



TRANSCRIPT

Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Climate Change and Water

PW 225/09

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TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW – ABC AM WITH LYNDAL CURTIS

SUBJECT: CARBON POLLUTION REDUCTION SCHEME VOTE

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JOURNALIST: Penny Wong, AM is broadcasting this morning from a dairy farm. Agriculture doesn't have the business certainty in this scheme that you are offering to other businesses. A farmer looking to get a million dollar loan doesn't know what will happen in three years time, do they?

WONG: Well we made a decision to exclude agriculture from the Bill that is before the Parliament, and we did that for a range of reasons. And one of them is there is a lot of measurement, technical and other issues which we need to work through with farmers and with their representatives before that decision can be made.

JOURNALIST: If other countries keep agriculture out, will Australia look to doing that as well?

WONG: I think that really does depend on where we get to. We said very clearly we are not going to include it in this Bill. What we will include is a voluntary opt-in for land holders for forest establishment and we will allow that to occur in fact a year before the scheme starts. So there is a potential income stream for land holders who want to, on marginal land, establish forests.

JOURNALIST: The last major change to the economy, the Goods and Services Tax, wasn't voted on until all the details were clear and yet you're asking the Senate to vote on a scheme where some of the details are far from clear, aren't you?

WONG: Well look, can I say this: in the GST and Work Choices, both two very large highly controversial pieces of legislation, there were no regulations provided to the Senate before those votes were taken. We have provided an unprecedented amount of material. We have provided activity statements, which form the basis of regulations. We've done 18 months of work building on the work that was done by Prime Minister Howard's task group. So we've had a Green Paper which was put out over a year ago which set out the Government's options, a White Paper which the Prime Minister announced in December, draft legislation as well as draft regulations and activity statements for business which are the...

JOURNALIST: But the position...

WONG: ...– we have provided an enormous amount of detail and those who are using this excuse are really, I think, finding another excuse to walk away from the national interest.

JOURNALIST: But the position of one of the major sectors, the coal industry isn't yet clear is it?

WONG: Well we have been clear that we will provide what we said, which was \$750 million to that sector. What we are working through, and Mr Combet is engaged in those discussions, is how that is best to be applied.

JOURNALIST: The certainty that there is that the vote today will be lost. The Opposition says it will present amendments for negotiation that you've promised to do, if they produce amendments. Are you willing to make any concessions in those negotiations?

WONG: Well what is certain today is that Labor Senators will vote for the national interest. And what appears certain is that Opposition Senators and the cross benchers will not. And I think it is important because today is in many ways, you know it's the big day, it's the day of reckoning on this issue. This is a reform that is long overdue, that is in the national interest, that both major political parties said they would implement when they went to the last election. And I can say Labor Senators will be voting for this, the question will be what will other Senators do.

JOURNALIST: But it's not the final day...

WONG: Your question about negotiation; I just want to get to that. I think I've said not only on this program but on many media programs, when Mr Turnbull has serious and credible amendments that have the support of his party room I will sit down and discuss them with him.

JOURNALIST: And will you negotiate in good faith?

WONG: Of course. I mean you don't sit in a room unless you're prepared to actually have an agreement. Not a single amendment has been put by the Liberal party.

JOURNALIST: But Malcolm Turnbull made it clear on this program yesterday that he will be developing amendments and that he is prepared to negotiate. Without going into the details of what ground you may be prepared to give, are you prepared to give some?

WONG: I have already said I would be prepared to negotiate amendments that are in the national interest – that are serious and credible and have the full support of the party room. Not a single amendment has been forthcoming.

JOURNALIST: That was Climate Change Minister Penny Wong with chief political correspondent Lyndal Curtis.

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