



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

Transcript  
ABC 612 Mornings with Madonna King

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E&OE

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*Subjects: Kevin Rudd's other job, carbon pricing, National Broadband Network, post-traumatic stress disorder, the Oscars*

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MADONNA KING:

I want to know if you think Julia Gillard has a mandate to introduce this carbon tax - yes or no - because Labor is saying yes, and the Coalition is wanting a people's revolt over it. And that's one of the issues on the agenda, as we go Inside Canberra, along with the NBN, the condition our soldiers are returning in and MPs moonlighting in second jobs. The reason I ask that is who do you think this?

MALE VOICE:

Attention, riders. Please keep your hands and arms inside the boat at all times.

KING:

Let me do it one more time. Who do you think that might be?

MALE VOICE:

Attention, riders. Please keep your hands and arms inside the boat at all times.

KING: Dr Craig Emerson is the Trade Minister. Good morning.

CRAIG EMERSON: Hello Madonna.

KING: And Senator George Brandis, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Senate. Good morning to you too, Senator.

GEORGE BRANDIS: Good morning, Madonna. Morning, Craig.

EMERSON: And good morning to you, George.

KING: Who do you think that sounds like?

EMERSON: It sounded like Kevin Rudd.

BRANDIS: Kevin Rudd.

KING: Do you think he might be moonlighting as a second job?

EMERSON: I don't know.

KING: Our listeners so far have guessed Hugh Jackman, Bryan Brown, Warwick Capper, Geoffrey Rush, Hugh Jackman again and Kevin Rudd.

EMERSON: Sounds like the Ruddster to me.

KING: Do you think? - let me do it one more time.

MALE VOICE: Attention, riders. Please keep your hands and arms inside the boat at all times.

KING: I think you'd better talk to him today, hey?

BRANDIS: Well, I think we all know that Mr Rudd wants a second job. That is, the job he used to have, but...

KING: Well, I think this may be [indistinct]...

EMERSON: What's he actually saying? Keep your hands inside the glass? Is he in an aquarium or something?

KING: No. It's at a Gold Coast theme park, a rollercoaster. I'm on it with the children.

BRANDIS: He might be watching out for all those sharks in the [indistinct]...

KING: Well, it was a water ride. And I must say, when that came out...

BRANDIS: Was [indistinct] down there with the sharks?

KING: This person is saying, 'please keep your hands and your limbs inside the boat at all times'. And the first time it happened, everyone in the boat turned around and said: What's Kevin Rudd doing? And so I had to go back to the theme park on the weekend to tape it with my mobile phone, so that I could play it because everyone thinks it is. Just one more time. Just listen.

MALE VOICE: Attention, riders. Please keep your hands and arms inside the boat at all times.

KING: Now, you don't know. Many years ago, he may have recorded it. Do you think you should ask him?

EMERSON: Well, I will. I'll ring him. But the word "hands". He says that word; that's the giveaway. If it is indeed him. Maybe it's someone impersonating Kevin.

KING: Maybe it is someone impersonating. Well, Terry from Burpengary, you're our winner. You were the first person to say Kevin Rudd. Not that we think it is. Well, it certainly sounds like him. But we'll explore further and see [indistinct]...

BRANDIS: It'll do. We'll fit him up with it.

KING: We'll fit him up. And we'll send Terry out an ABC [indistinct]...

BRANDIS: Poor old Mr Rudd. He's been fitted up by the Labor Party with so many things.

EMERSON: George can't have a laugh about it.

BRANDIS: Well, I'd laugh. I think it's very funny.

EMERSON: [indistinct] politics.

BRANDIS: But you've blamed him for the leaking and you've blamed him for this and that. You've blamed him for nearly losing the [indistinct]...

EMERSON: [indistinct] and how many on your side, George?

KING: Well, I'm not blaming him for the rollercoaster ride. I'll just put that on the record.

EMERSON: And I think it's good advice that people keep their hands inside the boat at all times.

KING: Well, it certainly is.

Now, from rollercoasters to the carbon tax. Craig Emerson - and George Brandis, let Craig Emerson answer this - do you have a mandate to do this?

