



TRANSCRIPT

Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Climate Change and Water

PW 37/10

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TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW – 774 ABC MORNINGS WITH JON FAINE

SUBJECT: CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION SCHEME, TONY ABBOTT

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JOURNALIST: Senator Penny Wong from South Australia is the Minister for Climate Change and in charge of these negotiations on behalf of Kevin Rudd, the Prime Minister. Senator Wong, good morning.

WONG: Good morning to you.

JOURNALIST: The Australian people now, in an election year – a probable election year – have a clear choice. We can support a party that wants a complex and expensive emissions trading scheme as Tony Abbott describes it, or we can simply go down the other path of a million solar hot water systems and a less complex incentives scheme for industry. The way he packages it, it makes it a very attractive choice.

WONG: I think the choice actually is between a party that's saying here is a plan that does something about climate change and a party that's putting forward what is nothing more than a con job that won't do anything about climate change. That's the reality.

JOURNALIST: What's the con?

WONG: Tony Abbott's scheme simply won't work. His scheme will ensure that emissions keep rising. So Australia's contribution to climate change will actually get worse under his scheme. He is letting polluters off scot free. He is saying it will be business as usual for Australia's worst polluters. And his scheme is unfunded. He's either going to have to increase taxes or he's going to have to cut programs and he won't tell Australians what it is.

We've got a scheme that will work, will put a cap on how much pollution we have, will make polluters pay. And because there will be an increase in some prices, we'll make sure Australian families are helped by providing a very substantial assistance package where every dollar will go back either to Australian families or to Australian industry to help prepare for this change.

JOURNALIST: Tony Abbott is playing the politics of this rather than the science. And that fits in, I'd suggest to you, with what most Australian voters want to see. Which is, they're now becoming wary of the science for reasons that have been outlined almost continuously now for some months, and wondering if the exaggeration that some scientists are now shown to have engaged in is a reason to doubt the whole of climate change science.

WONG: A couple of points about that. The first is that we have so much evidence that climate change is real. It's happening now. It will get worse. And also the effects on Australia. We know we are a hot, dry country. A few degrees difference makes a very substantial difference to us in terms of our economy and our way of life.

And I think the issue here is do we want to allow what are some very dishonest claims by Mr Abbott to cloud our discussion of something that's so important for our children and our grandchildren? Because ultimately that's what this comes down to. Do we want to do something now to reduce the risk to our kids and our grandkids or don't we? If we do, Mr Abbott's scheme doesn't work.

JOURNALIST: If you're on the cusp of a dilemma, do you go ahead with your plan as previously presented to the Parliament and risk a double dissolution election where the Australian people get to judge whether they want the whole lot or just some of it? Or the alternative measure, which is now available to you, of a compromise with the Greens. Penny Wong, which way do you go?

WONG: Well, let's remember that the Greens alone cannot deliver this legislation or any legislation. The Government in the Senate needs the support of not only the Greens but two additional senators whether it's on this issue or on any other issue. We need to get seven votes. Obviously we'll continue to have discussions with the Greens with a view to passage of legislation.

But that's the difficulty that the Government faces. Because we know that Mr Abbott, having taken over the Liberal Party last year, supported by people like Nick Minchin who believe that climate change is some left conspiracy to de-industrialise the Western world. They are his views. They are the sort of extreme views on this issue which are regrettably dominating the alternative government.

JOURNALIST: Just finally, Senator Brown said he's meeting with you, but will you meet with Tony Abbott?

WONG: Well, Mr Abbott – I don't think he's interested in passage of the legislation. He's made that clear. I met for weeks last year with Mr Turnbull and Mr Macfarlane. And you might recall, we got to a position where just less than two short months ago the Liberal Party was in fact going to support the Government's scheme.

JOURNALIST: It cost Malcolm Turnbull his job. But are you prepared to even sit down with Tony Abbott?

WONG: If Mr Abbott is interested in trying to talk about passage of the legislation, of course I'll sit down with him. But at the moment what he's interested in is a dishonest campaign where he's saying things which he knows not to be true. He's pushing a set of ideas which will increase our contribution to climate change. He's pushing a plan which according to reports in the Courier Mail today will lead to power price rises, power bills to rise. But he's not providing any assistance to Australian families and he's not costing it.

JOURNALIST: Well, we will see where it goes to in the course of this parliamentary session. Thank you.

WONG: Good to speak with you.

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