

ABC News Breakfast 23/08/2010

Those key independents entered Federal parliament just two years ago on the New South Wales north years ago as the coast. He finds himself in a very powerful position and Rob Oakeshott joins us now. Good morning and thanks so much for joining us.

A pleasure

Would you describe yourself in terms of philosophical alignment? Do you feel more presupposed to one side of politics versus the other and does that personal view matter to you and is it influential in your decision at the moment?

No, it's not. Personally, people have got to be put in boxes I'd probably be in conservative and the social progressive, but even that's pretty loose in its definition. It is issues by issues. It is a pragmatic approach to politics. It is sticking to very simple job description which I hope 149 other MPs today are thinking about, that is to advocate and lobby hard for a local electorate and through the parliament to do what I can to build a better Australia. In regards to this moment before us, I go into all negotiations that are likely to negotiations that are likely to take place with clean hands and good faith and likewise, I would hope there's 149 other MPs who are wanting to do the same. If that's the same. If that's the case, I'm confident we can achieve a really healthy outcome for politics and public policy in Australia today, get an executive with a clear majority, from that get a Prime Minister with a authority and the story of the last nine months and the story of last weekend where Australian... The Australian public been underwhelmed by the public policy process I hope we don't go through that again. I hope we engage the population better before and maybe even excite a few people. Hear now then from either side of politics to get you to join their camps? Joining a camp. This is not about a red or blue tribe. That's the type of thinking this opportunity get rid of. That's got us in the situation we're in today. Australia has been stifled by this strict party line. We saw a gang of four the whole country and what that has meant a lot of power and authority of the people is shifted to a head office to vested interests, to the latest polls. We can do better than that in Australia. If this is the opportunity that allows us to try and do that, I think it's even in the political parties' best interests to a least joining anyone's least explore it. Joining anyone's camp. I'm looking for a consensus approach to better parliamentary processes for the next three years. If we can work on that, achieve stable government, get real government, get real outcomes from the next through both the lower and Upper House, we've got an opportunity to do really good work for the Australian people and a better nation. Into that a little more deeply because it is a very interesting observation you make. You're right, in your particular circumstance and the other it is not about joining camps. Not in to join a camp. At the moment not in anyone's best interests to join a camp. At the moment I'm concerned about the foot soldiers on both parties' sides trying to put a spin on this that works in their political parties' best interests. He have which have which one has got to put their politics in their back pocket and the primary focus now is the national interest. If we can all work on that, have a moment in time where everyone actually works together in an adversarial system, we will be able to achieve something and achieve something good. Issue that I'd like to dig into a bit. these two major sides of politics is going to have to form government and is going to have to be assured it has enough votes even on the major issues such as budget bills and the like that it has all the votes that it needs to get that legislation through and then up to the Upper House. While you may the not be joining a camp, you'll have to in essence join in and promise to support in that respect... And that could be a big

challenge to you, couldn't it? Question of a new parliament will be the confidence question on the floor of on the floor of the house.

Yes question will be delivered by more than 75 people supporting an executive of the day. That's not a political party. That is the issue that's us. No-one is able to form a clear majority. This is not about political parties any more. This an opportunity for 150 members of parliament to consider all options as to how we form a clear majority and how we have a cover depth parliament for the next three years. If political partiesers as an either or years. If this stays about either or choice between the red or blue tribe, it won't work and we will have to go back to the ballot box. Those in the ranks of those two sides need to need to put that political party loyalty in the back pocket, focus on the national interest, focus on how we're going to get sphabl government hand outcomes focused government and consider all options. It's going to have to be a consensus government of some form to form a clear majority and that is not along party lines any more. I don't have to pick a red or blue team, I don't have to pick Julia Gillard or Tony Abbott. What I'm willing to do and what 149 other members should willing to do is find a way to work together to get a process in place where we can have a confident parliament with a clear majority, not about political parties, about a parliament that can work in the national interests. Oakeshott, have you had since last night in your conversation with the 7.0 report have there been incoming phone and the two leaders?

Conversations are ongoing. It's only It's only eight o'clock and of a spoken to both the leaders this morning. This morning. Rest assured, conversations are happening. That is healthy. That is a sign that both Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott are willing to do exactly what I just said and that is look for an outcome that works for everyone. I'm concerned by some of the Monday experts and the foot soldiers in both ranks who are analysing figures, whether it's majority seats, whether its preference flows, and trying to put a spin on this thing that really didn't matter. We're in a tricky situation. Everyone has to drop the political game for a minute, focus on the national outcome and focus on stable government and if we do that as a collective we will engage Australia in the political process like it hasn't been engaged before. I think that's the exciting opportunity from this challenge. Parliamentary reform that's very important to you and also other Independents such as Tony Windsor and in relation question time and there being a budget office attached to parliament. Is that something that you and the Independents will try and swiftly move in this period that you're about to try and get substantial changes made?

Look, I hope so. It's not just Independent members best interests, the he a in every low members best interests and logical extension in the people's best interests. In the Australian parliament, unlike the State houses in Australia, a local member cannot bring cannot bring an issue to the parliament that's important to his electorate and have it voted on by his colleagues. That is outrageous. That is a blieth on the system of government we've got in Australia today. Just as that one example, I would like to see private members' bills actually given some pair time, allowed to be voted on and I would be surprised if there's not 149 other colleagues of mine who mine who are watching this hopefully and nodding their head and that is regardless of political brands. The parliament needs to end parliament needs to end engage people better than it has. We've given up authority to a gang of four and it's all about the head offices, vifted interests and all about the latest poll. Saturday sent a loud message to the political system that it is failing and Australia is under well med by where we've got public debate. We can do better. I heard the message and I hope this is the opportunity now to

Address it. Know we've got know we've got you standing in the rain and I'm mortgagefied that we haven't been able to Russell up an umbrella for you. I was intrigued to hear you last night in that conversation you had with Kerry O'Brien in the 7.30, that Bob Katter finds himself in agreement with the two of you. You all find yourselves in agreement more often than that not. You're very like minded people. Why is it or how is it that you end up being like minded? Can you explain that to me why parliament is presented to Australia today is nine out of 10 pieces of legislation are agreed on by all involved. If we're fair dinkum about it, I think even Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott are good friends. We play the adversarial very well in public policy in Australia. We play the conflict well, but it would be nice at a moment like this and more generally in the which public policy is presented to also present the points of agreement where there is some bipartisanship. One that's going on at the moment, if we all step back, is Commonwealth reform and finishing the job of the Commonwealth. There are some really exciting things happening in public policy where we now have commonsense on a single industry relations system in this country. That is agreed by the Liberal Party and the Labor Party despite what you hear about industrial relations policy or Work Choices. That's one example Choices. That's one example of the exciting work that's being done by the parliament. It should be promoted. People should be interested in it and engaged in it. We engaged in it. We just hear the points of conflict and the adversarial way too often and everything else gets lost. For Tony, Bob and I a to be agreeing more often than not isn't unusual. Most members of parliament agree more often than not. I'm more than happy to acknowledge and promote. I would love to hear otherwise talk to you again. Thanks so much.

Thank you.