



LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
THE HON. TONY ABBOTT MHR
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR WARRINGAH

31 January 2010

TRANSCRIPT OF THE HON. TONY ABBOTT MHR
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW
SYDNEY

Subjects: Kevin Rudd's great big new tax; the Coalition's direct action climate change policy; Kevin Rudd's broken promise on the private health insurance rebate.

E&OE.....

TONY ABBOTT:

The new parliamentary year starts this week. It's a very big week for our country. Mr Rudd is arrogantly determined to reintroduce the emissions trading scheme even though the world has changed since Copenhagen, even though everyone else has moved on. This is a great big new tax on everything and my job this week is to save Australia from this great big new tax. That's the job of the Coalition, to save Australia from Mr Rudd's great big new tax on everything.

We will be introducing our own policy on climate change. We will be taking direct action to tackle this issue. We will be taking direct action to reduce emissions and to improve the environment. Our policy won't involve a great big new tax and it won't involve increased prices to consumers.

The other interesting thing about Mr Rudd this morning on the Laurie Oakes programme was that he seemed to suggest that he had a secret plan to cut private health insurance much further than it's currently proposed. This is a clear breach of an election commitment by Mr Rudd. He promised before the election that he was going to protect private health insurance and that's a promise that he's very much broken.

QUESTION:

Are you going to introduce a mega tax?

TONY ABBOTT:

No. We will have a clear and effective climate change policy. It will reduce emissions, it won't increase prices to consumers and it certainly won't involve a great big new tax.

QUESTION:

(inaudible)

TONY ABBOTT:

Well, you know Mr Rudd has announced \$43 billion worth of new spending on a national broadband network. We will fund our policy from the Budget.

QUESTION:

Mr Abbott, would you concede that your own leadership and the Opposition's fortunes over the next few months will stand or fall on your environmental policies?

TONY ABBOTT:

Well I think that Mr Rudd is in a very embarrassing position here. He has staked everything on an emissions trading scheme which he can't get through the Parliament. He says that climate change is the greatest moral issue of our time and he can't get his policy on climate change through the Parliament. I think that he should start devising policies that he can implement and I will have a very effective climate change policy that the world will know about before the Parliament resumes at 2 o'clock on Tuesday and I suggest that Mr Rudd have a look at our policy and adopt it because it will be a very good one.

QUESTION:

Do you support his idea to extend the MySchool website by including a survey of parents about their schools?

TONY ABBOTT:

Well what has happened with MySchool is that the former Government introduced the tests and the current Government is now publishing the results. Now I think that the national testing programme is a good thing and I think it's good that the Government is now publishing the results. I think it's important though that you don't just give parents information, you've got to give them power as well and that's what Mr Rudd can't give because that would involve taking on the State Labor Governments and that would involve even more hostility with the teacher unions.

QUESTION:

What do you think about delays with the Henry tax review?

TONY ABBOTT:

If the Prime Minister was fair dinkum he would release the report, he would make the report public in full, he wouldn't be dribbling out bits and pieces as it suits his political convenience. But I think it's pretty clear that what this process is all about is softening up Australia for higher taxes. Ken Henry said the other day that over time, we are going to spend higher taxes and that's the problem with Labor. As soon as they see an issue, they think tax.

QUESTION:

Will you continue to block the changes to the private health insurance rebate?

TONY ABBOTT:

Mr Rudd's means test on the private health insurance rebate is a clear breach of an election commitment and yes, we will keep the Government honest here. We will block this attack on private health.

QUESTION:

Are you prepared for that to be a trigger for a double dissolution election...

TONY ABBOTT:

This is a core principle for us. We believe in choice in health care, Mr Rudd doesn't. We believe in taking the pressure off public hospitals, Mr Rudd doesn't. This is a core principle and we will defend this.

QUESTION:

How do you fund changes to health care without changing the private health insurance rebate?

TONY ABBOTT:

Well, when I was the Health Minister we invested massively in health and if Mr Rudd was a better economic manager he would be able to continue that. Okay? Thanks very much, thank you.

[ends]