



THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP
MINISTER FOR TRADE

Transcript
ABC News Radio with Marius Benson
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E&OE

Subjects: Craig Thomson, gay marriage.

GLEN BARTHOLOMEW: One of those things occupying the minds of politicians today will be embattled Labor MP Craig Thomson. He'll again be the target of Opposition attacks in Parliament today over allegations he used an official credit card when he was a union official to pay for prostitutes. Mr Thomson yesterday gave in to Opposition demands that he quit his position as chair of a Parliamentary economics committee. But the Opposition is maintaining its call for him to respond to the claims against him - or quit Parliament altogether.

For a Labor view of the scandal which is threatening the Government, Marius Benson has spoken to the Trade Minister Craig Emerson.

MARIUS BENSON: Craig Emerson, the Opposition has made it clear it will be on the attack again against Craig Thomson today. Will Craig Thompson survive?

CRAIG EMERSON: Well, of course he will. And these are the facts: there are no charges or even allegations of criminality against Mr Thomson. There is no police investigation. And Mr Brandis would like people to believe that the police are investigating something. What he did is send some material to them and they said that they would make an assessment of it, and at least one media outlet is reporting this as an investigation.

It is not.

We've had also - in exercising these double standards - Mr Andrew Robb saying under Parliamentary privilege, 'look at the evidence that comes out - that he has lied, that he is a thief'. What appalling behaviour by Mr Robb.

BENSON: There are, however, a large number of unanswered questions. Is it time for Craig Thomson to give an explanation to Parliament?

EMERSON: Well, why wouldn't we follow the precedent set by Mr Howard, who said, on these matters that any investigation - and there is no investigation into Mr Thomson - should be

allowed to take its course. I mean these people think this: that they can take a sleazy short-cut to The Lodge because they're not interested in doing the policy work, or engaging in the big policy debates. They've got a \$70 billion black hole that they can't fill and an Opposition Leader who says he's bored with economics. His former employer, Mr Hewson, saying he's innumerate, and that's obvious, because he thinks a tonne of carbon dioxide weighs nothing. How about the Coalition rolls up its sleeves, does a bit of policy work, instead of sleazing its way around trying to make a short-cut to The Lodge?

It won't work.

BENSON:

Is Craig Thomson in your assessment an honest and honourable man?

EMERSON:

I have no reason to believe anything other than Mr Thomson's statements that he had made, which is that he has denied the claims against him which do not include any allegation of criminality.

BENSON:

Can I leave Craig Thomson there and go to another issue which is going to be the subject of interest in Parliament today, with MPs reporting on the attitude in their electorates to gay marriage.

What's your personal view?

Are you in favour, or opposed to gay marriage?

EMERSON: My personal view is a long-held one, and that is marriage is a union between a man and a woman.

BENSON: And why do you hold that view? What's the logic of it?

CRAIG EMERSON: I hold that view because the institution of marriage has long been such - that is, it's a union between a man and a woman. That's as set out in the Marriage Act. It's just been a long-held belief of mine. And it also is a belief of the Prime Minister of Australia Julia Gillard.

BENSON: Can I just get you to expand on it, because this debate tends to be just assertions from either side: gay marriage is good, gay marriage is bad; it's always been this way. Is there an ethical basis, a religious basis, a social basis for your view?

EMERSON: I'm not ... no, I actually am entitled to a view, and I'm not going to spend what a number of people would like me to do, in that, a lot of time debating an issue of whether marriage is between a man, a union between a man and a woman or not.

I have a view. I hold that view. And I will continue to hold that view. And to go through a long philosophical debate with you Marius as just, again, you know, dealing with an issue which is not fundamentally about boosting the living standards and job security of Australians, I'm sorry, I'm just not going to get into a lengthy discussion about it.

I have the view. I'm entitled to the view. Everyone's entitled to their view. And my view remains that marriage is a union between a man and a woman.

BENSON:

Craig Emerson, thank you very much.

EMERSON:

Thanks Marius.

BARTHOLOMEW:

Craig Emerson, who is the Trade Minister in the Gillard Government speaking there to Marius Benson ahead of today's Parliamentary action.

