



**MEDIA MONITORS**



**THE HON DR CRAIG EMERSON MP**

MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS, INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS AND THE SERVICE  
ECONOMY

MINISTER FOR COMPETITION POLICY AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS  
MINISTER ASSISTING THE MINISTER FOR FINANCE ON DEREGULATION

Transcript

Inside Canberra ABC 612 Brisbane

*Subjects: Printing allowance, parallel importation of books, climate change, consultation fees, Traveston Dam, Remembrance Day, end-of-year broadcast.*

**MADONNA KING:** And it's time to go inside Canberra. Welcome to Rudd Government Minister Dr Craig Emerson. Good morning.

**CRAIG EMERSON:** Good morning to you Madonna.

**MADONNA KING:** And Senator George Brandis, from the Opposition, up near the Traveston Dam really, aren't you Senator Brandis.

**GEORGE BRANDIS:** I am. I'm in Maroochydore. Good morning Madonna, good morning Craig.

**CRAIG EMERSON:** Hello George.

**MADONNA KING:** Now you're both on notice that you can't this morning use a string of words, words that it's been reported have been banned under new printing entitlement regulations.



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And if anyone catches you use any of these words in the next 20 minutes or so, they win an ABC bagful of goodies, which we can ill afford.

The words are disgraceful, dreadful, inept, mismanagement, reckless, recklessly, incompetence, incompetent, irresponsible, flawed, unfairly, disastrous, neglect, and disregard. Now considering the largest of those only have three syllables - George Brandis, you're not likely to use any of them anyway.

CRAIG EMERSON: Yes, he is. He likes big words.

MADONNA KING: Well I'm saying they're too small for him.

CRAIG EMERSON: Incompetence?

GEORGE BRANDIS: No, I - w... but I would like to make a serious point though. It is disgraceful, what the Rudd Government has [indistinct] one of them.

CRAIG EMERSON: See, he used disgraceful...

MADONNA KING: Excuse me.

GEORGE BRANDIS: What the Rudd Government has done to try and censor political debate in this country. The idea that a Government will say that words cannot be used to criticise the Government and then publish a list of words which politicians from the Opposition are



prohibited from using in printed material for which they are given an entitlement to get their message out into their constituency, is absolutely disgraceful.

MADONNA KING: Well you've said it a couple of times now. And we'll just find out who was the first person to actually get that.

Why are you doing that, Dr Craig Emerson?

CRAIG EMERSON: I actually agree with what George is saying philosophically - and that's a big word. But this list, as I understand it, has been generated out of the Department of Finance.

It has not been generated out of the Rudd Government or the Prime Minister's Office as George is like - has wanted to leave your, the readers with that impression.

MADONNA KING: Whose idea was it?

CRAIG EMERSON: Well there were changes to the printing entitlements, as we know. And George and I and you Madonna have discussed this before. I agree with George's basic proposition that we should not be censoring public discussion and public debate.

This list came from the Department of Finance. I don't agree with this list.



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**MADONNA KING:** But it's easy for a minister. The Minister for Finance, are you as a senior minister going to go into Cabinet and say this is just not on. You can't censor newsletters.

**CRAIG EMERSON:** Well I've just said that. That's my view.

**MADONNA KING:** But have you said it to your colleagues? Have you said it to the Minister for Finance?

**CRAIG EMERSON:** Well the story was in the paper yesterday, I think. I saw the list for the first time today. I don't think that politicians should be censored into not saying these sorts of words.

Of course, if it came to personal denigration funded by taxpayers, I wouldn't support that. But I have long supported and have long participated in the distribution of material which has been critical, when we were in Opposition, of the Howard Government. And I think that that should be allowed.

**MADONNA KING:** So will you tell this to your Finance Minister?

**CRAIG EMERSON:** Well I'm telling it to all of your listeners. And already, I think there are indications from Senator Joe Ludwig that he believes that the Department of Finance has been overzealous in the application of the new printing allowance which came out of a National Audit Office inquiry.



