



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

Transcript  
2CC Mornings with Mark Parton

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E&OE

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*Subjects: Craig Thomson.*

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MARK PARTON: Let's go to the Federal Trade Minister, not the Treasurer, Craig Emerson.

CRAIG EMERSON: G'day Mark!

PARTON: Despite what was ... yeah that was pretty amazing on the floor there wasn't it?

EMERSON: Yes, I'd had lunch at Government House with the Speaker and we rushed back so he was probably a bit breathless at the time.

PARTON: For those who didn't see it, it was suggested by the Speaker, indeed, that Craig Emerson had been promoted to the position of Treasurer, which of course is not the case. Wayne Swan, if you're listening: don't panic.

It's been a fascinating week and I think it's set to get even more interesting. I described on this program Craig Emerson, I described Craig Thomson as the worst mainstream political party preselection since Pauline Hanson was preselected by the Libs. I'm gathering you're going to argue against that?

EMERSON: I am, and I want to just make these points very quickly, Mark. Tony Abbott yesterday falsely claimed that the police are investigating Craig Thomson. Mr Abbott knew that not to be true. This is a standard Liberal Party tactic.

PARTON: Well, New South Wales police have confirmed an internal assessment is underway.

EMERSON: Correct. An assessment is what needs to happen when a bunch of documents lob in to your mailbox. And, of course, they're not going to shred them; they're not going to put them aside. Of course they're going to say 'we'll have a look at it'. An investigation is a police investigation. People know what that is and, in fact, there is no allegation of criminality against Mr Thomson. But Mr Abbott deliberately sought to smear Mr Thomson, just as Andrew Robb did under Parliamentary privilege by saying there's evidence that Mr Thomson is a thief. That is, he is accusing him of criminal behaviour.

This is a disgraceful episode in modern Australian political history. Mr Abbott is seeking to slither into the Lodge through these grubby tactics. He should do the necessary work; explain how he's going to fill his \$70 billion budget black hole and get back to the public policy debates instead of being a grub.

PARTON: With all respect, though, Mr Emerson, it's my understanding that the majority of the Australian public are watching this and saying that it's disgraceful as well. But they're saying that it's disgraceful for different reasons than the ones you're saying. I know that there's a legal process that's set to be in place, but I don't think that the Australian public is seeing this in the way that you are and ...

EMERSON: We're pretty keen on not prejudging people. We're pretty keen on the presumption of innocence.

PARTON: Well then why not let him talk?

EMERSON: Well, I'm just talking about this, and I'll answer your question. But I'm talking about this issue of an investigation. What did John Howard actually say when three members of his team, MPs, were being investigated - which Mr Thomson is not: "A lot of people who are under investigation end up having nothing to answer for. It's a police investigation and the appropriate thing for me to do is let the police investigation run its course."

PARTON: It doesn't look flash though, does it?

EMERSON: He wasn't going to comment. Now let's not have two standards here. Mr Abbott himself would have cherished the presumption of innocence when reportedly he was being charged with indecent assault, many, many years ago as a university student. He was exonerated. I'm happy to say he was exonerated, but he would have wanted and cherished the

presumption of innocence and he should apply that to the letter to Mr Thomson.

PARTON: Craig, it doesn't look flash though, does it? The things that we've got on the table thus far, it doesn't look good does it? Union credit card used to withdraw \$100 000 over five years from ATMs; used to pay for prostitutes. I know there's been all sorts of excuses being bandied around, but it doesn't look flash, does it?

EMERSON: Well it probably isn't a wonderful episode in terms of the level of debate that's going on, on this particular issue. And it is being highlighted by the Coalition falsely claiming that he is under investigation.

There is a Fair Work Australia investigation into the union and that is something that should proceed. It is not, it is not a police investigation. Now the police are making an assessment. Why would we not Mark - and if it was you, why would you not say 'what I'd like to do is to allow the Fair Work Australia investigation to take its course; I would allow the police assessment to take its course'. That's what you would want in your case as an individual, as a human being in a free society. Why is Mr Thomson not entitled to that? And the answer is: because the Coalition thinks if they can force him out somehow then Tony Abbott can slide into The Lodge and avoid doing the hard work on public policy and just say 'look at me, I made it into The Lodge; I'm the Prime Minister'. This is the grubbiest possible way to The Lodge and he's not going to get there.

PARTON: All right. Well, time will tell. Thanks for answering questions on it this morning; we do appreciate it.

EMERSON: Okay, thanks Mark.