EMERSON: We certainly said, not only before the election, but right through the previous term and even before that, that we were intent on putting a price on carbon. That is what we're doing.

So no-one should be surprised that we are proceeding to put a price on carbon through initially a fixed-price permit and that that will then make a transition into a floating price under an emissions trading scheme, which three times we tried to get through the parliament in the last term.

KING: All right. Let me come back to that question, though. Do you believe that you have a mandate, given the election of the ALP Government, to do this?

EMERSON: Well, the truth is the election result was one where neither party won a majority in its own right, but one party was given the honour and privilege of governing. Having been given that honour and privilege of governing, we are implementing what we said we would, and that is putting a price on carbon through an emissions trading scheme initially with a fixed price on the permits.

KING: But didn't your Leader, Julia Gillard, say 'not while I am Leader', that we wouldn't be getting this?

EMERSON: What she said, she said no, she did not say there would be no price on carbon. What she said is that there would be no carbon tax. Now, whether the price is a fixed price or whether it's a floating price, as in the scheme first sought by John Howard, that old lefty, John Howard, and advocated by Malcolm Turnbull...

KING: Just answer my question, though.

EMERSON: Yeah, I am. I'm...whatever it was, whatever it is, Tony Abbott, and others, will say it's a tax. They'll say it's a tax.

KING: But you say - but a fixed price would equate to a tax, wouldn't it?

EMERSON: Well, a tax - again, there's no point I think running around the mulberry bush debating...

KING: Semantics?

EMERSON: It does act like a tax. It does act like a tax. But the revenue - usually, a tax, as we come to know it, is to raise revenue for use on other purposes. In this case, all of the revenue will be going in compensation to households and to support businesses making the transition to a low-carbon future.

KING: All right. If it acts like a tax, do you agree that it's a carbon tax?

EMERSON:

It is actually a fixed price permit. That's what it is. And that then becomes a floating price after three to five years in an emissions trading scheme. It is putting a price on carbon. And that's what we said, not only before the election. We tried three times before the election, to be defeated in the Senate by the Coalition.

KING:

All right. Can I let you give Senator George Brandis the time for a response here, too. But, George Brandis, isn't Labor there to govern, and that's simply what they are doing?

BRANDIS:

Well, a government is elected to keep its promises. And it's very revealing, Madonna, that when you asked Craig two or three times does the Government have a mandate, he declined to say yes.

And, of course, it doesn't have a mandate because Julia Gillard on 16 August, the day the Labor Party policy launch took place in Brisbane said, quote, "there will be no carbon tax under the Government I lead", unquote. She repeated that statement several times, so did Wayne Swan and others.

This was only five days before the election. We all remember last year's election. It was very exciting. It was a very tight finish. And this was not an offhand remark by Julia Gillard. This was a deliberate, considered commitment – "there will be no carbon tax under the Government I lead", quote, unquote.

Now, what Julia Gillard announced with Senator Bob Brown and the Greens last week was as she herself said effectively a tax. And she said I'm not going to play silly word games. I concede that it is effectively a tax.

So we've had a complete breach of faith. Five days before the election, in order to win the election, she promised there wouldn't be a carbon tax. Now that she is in hock to the Greens, she's been forced to abandon that commitment.

KING:

All right. You've had a say. But take away from any alleged breach of a promise before an election. Why don't you and your party support a carbon tax? What's wrong with it?

BRANDIS:

Because the Coalition are the low tax parties. We do not believe in imposing, that the solution to problems is imposing new taxes on people. This is, might I remind you, Madonna, the second new tax in two months.

In January, we had the flood tax. In February, we had the carbon tax. On top of that, we've got the mining tax. I mean, this is...this Government just had...it's in the DNA of the Labor Party this addiction to higher taxes.

KING:

Yes, but correct me if I'm wrong, but it was the Howard Government with the GST, with the Ansett levy, I think.

BRANDIS:

But the Howard Government was a Government that in seven consecutive budgets lowered personal income tax rates and also lowered company tax rates, so...

KING:

So your principal opposition to this carbon tax is not on environmental grounds, it's simply on tax grounds?

