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Craig Emerson steals the scene in Federal Parliament

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By [Dennis Atkins](#)

September 04, 2008 12:00am

MARK Latham hated most people in Parliament, particularly those in the Labor Party. But he had special contempt for Queensland MP Craig Emerson.

During the dark days of Labor Opposition, Emerson loved a parliamentary stunt, including bringing into the House a cardboard cat and a saucer to illustrate criticism of the GST.

Former Labor leader Latham dubbed Emerson "Catman" after that effort and described him as "an untrustworthy piece of work" in his hateful published diary.

Now the Minister for Small Business, Independent Contractors and the Service Economy, Emerson has lost none of his theatrical enthusiasm but his serious portfolio responsibilities keep this tendency in check most of the time.

But he managed to turn a question about the impact of this week's interest rate cut on small business into an attack on the Coalition's stand against the increase in the Medicare tax surcharge threshold, itself a move more suited to the stage.

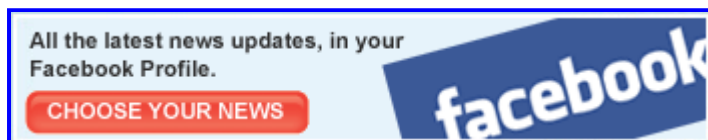
Emerson was soon in full flight, calling on the Opposition "to get on board with the Government's program of responsible economic management or get out of the way in the Senate".

"Get out of the way and allow the Government to secure a strong surplus and to provide another tax cut to the Australian people tomorrow," he said. "Help us get interest rates down and lock in those interest rate reductions for the benefit of the small businesses of Australia and the independent contractors of our country."

By the time he had finished, Emerson had most of his own front bench – especially Treasurer Wayne Swan and Finance Minister Lindsay Tanner – in shocked amusement and earned a round of applause from the Coalition.

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