



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

Transcript  
ABC News Radio with Marius Benson

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*Subjects: Doha trade talks, Cabinet leaks, opinion polls.*

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**GLEN BARTHOLOMEW:**

The Trade Minister Craig Emerson says global talks on free trade are failing, and Australia will lead new international moves to fight protectionism and promote commercial activity. Reports of those policy moves are mixed with headlines on new opinion polls today which show the Coalition retaining its crushing lead over Labor.

To look at policy and the polls this morning, Marius Benson has spoken with Craig Emerson.

**MARIUS BENSON:**

Craig Emerson, the Doha Round has been the mechanism for promoting free trade around the world. Do you believe it is now dead?

CRAIG EMERSON:

It's more that it's reached an impasse and it's apparently unblockable. That is, we've been working for more than a year now to break through this impasse, but it's time to come to the conclusion that we can't get past it. So we need to back-track a little and create a new pathway to global trade liberalisation, which is the only obvious source of increased jobs and prosperity around the world.

BENSON:

Can I go to domestic politics? Federal Cabinet is meeting today: is that likely to be a fairly tense meeting as you look around the room knowing that at least one minister there embarrassed the Government mightily at the weekend by leaking the Cabinet debate on asylum policy?

EMERSON:

I hope you're not shocked to learn that I won't be speaking in an anticipation of Cabinet or in retrospect after Cabinet meetings. No government has ever benefited from ministers talking about what happened in Cabinet, and I'm not going to break the habit of a lifetime by speculating about that.

BENSON:

But is it a bit awkward if you know you can't trust your colleagues?

EMERSON:

As I say, we're in a situation where, as a minister and as an adviser to a

previous Prime Minister, I've always taken the view that no good comes out of leaking from Cabinet. And the only people who benefit from leaks are the Opposition parties.

BENSON: Do you know who the rat is, or the rats are?

EMERSON: No, I have nothing more to say about that Marius. I've made my position clear. It's a lifetime position and I'm not going to breach it now.

BENSON: Fairly or unfairly, people point to Kevin Rudd as leaker-in-chief in the Government ranks. Do you trust Kevin Rudd?

EMERSON: I do trust Kevin Rudd, but I'm not going to engage in speculation about Cabinet leaks.

BENSON: Tony Abbott says the Government is shambolic and embarrassing. Do you concede he's got some grounds for saying that?

EMERSON: Mr Abbott is playing politics yet again, and the Australian people are fed up with political gamesmanship. We've seen most spectacularly his political gamesmanship played out in respect of the asylum-seeker issue, where he

insists he supports offshore processing to break the people-smugglers' rings and yet said he would vote for onshore processing. Always the case with Mr Abbott is don't take any notice of what he says, just what he does. And what he has done is endangered the lives of asylum-seekers by supporting onshore processing in terms of his voting behaviour, when he professes falsely to be in favour of offshore processing.

BENSON:

There are two polls out today, Craig Emerson. There's some slightly better news for the Prime Minister and Labor in Nielsen: your primary vote up a bit and Julia Gillard up slightly against Tony Abbott as better prime minister - that's in a sea of bad news. You're not polling well.

EMERSON:

It is admittedly from a low base, but the direction is in the right direction, and that's a good thing. It shows that when you make courageous decisions, when you have a courageous Prime Minister as we do in Julia Gillard, then the Australian people begin to respect and acknowledge that.

And what those polls also indicate is that Mr Abbott's ratings are the worst since he became Opposition Leader, because the Australian people are seeing through him. He's motivated by

one thing and one thing only: that's his own career aspiration to become prime minister. And day in and day out, he's prepared to sacrifice the national interests for that personal goal.

BENSON:

But you have to cherry-pick fairly carefully to find good news in these polls for Labor. The bigger picture is that Labor is miles behind.

EMERSON:

If we took the view that opinion polls were our guide for policy, then the Australian people rightly would deliver a very harsh judgement on us at the next election. Life is not one continuous opinion poll. Political life is about governing in the national interest, making courageous decisions on the basis of judgements as to what is in the national interest. That's what Julia Gillard is doing; she's demonstrating that she's a courageous leader, not being driven by opinion polls. And the Australian people are now seeing through Mr Abbott. But we do have a long way to go, that's true.

BENSON:

Craig Emerson, thanks again.

EMERSON:

Thanks Marius.

BARTHOLOMEW:

The Trade Minister Craig Emerson with Marius Benson.