



**THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP**  
MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS, INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS AND  
THE SERVICE ECONOMY  
MINISTER FOR COMPETITION POLICY AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS  
MINISTER ASSISTING THE MINISTER FOR FINANCE ON  
DEREGULATION

Transcript  
PRESS CONFERENCE  
Interviewees: Craig Emerson, Minister for Consumer Affairs  
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*Subjects: Tony Abbott's proposed \$11 billion paid parental leave scheme;  
Barnaby Joyce.*

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**EMERSON:** Today, a former adviser to Malcolm Turnbull has confirmed what everyone else knew - and that is Tony Abbott's paid parental leave scheme is nothing but a great big new tax on everything you buy. This adviser has belled the cat and that is that this \$11 billion new impost is an impost on corporate Australia which will then pass it on to consumers in the form of higher grocery prices, higher department store prices, higher petrol prices and higher bank fees.

Now remember, Tony Abbott said just one month before announcing his great big new tax on everything you buy that he would introduce no new taxes or any tax increases. Within one month he broke that promise. Imagine Tony Abbott going to the election, making a series of promises and then saying "trust me", when in fact, he's prepared to break a major promise and introduce a great big new tax on everything you buy, as confirmed today by Malcolm Turnbull's former adviser.

And the fact that Malcolm Turnbull's former adviser has spoken out exposes yet again the deep divisions in the Liberal Party; divisions that are now being played out about the future of Barnaby Joyce. We know that Barnaby Joyce is a risk to the

Australian economy and while ever Tony Abbott keeps Barnaby Joyce in that position, Tony Abbott too is a risk to the Australian economy – through his bad judgement in keeping Barnaby Joyce in that position.

A former Liberal Minister, Senator Ian MacDonald, has today called for Barnaby Joyce to be dumped from the Shadow Finance portfolio. Barnaby Joyce has been selling Australia down by asserting that we have a sovereign debt problem and risks of default, most recently comparing us with Greece when, in fact, Australia's public debt is less than one-twentieth of the size of Greece's public debt. This just shows that Barnaby Joyce is a big risk to the Australian economy and so too is Tony Abbott, through his great big new tax on everything you buy and through his decision to keep Barnaby Joyce in the very key shadow Finance portfolio.

Any questions?

**QUESTION:** Mr Emerson, why is it any of the Government's business who Tony Abbott puts on his front bench?

**EMERSON:** It's important because Tony Abbott and Barnaby Joyce are a risk to the Australian economy. Barnaby Joyce gets it wrong time and time again, confusing millions and billions and trillions. He can't even do simple arithmetic, yet he's prepared to get out and make public statements, dragging Australia's economic credentials through the mud internationally, by making completely false comparisons, for example, between Australia's government debt and Greece's government debt.

He's mumbled and fumbled recklessly and every time he recklessly makes these statements about Australia he is selling Australia down and creating a very big risk for Australia.

Tony Abbott is a risk to the Australian economy in his own right and that risk is only compounded by his declarations of support for Barnaby Joyce who is making, on an almost daily basis, incompetent and false statements that are very risky to the Australian economy.

**QUESTION:** Is this week the bad week for Tony Abbott that you guys needed?

**EMERSON:** Look, the Australian people will make their judgements about the performance of Tony Abbott. But in keeping Barnaby Joyce in this position he is upsetting a lot of Liberals who both on the record, and off the record, are urging him to move Barnaby Joyce out of the highly important, sensitive shadow Finance portfolio. Now Tony Abbott is saying he's doing a great job.

What? Doing a great job in talking the Australian economy down. In confusing millions and billions and trillions of dollars. He doesn't know what he's talking about, but he's quite happy to be reckless in talking the Australian economy down in the international arena. And Tony Abbott, what did he say about that? He's fully behind Barnaby Joyce and fully behind Barnaby Joyce in making completely reckless comparisons between Australia's strong financial position and the position of other countries around the world, such as Greece.

**QUESTION:** It's been suggested that Barnaby Joyce be given a job that would use, like, his skills. What do you think that job should be?

**EMERSON:** Well it's for Tony Abbott to make his decisions about what he's going to do with Barnaby Joyce. But while ever he keeps Barnaby Joyce in the Finance portfolio, he is signing up to a reckless shadow Finance Minister, a shadow Finance Minister who's prepared to talk Australia down just for their own opportunistic political gain.

Today Tony Abbott has backed in Barnaby Joyce. In backing in Barnaby Joyce, he's backing in a risk to the Australian economy posed by Barnaby Joyce and himself, Tony Abbott.

**QUESTION:** Isn't it to your benefit though that he stays there then?

**EMERSON:** Well, again, these are matters for the Liberal Party but I say this; on behalf of a good economic - sound economic policy in Australia, Tony Abbott is a risk to economic policy and the Australian economy and his friend and close supporter, Barnaby Joyce, is also a risk to the Australian economy.

The reason that Tony Abbott is keeping Barnaby Joyce where he is, is because he agrees with these reckless, inaccurate and irresponsible statements by Barnaby Joyce. Tony Abbott would rather see Australia fail, just so long as he can increase his chances of becoming the Prime Minister of Australia. This is reckless economic statements by Barnaby Joyce being backed in by Tony Abbott. And if Tony Abbott did want to do the right thing by the Australian economy he would move Barnaby Joyce out of the Shadow Finance portfolio.

**QUESTION:** Thanks very much.

**EMERSON:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**ENDS**