BRANDIS:

Our principle opposition is we don't think the way to deal with carbon emissions is by imposing a big, great big new tax on Australians that will see everybody's electricity bill rise by at least \$300 a year, will see

petrol go up by at least 6.5 cents per litre, which will see gas prices go up by least \$150 a year.

KING:

All right. We've done this - we've done this on the program, the likely effect from both sides.

But, Craig Emerson, why push this through now? Why do it now when other countries aren't doing it? And it seems that there is certainly a considerable amount of opposition to it?

EMERSON:

There is actually, believe it or not, a bipartisan commitment to reduce emissions by five per cent compared with 2000 levels by 2020.

Now, our system, an emissions trading system, that Malcolm Turnbull as Leader strongly supported, and still does, that John Howard as Leader advocated and announced before the 2000 election, is exactly what we are seeking to implement, but are thwarted. Now, the question is...

KING:

No, no. But my question was why do it. And, like, Ray has just called, and he's saying the same question. He says, 'hi, Madonna, can you just find out why we have to be the first country in the world to introduce a carbon tax'.

EMERSON:

Well, we're not. The European Union has, 10 states in the United States have and a number of other countries have. And both parties - the Coalition and Labor - have made a commitment to reduce emissions by five per cent...

BRANDIS:

We [indistinct]...

KING: Yeah, but it's the way you do it.

EMERSON: No, you have. You... there is bipartisan support on it.

BRANDIS: Yeah, that's right, no, I'm agreeing with you. We have made a commitment but not by taxing people.

EMERSON: Now the alternative approach Madonna is Mr Abbott's direct action plan which would cost taxpayers \$10.5 billion. And it's been revealed today that that would fall, fall way short of the Coalition's commitment to reduce emissions by five per cent by 2020, therefore requiring them to buy permits - and therefore costing taxpayers, wait for it, \$30 billion, \$30 billion if they are, were to keep their commitment which is a bipartisan commitment.

That's...

KING: All right, a very brief response George Brandis before I want to get on to the NBN. What do you say to that \$30 billion shortfall?

BRANDIS: Well that's not our view. And I don't know where that costing comes from.

EMERSON: Department of Climate Change.

BRANDIS: But - oh, well, from the Gillard Government.

EMERSON: The department.

BRANDIS: From the Gillard Government, yes, from the Gillard Government.

KING:

All right, well look, we'll let people decide that themselves. Several people calling in on that issue this morning. Paul from the Gold Coast: "Julia Gillard does not have a clear mandate to introduce an ETS after the last election". Leslie says 'if it acts like a tax and talks like a tax then it is a tax'. And Christian from Toowong: "Julia Gillard does not have a mandate to tax carbon emissions. Tony Abbott is right; there will be a people's revolt.

1300 222 612.

Either side on how you think on that issue - I would love to hear from you.

Gentlemen, let's just go on to the NBN briefly before another issue. It passed through the Lower House. Craig Emerson, what happens now?

EMERSON:

Needs to go through the Senate. We would need the support of the Independents and the Greens in order for that to happen, given that the Coalition including National Party, LNP Senators, are carrying through on that threat to do everything they can to block the roll out of the National Broadband Network.

KING:

All right. Is there also a...an inquiry, a parliamentary inquiry into it being headed by Independent MP Rob Oakeshott?

EMERSON:

I believe there is an inquiry and you know, we'll go through those processes, but legislation has passed through the House of Representatives, and the action will then turn to the Senate.

KING: So my question is more a procedural one - why have an inquiry headed by an independent if it's already on its way to be a law? Does that inquiry have the power to change it for example?

EMERSON: I can't actually directly answer that question because I don't have in front of me the terms of reference of the inquiry, but again I don't think there would be anyone who would say that Labor has sprung upon them the idea of a National Broadband Network...

KING: No-one's saying that...

EMERSON: That we don't have a mandate for doing that. We are going to do it.

KING: ... I was just asking..I.. yeah, I was just asking you where it's at at this stage from my listeners' viewpoint, and so when will it go through to the Senate? When will there be a vote?

