly the weak defence that you're putting forward.*

CRAIG EMERSON: *...for that. This is the Liberal Party. Why don't you go back to your One Nation emails, Peter? Why don't you go back to your One Nation emails?*

DUTTON: *Don't, don't resort to your low base, your low-base nonsense, Craig.*

EMERSON: *[Laughs] Oh, right, right, yeah. Sure.*

DUTTON: *I mean, the Prime Minister of this country lied at the last election...*

EMERSON: *I've just explained, I've just explained...*

DUTTON: *...and you are defending the indefensible.*

EMERSON: *...it won't make any difference to you. I've just explained this is a fixed price permit; you will call it a carbon tax, other people will call it a carbon tax...*

DUTTON: *Julia Gillard called it a carbon tax.*

EMERSON: *...whether it floats or whether it doesn't float, you'll call it a carbon tax. It is not a surprise...*

GILBERT: *It's now time for the bell. I can't ring the bell...*

FORDHAM: *OK. Kieran Gilbert struggling through that. Craig Emerson on the line and Peter Dutton is on the line. Good afternoon to you gentleman.*

DUTTON: Giddy Ben, giddy Craig.

EMERSON: Yeah, giddy.

FORDHAM: Everything peaceful now?

EMERSON: Yeah, I think Kieran had a cup of tea and we had a bit of a break and resumed hostilities.

FORDHAM: [laughs] Craig Emerson, I understand that things got even hotter during the commercial break. Is that right?

EMERSON: No, that's not true actually. I don't know where you got that from but, no, it was very civil. I just believe that Peter crossed the line in comparing me with Gaddafi or Chemical Ali.

FORDHAM: Let me pick it up with Peter Dutton. Peter Dutton, was that a fair comparison?

DUTTON: Peter it was off the back of Craig saying that it's not actually a carbon tax, which you heard him say before...

FORDHAM: Was it a fair comparison?

DUTTON: Well, I think the comparison I was making was not to Chemical Ali, it was to Comical Ali and as you said before in your intro he's the bloke who's standing up saying, you know, that

FORDHAM: OK, but you also compared him with Colonel Gaddafi, who Amnesty International has listed at least 25 assassinations by him between 1980 and 1987. You know...really is Craig Emerson really Colonel Gaddafi?

DUTTON: Of course he's not, but he is carrying on with the same nonsense at the moment in terms of suggesting that they've got support, that the people are not against what the Government said, saying that Julia Gillard hadn't said that it wasn't a carbon tax. It doesn't have any credibility at all...that was the comparison that I was drawing. It was, you know....in..

FORDHAM: Would you like to apologise to him?

DUTTON: No, I don't have anything to apologise for. As I said, and I still believe very strongly, that Julia Gillard and Craig Emerson are completely without any substance on this issue. I think they have misled the public.

FORDHAM: OK, let me bring in Craig Emerson. No apology forthcoming Craig Emerson.

EMERSON: You certainly know when someone is losing the debate when they invoke these sorts of comparisons. Colonel Gaddafi by all accounts has been involved in the killing of his own people. Certainly Chemical Ali was responsible, with Saddam Hussein, for the gassing of tens of thousands of Kurds. And to have a debate in a civilised country like Australia around an issue such as climate change and then to invoke the images of two men who are alleged to have or found to have engaged in the murder of their citizens I think crossed the line.

FORDHAM: OK, so you don't think you're being a bit sensitive on this, Craig?

CRAIG: No, I think I am entitled to make the point that I think that these comparisons cross the line. We ought to, on behalf of the Australian people, have a sensible debate. There is obviously a profound difference between the Coalition and Labor on the issue of climate change and putting a price on carbon. Let the people decide but I think they are in a better position to decide if we can keep some of this extreme rhetoric out of it.

FORDHAM: Well let's kiss and make up right now.

DUTTON: Err, he's not a very attractive bloke..ahh..Ben..

EMERSON: I'm happy to move on. Always happy to move on.

FORDHAM: OK, Craig Emerson thankyou for coming on.

EMERSON: Thanks.

FORDHAM: Good on ya Craig Emerson. And Peter Dutton, thankyou....

DUTTON: Thanks mate..

FORDHAM: And stay out of trouble.

DUTTON:

Cheers

FORDHAM:

[laughs] I like that. These guys a political rivals and they've stirred each other up today, they've gone into battle today, but it's good that they can come on Sydney Live 2GB and bury the hatchet...a little bit...kind of...not really.....