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Transcript  
2CC BREAKFAST WITH MARK PARTON  
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E&OE

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*Subjects: Gen 'Y' dole cuts, Health reforms, Dr Emerson's complexion.*

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**PARTON:** We're joined by Craig Emerson from the Government's front bench. G'day Craig.

**EMERSON:** G'day Mark.

**PARTON:** Tony Abbott. You must've looked at this whole cutting the dole for under-30's and said "This has got to be some sort of joke".

**EMERSON:** Another thought bubble I'm afraid. This is a discussion that he's apparently had behind closed doors. It has come out in the open with mining company executives. He said he is thinking about it and then today on radio they're saying it's not Coalition policy. We've been down this path before. Where Tony Abbott has a thought bubble and when scrutiny is placed on it he says "That's not really Coalition policy". Scott Morrison did it in relation to cutting visas for holiday backpackers and so on, which is really important in restaurants. Obviously they got on to him and said "What's going on here?" and he said "It's not Coalition policy". We're more than a third of the way into an election year and we're hearing pronouncement after pronouncement that it's not Coalition policy. How about we have a couple that are Coalition policy?

**PARTON:** All right. Let's move on from Tony and talk about your man. He's a very smart operator is the Prime Minister.

**EMERSON:** He's a very determined guy. I think that is really the bottom line. Kevin made the judgement, and obviously I agree with him, that we just couldn't delay this issue of fundamental reform of the health system any more.

**PARTON:** This is not a fundamental reform of the health system though. This is a fundamental reform of the funding of health. Because certainly what was being touted a couple of years ago by the Prime Minister hasn't happened. He hasn't taken over the health system has he?

**EMERSON:** The Commonwealth will be the dominant funder of the health system.

**PARTON:** Right, so it's a change to funding. Not much else is going to change.

**EMERSON:** That goes directly to this blame game issue Mark. If there are divided responsibilities, heavily divided and uncertain responsibilities as to who's funding what, then things can fall between the cracks. But this reform that has been agreed will deliver an extra 2,500 aged care beds, 6,000 more doctors; a four hour cap on waiting times in emergency rooms; better coordination of care and so on, and so on. It's pretty fundamental.

**PARTON:** It's fascinating. The Prime Minister made the statement yesterday, and I think he used the words 'working families' in the sentence as well. But he made the statement that yes waiting times will be capped at four hours. So he stood up there and made the promise. When someone fails with that it won't be the Prime Minister's fault, it won't be your Government's fault. It'll be, in the ACT, Jon Stanhope's and Katy Gallagher's fault.

**EMERSON:** I imagine our opponents, if we're in government at the time, will hold us to account. I don't think that's unreasonable for a government of any level to be held to account. Rather than simply make promises, we've backed it up with extra resources - which is the Labor thing to do. Labor, going back to Medibank, and then to Medicare, is committed to a public health system. That's our fundamental, philosophical belief of the Labor Party. I don't believe it's shared by the Coalition. They seem to favour the private system over the public system. And again, Tony Abbott, surprise surprise, has come out and criticised this. The question then is, Mark, are they going to use their numbers to block it in the Senate? I hope commonsense prevails and they say "We'll let this through". But we haven't had a definitive

answer on that because since it was announced we've had both Tony Abbott and the Opposition health spokesman Peter Dutton dumping on it from a great height.

**PARTON:** Louise listens to this segment on the way to work. She emailed us a couple of days ago and says "I'm a Liberal voter but I enjoy Craig Emerson's thoughts."

**EMERSON:** [Laughs] A potential convert.

**PARTON:** She says "Can you ask Craig if he goes to a solarium. He always seems so tanned." [Laughs]

**EMERSON:** [Laughs] No I don't. I do watch my son play cricket. Maybe that's how I picked that up. But I think as we go into the winter I'll be a whiter shade of pale, to quote Procul Harem.

**PARTON:** Excellent. Well at least we've cleared up the big political question of the day.

**EMERSON:** Absolutely. And no truth to the rumour of using that stuff they slap on. Don't use any slip slop slap with bloody fake tan or anything like that.

**PARTON:** I'm glad we cleared that up. Thanks Craig.

**EMERSON:** Rightio thanks Mark.

**ENDS**