



THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP
MINISTER FOR TRADE

Transcript
ABC News 24 with Michael Rowland
and Virginia Trioli

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Subjects: Karel de Gucht visit, Doha trade round, Japan disaster.

VIRGINIA TRIOLI: Now the EU's Trade Commissioner has used a visit to Australia this week to stress the need for action to salvage a global free trade agreement.

MICHAEL
ROWLAND:

Karel De Gucht met with the trade minister Craig Emerson in Sydney yesterday and for more, Dr Emerson joins us now from Sydney. Dr Emerson, good morning. We've been talking about sealing this so-called Doha Round of negotiations for years. What makes you think we're any closer now?

CRAIG
EMERSON:

Oh, it is crunch time and I think we'll know in the next few weeks as to whether this deal can be done in 2011 or not. If it isn't, that means it's been going for 10 years without a successful outcome. Next year, Michael, there are elections in key countries around the world, so that pretty much rules out 2012, and I think it would be very hopeful to think that all the countries would come back in 2013 and resume negotiations with the sort of vigour that would be needed to bring this round, to bring this conclusion in 2013 or beyond. My fear is that countries will lose interest and therefore the crunch time is right now and those discussions are going on in Geneva amongst major countries, the United States, China also India and Brazil. You saw yesterday Karel De Gucht, as you mentioned, is the EU Trade Commissioner. We're actually allies,

Australia is allied with the European Union in trying to bring this round to a successful conclusion this year.

ROWLAND: Now for viewers watching this, Dr Emerson, what are the practical benefits of this free trade round being sealed?

EMERSON: There are real big benefits for Australian farmers because some of your viewers will remember during the 1980s with the Farm Act in the United States and the Common Agricultural Policy in Europe, plus export subsidies, that this really corrupted markets for agriculture around the world with very detrimental effects on our farmers. If this deal goes through, there would actually be the elimination, the elimination of export subsidies on agriculture and very substantial caps put over the top of those agricultural support schemes in the United States and Europe. So there's a lot in it for Australian farmers. There'd also be improved access to markets in the form of reduced tariffs and quantitative restrictions. It's not just agriculture; it's manufacturing and our service economy, which accounts for 85 per cent of the jobs in Australia but about 22 per cent of our exports, and we're trying to get that up, too by opening up trade in services. So there's a lot at stake, not only for Australia, by the way, but for the poorest countries on earth.

ROWLAND: Now, if we could switch to Japan, Dr Emerson, your department, the Foreign Affairs and Trade Department, is urging Australians in Tokyo and certainly those eight regions up north to leave if they don't need to be there. Given we seem to be reporting the situation could be getting worse regarding the leaking of radioactive material, is the Department giving any thought to, or drawing up contingency plans, to evacuate embassy and AusTrade personnel from Toyko *holus-bolus*.

EMERSON: Well, at this stage, the commercial flights are both available and not full - and not full. So people who do want to leave and we are, you know ... that's true that there's a sense that people maybe should leave. Not just because of the issue of radiation, but there's been a lot of tremors in fact, up above 6 on the Richter scale. There's problems with infrastructure, electricity and so on. So putting them all together, there may be a number of people who do and choose to leave. They can actually get out on normal commercial flights at this stage. But as in other situations of course we will monitor this not only on a daily basis but on an hourly basis to make sure that we're providing all the necessary services. Our consular staff are at Narita airport 24 hours a day to make sure that Australians are safe.

ROWLAND: The European Union as well, we're reporting this morning, is starting to test all food imports from Japan for possible radiation. Surely that's prudent steps for Australia to follow as well.

EMERSON: We do that anyway, FSANZ it's called, to use the acronym. But the Australian-New Zealand food and safety standards setting organisation makes sure it does those sorts of tests. Of course we will do that and that's just normal procedure.

ROWLAND: Okay, Craig Emerson in Brisbane (sic), thank you very much for your time this morning.

EMERSON: Okay, thanks Michael.