



THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP
MINISTER FOR TRADE

Transcript
2CC Breakfast with Mark Parton

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Subjects: Carbon price campaign, Malaysia asylum-seeker deal, Abbott's financial trickery and superannuation promise.

MARK PARTON: Chris Smith broadcasting live from midday today at the Australian Institute of Sport. Now, Chris was in the studio earlier this morning and it was fascinating to hear him applauding the Prime Minister - because he was. He was applauding Julia Gillard for the hard work that she's doing in endeavouring to sell the carbon tax, you know. He said, 'hey, she is out there having a go', and having a go has translated to a slight increase in the popularity, according to the latest polls. I think it's gone up two points, from nowhere to not far from nowhere, and I'm sure it put a smile on the face of the Federal Trade Minister Dr Craig Emerson, who joins us right now. G'day Craig.

CRAIG EMERSON: Good morning, Parto!

PARTON: I saw Wayne Swan commenting on that move in the polls. I don't often see him commenting if it's going the other way. But with a positive, let's trumpet it, hey?

EMERSON: Well, I'm not sure what Wayne said so I can't really comment on that. But I'd observe that parliamentary terms are not one long continuous opinion poll; you've got to do what you consider as the Government to be in the national interest. That's what we've been doing. If that happens to show in a lift in the polls, well then so be it. But we won't be deterred from doing what is in the national interest. And I just remind your listeners, Mark, that Julia Gillard, the Prime Minister, said this would be the year of

delivery. Well just in the last four weeks we've put the live cattle trade to Indonesia on a sustainable footing; the Tasmanian forestry issue which has been raging for 30 years has resulted in a peace agreement that the Prime Minister helped broker; we've put a price on carbon - we've released the details of that; and, of course, the Malaysian asylum-seeker deal has been announced. So not only the year of delivery; I say the month of delivery, Mark.

PARTON: Okay, so the Malaysian asylum-seeker deal has been announced, to \$292 million. That's for 800 refugees, and we work out that that's about \$360,000 for each of them. That is a hell of a lot of money.

EMERSON: I think you'll actually find Mark if you did the research - and I'm not saying you haven't had someone looking at it - but the bulk of the dollar amount is used to bring in 1,000 asylum seekers, genuine refugees into Australia a year. That's a total of 4,000. It takes our refugee intake from 13,750 to 14,750 a year. So that is actually the bulk of the cost, and of course if very few or no people go to Malaysia on the way out the costs associated with them would be very low indeed. And I tell you what, a hell of a lot less than the so-called "Pacific Solution", where people were left to rot on Nauru at very great cost to taxpayers.

PARTON: Okay, so time will tell how this goes now in terms of will this actually stop the boats from coming, because if it does stop the boats well I'll be the first to say 'okay it's a fair bit of money but it's worked'. What the hell are you going to do if we get to the middle of November and we've already surpassed that 800 amount and all of a sudden it hasn't worked?

EMERSON: Well it would be curious logic for people to come from their country of source, arrive in Malaysia, then go to Indonesia, get on a boat, take a risky journey across the sea to Australia to get sent back to Malaysia and then keep doing it. It would be a very strange thing to do so. You're right: this is designed to break the people smugglers' model, their sales pitch to people, because I don't think too many asylum seekers would see the amusing side of just going around from their country of origin to Malaysia, to Indonesia, to Australia and then to Malaysia.

PARTON: Have you considered perhaps adopting a term from the other side and calling this "Stop the Boats", Craig?

EMERSON: We're not into these three-word slogans. But while we are on issues such as slogans, Tony Abbott is proving to be a real hollow man, and it's been revealed, Mark, that on Friday night he told a group of fund managers that he might not be able to unwind the increase in superannuation from 9 per cent to 12 per

cent. Well, that's being funded in large part by the mining tax. And what's clear from this so-called \$50 billion worth of savings is that he would abandon the small business tax breaks, abandon the company tax rate reduction, but keep the revenue from the mining tax. So it's becoming clear what his true agenda is; that is, he'll keep the mining tax but he'll get rid of the very beneficial uses which the mining tax revenue is to be put.

PARTON: Craig, we're out of time, but thanks for joining us again this morning.

EMERSON: Thanks Mark.

PARTON: Federal Trade Minister, Dr Craig Emerson.