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**MADONNA KING:** George Brandis, credit where credit's due. Do you support that very strongly?

**GEORGE BRANDIS:** Well I'm glad that Craig Emerson agrees with me, but I don't think it's possible to avoid responsibility by saying this is what the bureaucrats did.

**MADONNA KING:** But he's asking for it to be changed.

**GEORGE BRANDIS:** Well, and I'm glad about that. But in fact, this is a decision that was made under - by bureaucrats under guidelines signed off on by Cabinet. So it's not...

**CRAIG EMERSON:** It is supported by the Coalition.

**GEORGE BRANDIS:** I appreciate that Craig valiantly is trying to distance himself...

**CRAIG EMERSON:** And supported by the Coalition.

**GEORGE BRANDIS:** ... from this decision.

**MADONNA KING:** Well it was supported by the Opposition in what way, Craig Emerson?

**CRAIG EMERSON:** Yes it was. The reforms to the printing allowances were supported by the Coalition, and this is still a subject of a cross-party discussion. I'm saying quite clearly I do not support the sort of censorship that has been mooted by the Department of Finance.



Let's work it out through a proper cross-party process.

But I do not... I do not support that sort of censorship.

GEORGE BRANDIS: Well good on you Craig, I'm pleased you do, but don't - please don't say that your government isn't responsible for what happens on its watch.

And it's not right to say the Opposition agreed with it. What the Opposition agreed to is the broad recommendations of an audit office report that was published some months ago but since that time, under the direction of the Minister, Senator Joe Ludwig, the Department has come up with some guidelines. There have been cross party discussions. And the last I've heard about these from the Shadow Minister, Senator Ronaldson, who's discussed them with Senator Ludwig, is that that list is the government's position.

Now this is...

CRAIG EMERSON: That's not what Joe Ludwig is saying. That is not what he's saying. He's said that the Department of Finance has been overzealous in its application of these new guidelines.

MADONNA KING: So do you expect this to be withdrawn, Craig Emerson?



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Would that be the normal process?

CRAIG EMERSON: Well certainly Joe Ludwig is saying that, and I would imagine that Joe Ludwig is looking at these words, and looking at this list. It was not a list generated by Joe Ludwig or his office or anyone else other than the Department of Finance.

I don't agree with it.

And I think that we should have free speech in this country. That's my view.

MADONNA KING: All right. Let's leave it there. And George Brandis, you're happy - you're welcome to bring it up again next week if it hasn't gone further.

Can we go on to an announcement you've made, I think, this morning Dr Craig Emerson - and the government's decided not to change the Australian regime for books introduced by the previous Labor Government.

Just explain this.

CRAIG EMERSON: The previous Labor Government back in 1991, it had restrictions on the importation of books where those books were also published in Australia.



And so you weren't able to bring in an imported variety in competition against the Australian published book.

The Productivity Commission did a report and said look, it should be opened up. It should be completely free.

The Productivity Commission also said that, mind you, if you do that, it will damage Australian culture, it will damage Australian authors, it will damage Australian publishers, but you should compensate them through the Budget.

MADONNA KING: Because you can get them in so cheaply?

CRAIG EMERSON: Yes and given that Australian authors' royalties are related to the value of the book, if they come in and they don't get those sorts of royalties or at the same rate that then damages Australian authors.

We accepted that argument. We accepted that the damage to Australian culture would be not a wise thing to do.

MADONNA KING: So you...

CRAIG EMERSON: And so we have not accepted the Productivity Commission's report.



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MADONNA KING: Okay so you're not going to remove the parallel importation restriction on books?

CRAIG EMERSON: That's right.

George Brandis what was the Coalition's view on this?

GEORGE BRANDIS: Well the Coalition has been eagerly awaiting the Government's announcement in relation to this and can I point out to your listeners, though I'm sure your listeners were already aware of this from the press discussion of the issue that what this will mean is that the price to readers and consumers of books in Australia will remain much higher - artificially much higher than it otherwise would have been.

