



THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP
MINISTER FOR TRADE

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Subjects: Trade surplus.

GARDINER: It's that time of the week where we're joined by the Federal Minister for Trade, Dr Craig Emerson, good morning.

EMERSON: Good morning Jorian.

GARDINER: I'm not getting you jet-lagged am I, mate?

EMERSON: (Laughs) I did actually go to New York and Washington in my first week as Trade Minister but that was a hurried trip – got there, got back, and did some good work while I was over there.

GARDINER: But ... if Tony Abbott had made that trip he would have needed two weeks off wouldn't he?

EMERSON: Well, as Julia Gillard said, Tony Abbott's travel plans are a matter for Tony Abbott. Others are making observations about that, including Joe Hockey. I must say, he's criticised Labor for simply saying that Mr Abbott's travel plans are a matter for Mr Abbott. It seems that were the source for all bad commentary, evil and bad things that happen in the world as far as the Coalition's concerned. Our view is Mr Abbott's plans are a matter for Mr Abbott.

GARDINER: Moving onto something a little bit more positive, Australia recorded a seasonally adjusted trade surplus of \$2.3 billion in August, on figures released by the ABS yesterday, is that correct?

EMERSON: It is, and it's the third biggest trade surplus in Australia's history, and the fifth in a row. It comes on the back of a very bad period, from around 2002 where there were 75 successive trade deficits – so Australia's doing something right and that is we're

exporting to the world, we're succeeding on tough international markets, that's really good news for Australia.

GARDINER: Exports of goods and services fell two per cent, to 24.7 billion and merchandise exports fell three per cent. While service exports rose one per cent, driven by a rise in travel services, this is good news for the country, isn't it?

EMERSON: It is, and when we talk about those falls they are off, you know, very, very high peaks, so it is good news. It's taken us a long time to get our trade accounts into surplus and obviously we pay tribute to our miners – they've been very important in that. But as you've indicated there, our service economy exports are growing and that's really important because while our service industries in Australia generate about 85 per cent of private sector employment, they are responsible for only about 22 per cent of our exports. So we have the strategy of trying to lift the role of the service economy, all those industries, financial services, engineering services, education services, to further boost our trade effort.

GARDINER: Now, you're only, you're only a recent Minister for Trade, are you enjoying the job?

EMERSON: I love it. I'm like a pig in mud – happy as a pig in mud. It's a great portfolio and I was the Shadow Minister for Trade for a time, and I was also Trade Adviser to Bob Hawke for four years. So, that did involve a lot of travel, but we did some good work including ... Bob worked very hard on US and European farm subsidies and supports and bringing the so-called 'Uruguay Round' multi-lateral trade negotiations towards completion, and then that happened later under the Keating Government. So, Australia has punched above its weight in these international trade forums to get these trade barriers down. That's where Australia's prosperity lies. We are a trading nation, and it's just unfair when other countries impose high barriers to Australian trade – very unfair for some of the poorest countries on Earth, too, who face these high trade barriers.

GARDINER: That's Dr Craig Emerson, the Minister for Trade. Thanks for joining us on the program this morning, Dr Emerson, and keep up the good work.

EMERSON: Thanks, Jorian.