



MEDIA RELEASE

DR CRAIG EMERSON

Minister for Trade

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ABBOTT'S VOTE OF NO-CONFIDENCE IN DEPUTY BISHOP

Tony Abbott has today dismissed the China Free Trade Agreement negotiations as a low priority for the Coalition, in an extraordinary rebuff to his Deputy Leader, Julie Bishop.

In a direct rejection of Ms Bishop's position, Mr Abbott has said the China negotiations would go on the back-burner under a Coalition Government.

This comes just a day after Ms Bishop urged the Government to conclude its negotiations with China to support Australia's exporters.

"Mr Abbott has come out with an entirely contrary position," Dr Emerson said.

"This would-be Prime Minister would trash Australia's relationship with its biggest trading partner, if given the chance."

"Well-negotiated FTAs mean more jobs, more investment and more export opportunities for Australians."

Dr Emerson has a pre-scheduled telephone conversation today with his Chinese counterpart Chen Deming.

"I will assure Mr Chen that Australia remains committed to the trade negotiations with China."

Mr Abbott's latest policy announcement would not only come as a surprise to the Chinese Government; former Prime Minister John Howard would also be confused, given he initiated the Free Trade negotiations with China in 2005.

Mr Howard described the launch of the negotiations as "historic" and recognised China as a market economy.

Mr Abbott's latest stance is also a fresh snub to his Deputy Leader, after he said recently of Josh Frydenberg: "It's nice to have someone in the Parliamentary party who understands foreign affairs at last."

"Mr Abbott's job-destroying, protectionist tendencies - at odds with Ms Bishop's position - have won the day again," Dr Emerson said.

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