MADONNA KING: And that's true isn't it, Craig Emerson? It will...

CRAIG EMERSON: [Interrupts] Well you see the internet is with us. It was born for all people in 1992; more recently people have been able to purchase books online through Amazon, the Book Depository, and there'll be more of these international providers. They can deliver within a week to your home. So that itself is applying plenty of competition to the Australian book publishing and printing industry.

MADONNA KING: But was there some kind of compromise proposals you could have looked at like involving reducing the length of the 30 day publication rule?



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CRAIG EMERSON: Well we had a look at that but the difficulty with all of that is that the internet competition through online book sellers is real; it's happening. It will probably intensify over time. So if people are not happy with the availability, the timeliness of the availability of books, or of the prices, in Australia they can order on the internet and get it delivered to their home within seven days.

MADONNA KING: George Brandis?

GEORGE BRANDIS: Well I think the point about the internet just goes to show how silly it is because people can certainly do that but what that shows is that these national boundaries are breaking down in the internet age and the - artificially maintaining for one sector of the market that - which is the largest market - that is books bought over the counter rather than over the internet, an artificially high price for Australian books I think is the immediate and inevitable consequence of this decision.

CRAIG EMERSON: Well they'll need to meet the competition from the internet. That's the reality and...

GEORGE BRANDIS: [Interrupts] But they will be artificially - they will be artificially protected from competition from one another in the market of selling books across the counter and that means that the prices will remain much higher, about 30 per cent higher...

CRAIG EMERSON: I must say...

GEORGE BRANDIS: ...than they otherwise would have been.

CRAIG EMERSON: Well those figures are completely in dispute George but as a former Arts Minister I think the authors of this country and the publishers of this country would be disappointed with the position that you've adopted on this.

GEORGE BRANDIS: The Australian publishing industry does just fine but I'm concerned about the consumers.

MADONNA KING: All right well let's move onto another issue but just announcing the Government's decided not to change the Australian regulatory regime for books introduced by the previous Labor Government and the Government has not accepted the Productivity Commission's recommendation to remove that parallel important restriction on books.

To consultants in the Rudd Government, I read Craig Emerson, spent \$454 million on consultants last year, \$454 million. Is that reasonable?

CRAIG EMERSON: It's a new government with a new set of policies and some of the impacts of those policies need to be assessed whether it's the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme...

MADONNA KING: Isn't it why you have a Public Service?

CRAIG EMERSON: Well if the Public Service were geared up to do all of this work it would be a very much bigger Public



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Service and sometimes it is more efficient and more timely to engage consultants and that's what's happened here with a range of new policy initiatives doing regulation impact statements for example.

But this is in a broader context Madonna of Lindsay Tanner and the Expenditure Review Committee identifying and settling on savings in the administration of the Government of \$7 billion.

**MADONNA KING:** So you're saying this is in lieu of full time jobs in the Public Service?

**CRAIG EMERSON:** Well just that they're specialisations. You know, like it could be specialist accounting advice, specialist economic advice, specialist engineering advice and you can't really...

**MADONNA KING:** [Interrupts] Four hundred and fifty-four million dollars worth of it.

**CRAIG EMERSON:** But I'm just saying you can't have the Public Service being specialists in every walk of life otherwise it would be an enormous Public Service.

**MADONNA KING:** George Brandis how would this compare to the amount your government spent on consultants in any one year?

**GEORGE BRANDIS:** It's substantially higher. The figure you've quoted \$454 million in the '08-'09 financial year was five per cent higher than in the previous financial year

which included the period of the change of government and higher again still than in the last full year of the Opposi...of the Liberal Party, the Howard Government. So it's - and this has come at a time by the way when there have been all sorts of efficiency dividends and restrictions imposed on the Public Service themselves. Now you know, it's of a piece in a funny way with the first topic we discussed, that is the political censorship of criticism of the Government. This is a government that is completely devoted to controlling the message. It's completely devoted to spin.

