



**THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP**  
MINISTER FOR TRADE

Transcript  
ABC New Radio with Marius Benson

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*Subjects: Steel industry job cuts, China's currency, convoy protest, Craig Thomson.*

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**GLEN BARTHOLOMEW:** There's going to be a bit happening today in Australia. The Federal Government's under pressure to provide new support for Australia's manufacturing industry today with the steel maker BlueScope expected to announce it's cutting more than 1,000 jobs.

The rise in the Australian dollar is being blamed for the cuts and unions are warning that thousands more jobs will be lost in manufacturing in coming weeks.

For a government response to the bleak employment news, Marius Benson has spoken to the Trade Minister in the Government, Craig Emerson.

MARIUS BENSON: Craig Emerson, some bad news for the steel industry from BlueScope Steel this morning, and warnings that there's much worse to come from manufacturing. Do you share that pessimism about the Australian manufacturing sector's future?

CRAIG EMERSON: Well I think overall the manufacturing sector has a strong future, but there's no doubt that the very high Australian dollar is a real burden for Australian manufacturing.

It's not the fault of Australian manufacturers; it's just one of the products of the so-called two-speed economy, where you've got the mining sector and its very strong performance driving up the value of the Australian dollar and that adversely affecting the competitiveness of manufacturing.

So that's basically the fundamental cause of the issue that is confronting us.

BENSON: There are a few suggestions about what the Government should be doing. The Government is apparently going to provide some immediate assistance to those directly affected by these job cuts.

One suggestion is talk to China about floating their currency. You were in China quite

recently: would Australia's voice carry any weight in China's consideration of its currency?

EMERSON:

Well, the United States has been urging China to adjust its currency upwards. China actually has done that to a limited extent. Whether Australia's voice would be decisive in the context of the United States having been urging this for a very long time is open to question. But of course, unions and others are fully entitled to express a view about that.

BENSON:

Okay, can I ask you about a couple of the political issues that are around today?

There is a convoy of trucks arriving at Parliament House's doorstep today and their message to you is 'get out'. What's your message to them?

EMERSON:

My message to them is that they're entitled to express their view but it is the protest, the people's protest, that Tony Abbott has called for and it's led by a member of his own political party.

So surprise, surprise! Of course members of the Liberal Party, the National Party, would like a change of government. But given that Tony Abbott's people's protest is led by a member of his own political party, Mr Mick Pattel, who was the endorsed candidate for the state seat of

Mount Isa, it's worth reflecting on Mr Pattel's views which include that climate change is all about the formation of a one world government and that there could be a one world army invading Australia.

So I wonder if Mr Abbott shares those views.

BENSON:

The Labor backbencher Craig Thomson is in the headlines again over new allegations regarding his use of a union credit card which has allegedly been used for the purposes of prostitution. He has denied those allegations. How much damage is being done to the Government by Craig Thomson's scandals?

EMERSON:

I think people can tell the difference between allegations and proof or strong evidence.

In the case of Mr Thomson a number of allegations have been made; none of them - none of them - of a criminal nature. Mr Thomson has denied all of the allegations.

And a standard is being applied yet again by Mr Abbott to Mr Thomson which is that he should resign at least from a committee's chair position and probably from Parliament because allegations have been made against him.

Well if that was the basis of people having to resign all they'd have to do is make allegations

against each other and you'd have people being called upon to resign from Parliament left, right, and centre.

But I say to Mr Abbott: apply the same standard to your own team. In the case of his own team he has one Member of Parliament who not only has had allegations of criminal behaviour against, her but charges laid. She is still, to this day, a Member, in fact a chair of a parliamentary committee.

Why isn't Mr Abbott calling on that Member of Parliament to stand aside, to quit Parliament or at least quit that parliamentary committee?

BENSON: Craig Emerson, thanks very much.

EMERSON: Thanks Marius.

BARTHOLOMEW: The Trade Minister in the Government, Craig Emerson, covering a few issues with Marius Benson.

