



THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP
MINISTER FOR TRADE

Transcript
2CC with Mark Parton
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E&OE

Subjects: Defence reforms, polls, carbon pricing, Kevin Rudd's slip of the tongue.

- MARK PARTON:** It's a quarter to nine, the conservatives' favourite part of the week on this radio program because we're joined by the Federal Trade Minister Dr Craig Emerson. I'm most appreciative of you making the time. Some people aren't though, Craig. Gee, they get into me.
- CRAIG EMERSON:** Oh, no, you've got broad shoulders. You can handle it.
- PARTON:** Very much so. Very much so.
- EMERSON:** It's the silent majority that you should be aware of. And they're the ones that say 'gee this is a really interesting segment. Keep it going, Mark'.
- PARTON:** Craig, many have suggested the Defence announcement yesterday was a diversion. If it was, it's worked.
- EMERSON:** Oh, has it? Yeah, well it is important that over a reasonable period we ensure that all defence positions are available for women to apply to. It doesn't mean that they will gain all of them. But I think it's something

like 93 per cent of defence positions are already open to women. This opens the remaining seven.

PARTON: Look, I know it's not your portfolio. And Neil James was on from the Australian Defence Association - on this program earlier - and he was just making the point that there's this review that's in place, that I think Greg Combet commissioned, that reports at the end of the year. Why wouldn't you have waited until then? Because, what do you do if the report comes back and says 'no, don't think so'.

EMERSON: Well, this has been properly considered by government. And you can take the attitude, 'why put off until tomorrow what you can put off forever?'

PARTON: Why commission the review if we weren't going to actually listen to it or act on it?

EMERSON: Well, as I say there's been plenty of discussion within the Government and within the Defence Forces about this. And in the end it's the role of governments to make decisions, as advised by the Defence Forces. And their advice is that the time has come to open up these remaining positions to women. The funny thing is - and you'd be entitled to say, Mark, 'gee this Government's got all these reviews going and it won't make any decisions' - and then when we make decisions people would say 'well, why didn't you have a review?'

PARTON: Damned if you do and damned if you don't. I want to know, in the mornings when you lob at work - whether it's in Brisbane or here - what newspapers do you get delivered to the office, Craig?

EMERSON: Well, I'm in the electronic age and I've got my little iPhone, and I read the newspapers online.

PARTON: So you don't get hard copies?

EMERSON: I do in the end. And you do pick up stories in the hard copy, of course, that you don't notice online. But you get the main stories, so that I'm well prepared for your thoroughly investigative questioning.

PARTON: I want to know if you get a copy of *The Australian*. Do you read *The Australian*?

EMERSON: I do, yeah. I read *The Australian*.

PARTON: The Newspolls continue to dominate their coverage. But it gets to a point where it's like, okay, well what do you say? Labor's on the nose, and I know there's still two years before the election. But, wow, it's not looking flash is it, mate?

EMERSON: It must be a day ending in 'a-y' if there's a poll out, or if we're discussing polls. You know in my electorate, what people don't talk about is polls. They talk about issues that affect them, and that's pretty reasonable I reckon.

PARTON: It just looks that according to the polls there are many issues that are affecting them, and affecting them badly - and they're not happy.

EMERSON: You and I have been over hill and down dale on the carbon price. And there's no doubt that that's not a popular reform. But as I've said to you before, Hawke and Keating - and even Howard - implemented reforms that weren't popular. Remember John Howard introduced gun control? Now,

if he'd just said 'let's just check the polls before I make any decision on this', he probably would have found that it would be ... - and he was governed by those polls, not by what he thought he was in the national interest - there's no way he would have introduced gun control. No way. And so the point is there are decisions that need to be taken that are in the national interest. And you know, Mark, I reckon the Australian public understand that. And if they're asked their opinion on a particular issue they'll give it to you, fair enough. But it doesn't mean that they expect that every day government decision-making is being based on the latest opinion polls. Because, otherwise, government decision-making would change once a day, or even more frequently than that. And then people would say, 'what are you guys on about: you just keep chopping and changing?'

PARTON: Craig, I understand that. But when it comes to something that ends up being so unpopular, is it a case of a government like yours - which is clinging on by the support of a couple of others - being arrogant in saying 'well, whether you want it or not this is what we're doing'?

EMERSON: I think in a sense it's the opposite, because politicians ...

PARTON: How?

EMERSON: ... well because politicians would ordinarily be charged with the offence of simply seeking to keep their bums on seats - shiny bums on seats; that they're not interested in the general welfare of the community. That's a critique of politicians. If that were the case, then why would we be pushing through reforms that are unpopular? We'd

just say 'let's do whatever is popular and then we'll get re-elected'. What we're actually saying is 'let's do whatever is necessary and in the national interest and ...'

PARTON: [interrupts] ... and what Bob wants.

EMERSON: ...and ... no, no, and we've been through this before. We have said that we'll introduce an emissions trading scheme. We've been trying to do that, as was John Howard in 2007. This has got a three-year fixed carbon price. The Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme had a one-year fixed carbon price. The difference - the fundamental difference, and I wouldn't call it fundamental - between this scheme and the scheme that we sought twice to introduce is two years of the fixed price.

Now, Tony Abbott ... and we've said 'yes, if you want to call it a carbon tax call it a carbon tax ... but we have always said that we want to introduce an emissions trading scheme, as did John Howard; as did Malcolm Turnbull; as did Tony Abbott, who thought it was the best way to go until he confessed that he was a weather vane, and all he was doing was exactly, Mark, is what you said: and that is listening every day, watching the polls and changing his position. And that is not leadership. That is not leadership; that's followership.

PARTON: Before I let you go: how's your mate Kevin on that little slip of the tongue on the radio yesterday?

EMERSON: A slip of the tongue is exactly that. And I'll bet if you look through the transcripts of the discussions that you and I have, I have made slip-ups in our interviews. So that's

what it was. And I'm sure people might like to read lots into it. But, gee, then they'd say 'you lot, you're just robots; you just roll out these lines; there's no spontaneity about it'.

PARTON: As soon as you make a mistake, yeah.

EMERSON: Ah! Ah! You are human, after all!

PARTON: I think it was just a slip of the tongue from a tired man, and, and ...

EMERSON: Exactly

PARTON: ... and they're pretty keen on creating stories that really aren't there. But I take more stock in the fact that when Mr Rudd is referring to the Prime Minister, he never actually ever refers to her by name anymore.

EMERSON: I just don't know about that. I suppose that will be a story for tomorrow. I call her Julia; I call her Prime Minister; I call him Kevin; I call him The Ruddster. And, you know, by the way it's Julia's birthday ... I'm sorry ... Prime Minister Gillard's birthday tomorrow.

PARTON: Is it really?

EMERSON: Yes it is, yeah. She turns 50.

PARTON: Thanks for sharing with us, Craig. Thanks for coming on.

EMERSON: Okay Mark, thanks a lot.

PARTON: Federal Trade Minister Craig Emerson.