CRAIG EMERSON: [Interrupts] What's this got - what's this consultancy got to do with it George?

GEORGE BRANDIS: This is a government run by a man who is an infamous control freak who wants to control everything and the amount of public money being wasted, nearly half a billion dollars in a single year on consultancies. They're doing the work that as Madonna rightly said Craig should be done by the Public Service...

CRAIG EMERSON: [Interrupts] Oh come on George.

GEORGE BRANDIS: ...is another feature of the same...

CRAIG EMERSON: [Interrupts] I remember...

GEORGE BRANDIS: ... feature of the same mindset and you spent - you criticised the previous government...



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CRAIG EMERSON: [Laughs] Oh George...

GEORGE BRANDIS: ...for spending too...

CRAIG EMERSON: Can I have a go?

GEORGE BRANDIS: No, no let me finish my...

CRAIG EMERSON: No, no, no, no [laughs].

GEORGE BRANDIS: ...let me finish my point. You spent - you criticised the previous government for spending more than it should have done on consultancies and public advertising yet in your first full year in government you spent considerably more.

CRAIG EMERSON: I well remember the sale of Telstra George and if you're arguing that all this should be done within the Public Service which is what you've just said, you guys racked up an enormous bill on consultants' fees for the sale of Telstra, hundreds of millions, probably into the billions of dollars, so come on, give it - you know, there's a bit of hypocrisy here George.

GEORGE BRANDIS: I'm sorry Craig but this is the highest amount in any year that has ever been spent by any Australian Government. An increase of 5.6 per cent.



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**MADONNA KING:** All right you've made your point George Brandis. Do you expect it to be this high next year Craig Emerson?

**CRAIG EMERSON:** Well I'm not a - you know I can't gaze into the crystal ball but there have been new policy initiatives for a new government. I imagine that over time that this will fall away as a number and as the Public Service itself gears up to the very policy initiatives that we announced pre-election and we're now implementing.

**MADONNA KING:** Twenty-six minutes past nine here on 612 ABC Brisbane. Inside Canberra this morning with regulars Rudd Government minister Doctor Craig Emerson and Senator George Brandis from the Opposition.

To climate change and let's make it brief. We look at it each week. George Brandis do you believe - do you support Coalition senate leader Nick Minchin who's claimed most Opposition Party members do not believe in man-made global warming?

**GEORGE BRANDIS:** Well I don't know how Senator Minchin would know frankly unless he's conducted a poll.

**CRAIG EMERSON:** Maybe he has.

**GEORGE BRANDIS:** I think - and I don't think he has - I think the clearest indication of the sentiment in the Coalition Party room was when we had a very long meeting

on Sunday about three weeks ago and the overwhelming majority of the backbenchers who spoke and there were about 45 of them spoke, supported the approach taken by Malcolm Turnbull.

MADONNA KING: So you - do you believe there's a lack of commitment then by some in your party for action on climate change?

GEORGE BRANDIS: Well I think that this is an issue in which it's perfectly sen...reasonable for different people to have different views.

MADONNA KING: It's causing political heart ache isn't it?

GEORGE BRANDIS: Well you know at least in the Liberal Party we can actually have a discussion about a complex issue without being pre-programmed and told what to think and say as Craig and the members of his robotic party room invariably are.

CRAIG EMERSON: We often have you in the party room George.

GEORGE BRANDIS: So we - you know...

CRAIG EMERSON: You got that little listening device; a glass on the other side of the caucus room [laughs].

GEORGE BRANDIS: This topic climate change and the extent to which the activities of the human race are causing climate change is the great topic of the age. People talk



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about it all the time so of course there will be a variety of views among politicians themselves. But the point I'm making to you Madonna is that when we had the discussion at the special meeting three weeks ago, the vast majority of backbenchers who spoke supported Malcolm Turnbull's approach and handling of the issue.

