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MINISTER FOR TRADE

Transcript
MTR Talkback with Steve Price

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E&OE

Subjects: Malcolm Turnbull's comments; Liberal Party intimidation.

STEVE PRICE: [Plays Malcolm Turnbull excerpt]

Boy that is dumb politics.

Craig Emerson's the Trade Minister. Minister, good morning.

CRAIG EMERSON: Good morning, Steve.

PRICE: You'd love to hear that if you woke up this morning as Tony Abbott.

EMERSON: Oh, well, I suppose he's got to live with it and that is, you know, I think the fact is that Mr Turnbull's frustrated at the many and varied positions that Tony Abbott has had on this issue of climate change: all the way from climate change is "absolute crap" to actual support for a carbon tax, support for an emissions

trading scheme, now support for a so-called direct action plan that would cost taxpayers a motza.

So I reckon Mr Turnbull's finding Mr Abbott pretty hard to track down on his real position on all of this, and frustration and divisions have come out.

PRICE:

Is that the Opposition's problem? I mean, you now have detail and a policy. A lot of us disagree with it, me included, and I think the polls would show you that a lot of Australians disagree. But the other side have a policy that they seem unable to actually explain to people and they don't seem to really believe it.

EMERSON:

Yeah, I think that's right and, in terms of their inability to explain it, maybe I can do that because I've read the policy in detail.

It's called "Direct Action", but essentially what it does is it subsidises the big emitters and uses taxpayers' funds to do it, whereas our policy actually puts a charge on the big emitters to encourage them to reduce their emissions.

Now, both parties, Steve, had the same unconditional target of reducing emissions by 5 per cent by 2020 compared with 2000 levels.

It's a question then, if you believe Mr Abbott, as to the best way of doing it.

We reckon the best way is to put a charge on the emitters; not a charge on taxpayers, which is what Tony Abbott would do, to the tune of \$720 a year.

PRICE:

Have you also made it impossible for him to unpick your legislation if it goes through? Because surely no potential prime minister in an election campaign's going to take pension rises and tax cuts off people, are they?

EMERSON:

Well, he says that he'll take pension rises off people. He says he will do tax cuts without the carbon price but, in truth, they were already at election time almost \$11 billion in the red. It was the Department of Finance and Treasury who identified this very big black hole and now they're saying that they're going to have this direct action plan that's going to cost another \$720 per household, a total of \$30 billion, Steve, \$30 billion.

I don't know where they're going to get the money from this and, on top of that, on top of that they say they'll have tax cuts without a carbon price.

Look, they took to the last election - they've been saying it during the week - "oh, \$50 billion of savings." Those \$50 billion of savings included getting rid of the uses of the mining tax revenue which is small business tax breaks and company tax reductions, infrastructure spending and increases in superannuation but they keep the mining tax revenue. They keep the mining tax revenue.

Now, Mr Abbott says "Oh, I'm going to get rid of the mining tax but keep the mining tax revenue." It's little wonder that he said quite recently that even the firmest positions arrived at in opposition can be revisited in government. That's his get out of jail free card.

I think you're right. After the next election, if he were re-elected, he's say, oh, look, I can't unscramble the omelette, I really would like to but you're stuck with it.

Now, he should be honest about that instead of saying that they've got a better plan which, in fact, whacks taxpayers at least \$720 a year per household.

That's unfair. What's fair is to apply this charge, the emission price – carbon price – to the big emitters, not to consumers.

PRICE:

There are a lot of emotions running pretty high in this debate. Were you disappointed to see here in Melbourne yesterday - I think it was at Frankston - someone opposed to the tax being heckled?

EMERSON:

Yeah, look, it's a young woman with a different point of view. She actually supports action on

climate change. Mr Abbott said she's got a right to her point of view and then an aide to Shadow Cabinet Minister Bruce Bilson followed that young woman down the street to the point where she felt so intimidated that she called the police.

Now, I hope that is not an insight into Mr Abbott's Australia, saying people have a right to put an alternative point of view but then have an aide to a shadow cabinet minister intimidate that person all the way down the street to the point where she's so distressed and so worried that she has to ring the police.

PRICE: Good to talk to you. Thanks for your time.

EMERSON: Thanks a lot.

PRICE: Trade Minister Craig Emerson.