



THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP
MINISTER FOR TRADE

Transcript
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Subjects: First day of the 43rd Parliament

GARDINER: Every week around about this time we're joined by Craig Emerson, who is the Minister for Trade now. Good morning Dr Emerson.

EMERSON: Good morning Jorian.

GARDINER: How are you today?

EMERSON: I'm doing really well. It's a sparkling day and a historic time as we get into the Parliament, following the formalities yesterday which were fantastic.

GARDINER: How was it yesterday? Were you a proud boy yesterday?

EMERSON: I was very proud. I have been to the opening of a number of Parliaments now, but this had special significance. We had the first Indigenous House of Representatives MP sworn in yesterday. There was Ed Husic, who is our member for the seat of Chifley and is of the Muslim faith; and he was across the table from Michael Danby, who is of the Jewish faith – also Labor – and they were being sworn in at the same time. So I think there were a lot of really good things going on. And we had a smoking ceremony and a welcome to country. So a lot of colour and it was really an historic day.

GARDINER: A lot of colour and movement. Can I just ask you a question? What did you guys promise to get Peter Slipper to take that job?

EMERSON: Nothing. There were no deals made with Mr Slipper. And the wisdom of the House was such that Mr Slipper won 78 votes to 71. So the majority of the House did support Mr Slipper. Obviously the Coalition did not, but the will of the House prevailed and Mr Slipper will be Deputy Speaker.

GARDINER: How is this new term of Parliament going to work, Dr Emerson? You only hold it by the slimmest of majorities - one now. I mean,

can this Parliament really go the full term? And do you hold out hopes that it will?

EMERSON: It's true that it's a historic time with the numbers in the House of the Representatives as they are. It will depend very much on the goodwill of all Parliamentarians. I think that the Independents are committed to a long and stable Parliament – certainly Labor is. I would hope that Mr Abbott's Coalition is. But he's already torn up one agreement on parliamentary reform, and this is why we were pleased to have the fulfilment of a commitment in that agreement that if the Speaker was from the Labor side, then the Coalition would fill the Deputy Speaker. Now, that's not something I think, that the Coalition was going to honour, but it was honoured anyway through the numbers in the House. So it really depends on Mr Abbott and his Coalition. So far it seems the signs are not encouraging. He's looking like a wrecker and he's still sulking and angry with the Australian people that they haven't made him Prime Minister. Well, he didn't get enough seats, and that's just the reality. And a reality to which he will need to adjust.

GARDINER: There's that word again that we heard yesterday. Did all you guys get a memo or something?

EMERSON: What was it?

GARDINER: Wrecker. You just said 'wrecker'.

EMERSON: I thought you were going to say 'new paradigm'. Now there's a word that I don't like.

GARDINER: What the hell does it mean, Dr Emerson?

EMERSON: I don't know. I'm still scratching my head.

GARDINER: I've got one more question for you. You're the Minister for Trade; you'll be globe-trotting around, talking to different people. What are you going to tell them about a carbon price?

EMERSON: Well, I'm going to tell them that there is human-induced global warming and we all need to come to terms with that – Labor is coming to terms with that. We have set up a cross-parliamentary committee to build a community consensus for a carbon price. We don't agree with Mr Abbott that climate change is absolute crap. And so this is one of the reforms that will need to be made globally as we make the transition to a low-carbon economy.

GARDINER: If you have one hope for the new Parliament that was sworn in yesterday, Dr Emerson, Minister for Trade, what is it?

EMERSON: It's that we can remain a Parliament that delivers for the average Australian higher living standards, higher quality of life, a fairer community, and economic reform that makes sure that our economy is strong and generates the necessary jobs that provide the dignity of work for all Australians.

GARDINER: Has Rob Oakeshott had his fifteen minutes of fame?

EMERSON: Rob Oakeshott's done a terrific job in this area of parliamentary reform. He wanted that. An agreement was drawn up and that agreement will be honoured – by one side of the Parliament, and that's the Australian Labor Party. It's already been repudiated by the other side, led by Tony Abbott, unfortunately.

GARDINER: Well, we wish you luck for the next 18-months to three years. Dr Emerson, Minister for Trade, thanks for joining us this morning.