**MADONNA KING:** All right, while still on environmental issues, a big decision is to be made in a couple of hours here in Brisbane with the Environment Minister Peter Garrett in Brisbane announcing his decision on whether Traveston Dam goes ahead or not. Do you know what that answer is Craig Emerson?

**CRAIG EMERSON:** No I don't and it wouldn't be right for me to know that.

**MADONNA KING:** Who would he tell?

**CRAIG EMERSON:** I'm not sure. He certainly has a statutory obligation to make an assessment, Madonna, of the impacts on matters of environment - a national environmental significance. That includes the lungfish and the Mary River Turtle. I don't believe it's a reassessment of the entire environmental impact statement process that the State Government has gone through.

The Commonwealth is involved where there are matters of national environmental significance such as the Mary River Turtle and the lungfish. And



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Peter would be making an announcement which is a proposed position, and then his colleagues, there are several ministerial colleagues, who have ten days - ten working days to comment on that.

That's the ... process.

MADONNA KING: And who are those ministers?

CRAIG EMERSON: Well, Tony Burke is one of them. He's the Agriculture Minister and I've just forgotten the other two, but there are three ministers who are involved in responding to that proposed response.

MADONNA KING: And so, if they - if people really disagree, or if another minister really disagreed, they can still go to Peter Garrett for the next ten days?

CRAIG EMERSON: Well they can put positions - it's actually set out in the legislation, so it's not, my understanding, a complete revisiting of the entire process, but concentrating on those issues that are of national environmental significance.

MADONNA KING: So, who has the final say? Let's say Tony Burke goes to Peter Garrett and says - Peter Garrett says today it goes ahead. Tony Burke doesn't want it. Who actually draws the line in the sand and makes the final decision?

CRAIG EMERSON: Well, Peter Garrett has the statutory obligation to make those decisions.



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MADONNA KING: And both you gentlemen are very good when it comes to knowing how spins works, how politics works, how media works, how public relations works.

CRAIG EMERSON: We're babes in the woods.

[Laughter]

MADONNA KING: Well, let's see how you answer this one.

Peter Garrett is flying to Brisbane. If he was going to hit it on the head, George Brandis, wouldn't he be doing that in the area of the Traveston Dam, in the Mary Valley?

GEORGE BRANDIS: Well, I think it's a fair point you make, Madonna.

MADONNA KING: I'm just asking the question.

GEORGE BRANDIS: I mean, if Mr Garrett...

CRAIG EMERSON: Answer the question, George.

GEORGE BRANDIS: Well, it's - I'm being asked what I think a Labor politician should do. I think that if Mr Garrett is going to make a decision that has a very big effect on people in the Mary Valley, as plainly this does, he ought to have the courage to look them in the eye.



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MADONNA KING: And, Craig Emerson, do you think it's unusual that he would hit it on the head by announcing it in Brisbane, or would that be just where the Federal office of the Environment Minister is and that's the closest place to the Traveston Dam.

CRAIG EMERSON: Oh, look, there's plenty of different ways of communicating with the local people. I don't know what the decision is. I would be speculating as to why Peter's going to Brisbane or - and not to another location.

I don't think I can say anything particularly - I'm not trying to evade the question, I just don't know that announcement that he's going to make and I wouldn't read too much into where he's announcing it. He's certainly not announcing it in Canberra, so he is coming to Queensland and I think that's credit-worthy.

MADONNA KING: Still a question to come and it relates to our dilemma for the day. If I can get you just to sit tight and we'll cross to new headlines with Donna Thorn.

[unrelated items - news break]

MADONNA KING: We're *Inside Canberra* this morning with Dr Craig Emerson and Senator George Brandis as we do each Wednesday at this time here on 612 ABC Brisbane.

And we put to them our dilemma each day, and I want to do that to you today. As you know, it's

Remembrance Day, also known as poppy day or Armistice Day, or Veterans' Day.