EMERSON: I'm not sure about that. George may have some information on that.

BRANDIS: Well we've just...we're just discussing the Senate program this morning. This government seems to have run out of things to do because today we have all this kind of rats and mice legislation of statute law revision bills and unc... noncontroversial legislation. The government's legislative program for the Senate this week - after the flood levy legislation is dealt with - seems to have collapsed.

KING: So w...

EMERSON: I wouldn't say collapsed George, I'd say that the problem is the obstruction by the Coalition in the Senate [indistinct]...

BRANDIS: [Overtalking] No, you're not introducing any new substantive bills this week Craig. I mean it's, we are quite perplexed in the Opposition that the Government seems to have run out of things to do. At least I suppose that means it's not this week putting a new tax on people, so maybe that's good.

EMERSON: Well I think it would be a good idea for the flood levy to pass the Senate, George.

BRANDIS: Well you know we have a difference on that.

EMERSON: Your Coalition will seek to block it.

BRANDIS: We found enough savings in the budget to fully fund the Queensland recovery efforts, the... and the amount that the government is estimated it will cost, without putting a new tax on people.

EMERSON: You've already got an \$11 billion black hole that has not been filled. Now add to that \$30 billion...

BRANDIS: Well we know...

EMERSON: ... for your direct action carbon plan.

BRANDIS: Please don't quote figures at me Craig because we know that the ALP are the world champions at rubbery figures; I mean you're the ones who wasted billions and billions and billions of dollars on Pink Batts and school halls that people didn't want.

EMERSON: And as for your argument about how the Coalition's so wonderful at reducing taxes, the Coalition is the highest taxing government in Australia's history, all the way from 2002 to 2007.

[Audio: leaf blower]

KING: Do you remember that? That's the leaf blower that really annoyed Joe Hockey a few weeks ago.

Now I've got your attention, thank you gentlemen.

[Laughs]

I can move on from the NBN and let our listeners decide - no, I'm keeping that leaf blower close.

BRANDIS: I didn't get a question about the NBN.

KING: Now well I...

EMERSON: You certainly gave an answer.

BRANDIS: I wasn't asked about the NBN.

EMERSON: George doesn't need questions.

BRANDIS: I - no, I wasn't given the opportunity to address the issue.

EMERSON: Bring on the leaf blower.

KING:

Well, yes, I don't want either of you to have the opportunity this morning to address the NBN, we've done that several times. I just wanted to procedurally find out where it is so my listeners knew how to follow it. Let me come to another substantive issue - to Paula, the wife of an Australian soldier who has just returned with post-traumatic stress disorder.

You've heard what she has had to say.

What do you say to someone like that Craig Emerson?

EMERSON:

Well, obviously, it's terribly traumatic and it's just a reminder to everyone of the brutality of war, and I feel very, very sad for Paula and her husband and the three children. The department is supporting as best it can. I think that there is an issue or a question in relation to whether she can be made a carer, and you asked Defence personnel about that yesterday. There isn't as I understand provision for that.

But he will get all of the available support from the Defence forces that they can provide to him.

KING:

Do you think we are doing enough for our service personnel coming back, Craig Emerson? We were inundated with other stories yesterday of similar cases.

EMERSON:

Yeah. I think it's one of these issues Madonna where how do you find whether you're doing enough. Because there will still be, no matter how much is done, cases of post-traumatic stress disorder. Tragically, there will still be cases of suicide. It is true that the Defence force suicide rates are about 40 per cent lower than the civilian rate, but that doesn't...

KING: No, can I just...

EMERSON: ... really give a lot of comfort to those families where suicides have occurred.

KING: ... pick you up on that figure? Because it was raised yesterday but a listener then pointed out that is just suicide rates, or indeed post-traumatic stress disorder rates while a person is serving in the army.

If they are led out as medically unfit as many of them are, and then take their life, or then get that diagnosis, they are not considered in those numbers.

So we don't have true numbers collated.

EMERSON: I think that - yeah, I think that actually is fair comment because it sounds to me, though I wouldn't profess to be an expert - once someone leaves Defence, and the figures I've given you are for the Defence Forces, not for Veterans' Affairs, then that comment is probably reasonable.

