



THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP
MINISTER FOR TRADE

Transcript
2CC Breakfast with Mark Parton
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E&OE

Subjects: Osama bin Laden, carbon price

MARK PARTON: 18 to 9, let's go to Dr Craig Emerson, the Federal Trade Minister. G'day Craig.

CRAIG EMERSON: Hey Mark, how are you going?

PARTON: Not bad. I was just saying to a caller that there was a press conference with Hillary Clinton delivered yesterday afternoon after the death of Osama bin Laden, and Kevin Rudd was very much there in the background - and there's a big part of me that wished he wasn't there. Let the Americans take this; I don't know if we really want to be involved.

EMERSON: Well, Kevin was in Washington for other reasons and he, I think, was scheduled to have a press conference with Hillary Clinton in any event, so they are the circumstances in which Kevin appeared. But we are allies of the United States, so we're very keen to see an end to Osama bin Laden, but we don't pretend for a moment that that means an end to Al-Qaeda. He was in some sense a totemic leader of Al-Qaeda, but that doesn't mean that the organisation itself is destroyed now that Osama bin Laden is gone.

PARTON: Speculation in a number of places, and I'm sure it's to some extent mischievous, that Kevin Rudd found out about this, the killing of Osama bin Laden, before our Prime Minister Julia Gillard did.

EMERSON: Well, I don't know where that speculation comes from. The PM was advised, here in Canberra. Obviously I can't say to you because I don't know the answer as to when Kevin Rudd was advised, but I think the normal procedures were applied here and so I don't know the basis of that speculation, Mark. There will always be some, I suppose.

PARTON: Obama is of course, sorry ... Osama and Obama, it's easy to get them mixed up. They're dominating the news service and what it's managed to do is push some of these other stories off the front page. Among them, that according to the latest Newspoll, voters are overwhelmingly against Julia Gillard's carbon tax. These latest figures suggest that 60 per cent of voters are opposed to the Government's plan to put a price on carbon next year. Sixty per cent! That must be a major, major worry.

EMERSON: Well, I think I've made these sorts of points to you before, Mark. This is an important environmental reform. It's an important economic reform. And mostly, important economic reforms are not wildly popular with the community but the community does understand the need to make these sorts of reforms. We've had 20 ...

PARTON: Well clearly they don't, Minister.

EMERSON: Well, I'm just saying we've had 20 years of strong economic growth in this country built on reforms that were put in place by the Hawke and Keating governments. If you'd conducted polls on those reforms at that time - such as the entry of foreign banks; such as reducing industry protection - you would have got some similar results. Nevertheless, they pressed ahead and there has been a very big bounty out of that. There are two choices here for governments: one is to have a look every second week at the polls, make your decisions on that basis; the other is to drive through and make a decision in the national interest. That's what we're doing, and as far as voters are concerned, well, we would think that in time, voters will appreciate that this is the right economic reform and the right environmental reform. But we will not be a poll-driven government. There was a lot of criticism around a year or two ago that we were obsessed with the 24-hour media cycle; that we did everything according to focus groups. We're not doing that and, of course, we get criticism for it.

PARTON: You're damned if you do and damned if you don't.

EMERSON: Exactly. I don't mind the criticism - it's a democracy.

PARTON: I know you don't.

EMERSON: It's making a point. In response to that, these are important reforms and we will implement them.

PARTON: Craig, thanks as always for your time this morning.

EMERSON: Thanks very much, Mark.

PARTON: Federal Trade Minister, Dr Craig Emerson.