And there's been claims this morning by many diggers that we don't actually respect it the way we used to. That in years gone past, buses would stop, trains would stop, cars, businesses actually stopped to honour our fallen. Life gets busier, we go on and work continues.

Now, some politicians, the Opposition in Victoria for example, are calling for Parliament to be scrapped on Remembrance Day out of respect for Australia's war dead and it would allow our politicians to go back into their communities and to pay their respects and to commemorate 11 November with their local community.

Should we be doing more to remember at this time, and would a good start be that Parliament not be scheduled to sit on Remembrance Day?

Craig Emerson?

CRAIG EMERSON: That would be my preference. That's my view, that Parliament not sit. But each State Parliament will make its own decisions. The Federal Parliament isn't sitting. I'm going, after our interview today, Madonna, out to Logan and District RSL and, you know, participating in a Remembrance Day.



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We also have Anzac Day in Australia. So there are two days. In the United Kingdom and other countries, Remembrance Day is the main day. We've got two, but I think two is entirely appropriate in paying our respects to those who have fought and died in war.

**MADONNA KING:** And some people have said Parliament doesn't sit that many weeks a year. Parliament - Federal Parliament isn't sitting. It's several State Parliaments that are. Was it rescheduled so it didn't interfere with Remembrance Day or was that just good luck.

**CRAIG EMERSON:** Look, I'm not sure about that, Madonna, but I think it is good for local members to be able to go and participate in those commemorations in their local electorates. That's my personal view.

**MADONNA KING:** Senator George Brandis, should Parliament sit on Remembrance Day?

**GEORGE BRANDIS:** No, I don't think it should, and the point you make before is right. I mean, there's - Parliament, certainly the State Parliament sits seldom these days and it would be no intrusion into the governments' legislative timetable to enable state members of Parliament to be present in their communities for a day like this.

It is important that each generation be reminded of the significance of Remembrance Day. It's been a great success in recent years. The regeneration of



Anzac Day is a much more significant occasion than it was perhaps 20 years ago, and I'd like to see the same thing happen with Remembrance Day.

MADONNA KING: All right. So, both our politicians are today saying that Parliament should not sit on Remembrance Day. That's your dilemma this morning. How do you see it?

Do you remember those days when buses stopped, trains stopped, everyone actually stopped at 11 o'clock? Are we just too busy now? Do we need that annual reminder as the RSL is saying this morning that perhaps we wouldn't even stop if we weren't reminded each year.

1300 222 612 is my number and just before we go gentlemen, our - we'll be seeing you each Wednesday up to the end of the year, but then on Friday, 11 December we're having a live broadcast out in - just at the top of the Queen Street Mall and both you are coming and, I understand, Senator George Brandis and Dr Craig Emerson, keen to meet out listeners?

CRAIG EMERSON: Oh definitely sounds fantastic.

GEORGE BRANDIS: Absolutely.

MADONNA KING: And Dr Craig Emerson, I understand you'll be bringing a guitar?



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GEORGE BRANDIS: Oh God.

CRAIG EMERSON: I will be bringing the guitar.

[Laughter]

CRAIG EMERSON: Mate, I've got some irresistible words and I understand you're...

GEORGE BRANDIS: As long as you're not expecting me to sing.  
[indistinct]

[Laughter]

CRAIG EMERSON: No, I am, mate. I understand you can belt out a pretty good tune.

[Laughter]

MADONNA KING: Well, George Brandis I hear you're not adverse to breaking out into some traditional Australian poetry.

GEORGE BRANDIS: On occasions.

MADONNA KING: Well, let's make Friday the 11th one of those occasions.

GEORGE BRANDIS: [Laughs] Okay.

MADONNA KING: Senator George Brandis.



GEORGE BRANDIS: Thanks you, Madonna. Thanks, Craig.



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CRAIG EMERSON: See you, George.

MADONNA KING: And Dr Craig Emerson, thank you too.

CRAIG EMERSON: Thanks, Madonna.