KING: Yeah.

EMERSON: And tragically last year in the Defence Forces themselves, that is people who have not left, there were three suspected suicides. Sorry, that's this year. And there were seven last year.

So it is a terrible thing.

KING: Four of them in Queensland.

EMERSON: And it's a terrible reminder of the horror of war.

KING: Has this issue, George Brandis, been raised with the Opposition at all - the number of our young men coming back with post-traumatic stress disorder and the services being provided to them?

BRANDIS: Well, I know that Stuart Robert who is the Shadow Minister for Defence Personnel and himself was an officer in the Australian Army, is very, very concerned about this issue. And I've taken the liberty of referring this matter to Stuart Robert, the Shadow Minister, and also to Senator Michael Ronaldson, who is the Shadow Minister for Veterans' Affairs, and asked them to take an interest in it.

KING: Okay. So we're happy, we're able to follow up with either of them on this issue.

BRANDIS: Well, I'd ask them to take an interest in it. So no doubt they will. And it... in due course I'm sure you'll be able to speak to them.

KING: Okay, because sitting in this chair when you get the response we did yesterday of other people, and their plea - these are soldiers, and people who have now left the military - they're saying, 'please don't let this go'.

This is something that we should debate publicly. And if there is a problem with post-traumatic stress disorder or depression or suicide surely it's in the public interest for it to be debated, or at least known.

EMERSON: I agree with that. And I would encourage it Madonna.

KING: Okay.

BRANDIS: Well I think that's true. And I think it also reminds us that not all the injuries suffered on the battlefield are physical injuries.

KING: Yes.

BRANDIS: The psychological injuries can be just as devastating.

EMERSON: Could I tell you a very, very quick story?

KING: Sure.

EMERSON: When I was about 12 years of age in a little Catholic school in Baradine I've talked about before, we wrote to soldiers in Vietnam, Australian soldiers, as kind of pen pals. And I drew up this ... built up a friendship with a serving soldier in Vietnam. He came back. There was a terrible bust-up in his family. And he suicided.

And I never forgot that.

And it makes the point that George made - this young man survived the horror of the war and wasn't seriously injured and certainly wasn't killed, but he took his own life within months of coming back to Australia.

KING: Well, we will continue to follow up on that, and I perhaps feel a bit flippant asking this, but let's finish on a light note this morning. Presumably you both followed the Oscars. You're the spokesman for the Arts for the Coalition, George Brandis. I'm just wondering what frock you liked most?

BRANDIS: I thought the frock that Jacki Weaver was wearing was very elegant.

EMERSON: I'm going to get caught very flat-footed here. I didn't watch the Oscars. I saw news reports that they were very boring this year. I think four Australians received Oscars, but none of our front-line actors did.

KING: Now, and you've got to be honest with me George Brandis. Did you sit down and watch it? Did someone point out Jacki Weaver's dress, which I agree was very nice.

BRANDIS: No, I was..look, I had, it happened Aus... in the day time, yesterday, the day before yesterday, as you know, Australian time. And I had it - as I am the Shadow Arts Minister and the Australian Film Industry is within my area of responsibility on behalf of the Coalition - I did keep an eye on it out of the corner of one eye, and I flicked between the Oscars and the Senate. And I might have been one of the only people in Australia who was sort of flicking between the Oscars and the Senate.

EMERSON: And trying to tell the difference between the two.

BRANDIS: Yes.

KING: [Laughs] Well there's some pretty dramatic performances in both isn't there?

EMERSON: [Laughs] Melodramatic.

BRANDIS: I don't think there were any of the Senators as elegant as the people receiving the Oscars.

KING: All right, Senator George Brandis, Dr Craig Emerson - good to talk to you. And I look forward to doing it at the same time next week.

EMERSON: Thanks a lot Madonna.

BRANDIS: Thank you very much Madonna.

KING: That's Dr Craig Emerson, the Trade Minister in Julia Gillard's Government, and Senator George Brandis, the Deputy Opposition Leader in the Senate.

