



THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP
MINISTER FOR TRADE

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Subjects: Opinion polls, carbon tax, Craig Thomson.

WENDY KINGSTON: Let's go to Federal politics now and there's been a very slight improvement in Labor's primary vote. But two-party preferred figures still show that Tony Abbott would win in a landslide. Julia Gillard is narrowing the gap on Mr Abbott as preferred PM, however. It's the first positive result in months for Labor. Trade Minister Craig Emerson is in our Canberra studio this morning.

Minister Emerson, thank you for your time. I just saw the graphics, as did our viewers at home: some good and some bad news for you at the moment?

CRAIG EMERSON: It's important Wendy that we don't obsess about polls. They used to come out once a fortnight, then once a week, now they're coming out two or three times a week. They'll be out every day before we know it, and really it's the job of government to get on and do the policy work that's in our long-term interests, rather than getting out of bed each morning and finding out what's in an opinion poll. You know, I think a legitimate criticism of governments in the past has been that they're too poll-driven. Well, what we're doing is making sure that we put in place the right policies for Australia's future, whether that be on economic reform or on the very important environmental issue of carbon pricing.

KINGSTON: Just on the carbon tax, the PM's been trying to sell that message now for weeks; people still don't seem to like it. Why don't you think this message is getting through?

EMERSON: Well, I think it'd be a bit surprising if there was overwhelming majority support for the idea of putting a price on carbon or, as it's been called, a carbon tax. These sorts of measures are not normally popular at the time they're announced. But nevertheless they are important for Australia's long-term future to keep the economy strong as we move to a low-emission economy, to a renewable energy future and that's why we're doing it. We're not doing it for the heck of it; we're not doing it to be unpopular. Obviously, governments would prefer to be popular, but you need to put these sorts of policies in place to secure our place as a strong economy in the region while at the same time looking after our environment. That's what we're doing.

KINGSTON: Likely to see a lot of anger tomorrow with the big anti-tax rally that's planned. How do you turn that anger around?

EMERSON: I think the proof of this carbon pricing will be in the living of it from the first of July next year. People will come to appreciate that Mr Abbott's wildly exaggerated claims about it will have all fallen to the ground. And then, of course, the pressure will be on Mr Abbott because his shadow treasurer, Joe Hockey, has now admitted in briefing notes to his own colleagues that have been leaked that they have a problem ranging between 50 and 70 billion dollars in the various commitments to repeal the carbon price, to repeal the mining tax, to provide tax cuts without a carbon price. All of these things dramatically do not add up and so they'll be in a pickle after the first of July next year, when they have to explain to the Australian people that their sums simply don't add up and they can't deliver on the promises that they're making.

KINGSTON: Just to move away to another issue now: we've got Labor MP Craig Thomson from New South Wales. He's allegedly abused a charity worker at a pokies rally. This is behaviour you really can't afford to have with the party at the moment, can you?

EMERSON: Well Craig's apologised for that. He apparently believed that the person who was MC-ing the forum was being unfair in terms of the allocation of time between him as the Labor representative and the Coalition representative. He learned that the MC wasn't responsible for that. He apologised for his statements and the young woman has fully accepted his apology and said that she wants to move on. So I reckon that's probably the end of the matter.

KINGSTON: All right, Trade Minister Craig Emerson. Thank you very much for your time.

EMERSON: Thanks a lot, Wendy. Thank you.