

National Press Club 25/08/2010

Today at the National Press Club, the four men who hold all the cards, Rob Oakeshott, Bob Katter, Tony Windsor and Greens' MP Adam Bandt unite to discuss their plans for the next government. At the National Press Club in Canberra, it's Independents' day.

(Bell rings) Well good afternoon and welcome to the National Press Club in Canberra for this National Australia Bank address. We live in interesting times. Let's just hope it's not the Chinese curse version of "interesting times", and, and four of the which most interest coalesces at the moment are on stage with us here, and that is from my left Bob Katter from Kennedy, Adam Bandt from Adam Bandt from Melbourne, Rob Oakeshott from Lyne and Tony Windsor from New England. Time is short here today we won't waste it, but our guests have agreed to speech each for three minutes at the outset. We'll give them a little bit of latitude, a bell at three minutes and hopefully they'll start to bring their thoughts to a conclusion and then we will take questions from the floor. Now given this is the new consensus politics, the Independents have agreed on the order in which they will go and first man up is Tony Windsor.

APPLAUSE

Well, thank you very much for having us and if I could firstly pay my respects to the family of the soldier that was killed in Afghanistan. We have front of us, I believe. This is going to be a very, very exciting Parliament and it's something I don't think anybody should be afraid of. And, in fact, I think it's something that most of us in the Parliament could make a very positive contribution to and you people in the media could also make a very positive contribution. The three Independents - and we're not a bloc, I don't intend to be a part of any bloc - but what we've done today is put together what we believe is a bit of a pre-emptive pathway. We really don't know how the numbers are going to crunch and it could be 10 days before we do know. So what we've embarked on is a process today, and the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister would have received this within the last half hour, is, in fact, a letter from us requesting a number of things, some some to do with Treasury, some to do with parliamentary procedure, some to they've actually got in mind for the nation of the next three years. And there's also questions in there in relation to the longevity of the Parliament. I, for one, am not interested in forming interested in forming a government if, in fact, it is the agenda of that government to get to the polls as quickly as possible. If that is seen as the option, or the agenda of either side I won't be opting for either side, I would opt out of the process and if enough people do that, we would return to the polls. Now no-one really wants that, least of all me, because I see enormous opportunities, particularly for regional Australia in relation to the circumstances we've been placed in, but also for Australia generally, to actually do actually try generally, to actually do things differently. To better relationship between the House of Representatives and the Senate, to try and establish better pathways of communications. One of the things we've done in this country is probably created one of the worst examples of the Westminster system, where it's actually become too confrontationalist and there's an expectation, and even within the media, that it will be the two dogs barking and that's what the reporting is made of. We're trying to establish a pathway that's slightly different to that, and we can't tell you all about it today, because it would be improper and rude to both the leaders. We are serious about trying to establish a pathway where government can be formed and government can be very proactive and progressive in terms of the future of this nation. So when people say "What are the issues?" There is one issue only, and that is the stability the stability of governance of this nation for the next three

years. Obviously government will have a program for the period of those years and there'll be various things that we will be questioning in relation to Treasury costings et cetera, various that are out there that have been committed by government - is that the three?

Yes, but you have some grace.

I've got to lead by example for Bob Katter!

LAUGHTER

That's three, Bob. We do have a number of issues that will be explored and we would ask both leaders to go into this process with goodwill. I think there's enormous goodwill out in the community to try and get this right, to do it differently. We aren't going to hold the Parliament to hostage. That is not my intention, I'm sure it's not the others, and I'm sure I could probably speak for Adam in relation to that. What we're about is trying to improve the process so the people in the building, the members of Parliament, the representatives of the constituencies can actually be more involved in the day-to-day running of the Parliament rather than the imposition of the executive through the Parliament and then another cat fight in the Senate. So thank you for the opportunity and I'll try and attempt to answer any questions if I could later on. Thank you.

APPLAUSE

Next up is Bob Katter.

I quote figures, and I never quote the figures without bringing along the source government, so if you want to question me, have a fight with the ABS. Doesn't matter how you read these figures, within 14 years, Australia will be a net importer of food, which doesn't surprise me. In 2003, we became a net importer of pork. In 2004 I was quite staggered to find we'd become a net importer of fruit and vegetables and in 2008, and I thank the 'Sydney Morning Herald' as being the first media outlet in Australia to draw attention to the food security issue security issue in this country. And in 2008 we became a net importer of seafoods. Now whether you want to look at the cattle figures, the last I looked they were down 18%, sheep figures down 41%. Dairying, which amazes me, butter and cheese down 19 and fresh milk down 10. Sugar we're closing 6 mills every 10 years. I'm not an expert on wheat, so someone else can give those figures. We've only got 20 mills to go and we'll have no sugar industry at Those are your four really big industries in Australia. These figures have carved some 40 or 50,000 jobs out of rural Australia, so if you live in a country town in Australia, every year if you own a business you know it's get less and less. It's not going to get better, it's going to get worse. Every year you know your kids are going to leave because there's no jobs in the local town. Every year maybe a high school maybe a high school closes, next year maybe you lose your dentist. When we went around in this election campaign holding our meetings, two people turned up, one a stone's throw from Cairns and one out in Richmond in North Queensland. They had to pull their own teeth out, they couldn't get any dentists. So having said that, you say "Well, why has this occurred?" Well if you're going to free trade when none of the rest of trade, and let me be very specific. The last time I looked at looked at the OECD figures their average support levels, subsidy tariff levels were 49%. Alright, Alright, it's wonderful to free trade, I'm all for free trade but if you're doing it, no-one else's doing it, we'll close down your food and manufacturing industries. Say goodbye to them. We all know we'll have no manufacturing again, the figures are here for car manufacturing 82%

Australian, now only 16% Australian since 1987. We have a situation in Australia, and both the mainstream parties have had inquiry after inquiry into this. They knew that Woolworths and Coles had 50.5% of the market in 1991 and they had inquiry after inquiry as their percentage control of the marketplace rose to 68% or 72% figures you wanted to use, and now it is according to their own growth figures over 85% of the market, so we've only got two people to sell food to in Australia and only two people to buy food from in Australia, and I'd love to say more about that. Let me conclude on a positive note. We thank very much the Rudd Government, and I don't mean to exclude Julia from that and the Treasurer most certainly for the clean energy corridor in Northern Australia. We thank Tony Abbott for his direct action approach, because that's really what is happening here, but we would say to the Coalition, the Liberal Party, talk about it, but this time do it. They were actually doing it. They were actually doing it, and the clean energy corridor is to get power out to Mount of us burning up a huge amount of energy in getting energy out to Mount Isa there'll be a massive transmission line and the biggest wind farm in the Southern Hemisphere. Along that transmission line will be two of the biggest solar two of the biggest solar fuel bioplants in the whole world. That line will produce if we carry it through to completion - and I plead with the major parties to look at this - 3% of Australia's electricity and 7% of Australia's petrol. Clean, renewable forever and at a price... I'll conclude on this note, there's a picture of a handsome film star here in an Akubra hat on his only trip overseas, but he went to Brazil this bloke and he filled his Holden motor car with a litre. When I filled it up in America it was 84 cents a litre. When I came back to Australia at that time it was 138 cents a litre. We're buying our petrol from overseas now, we are no longer self-sufficient in petrol, we get it from Indonesia. And I conclude on that night, do you want to fill up at that price with clean energy, or do you want to continue down the pathway which both major parties have lined up for us over a long period of time?

APPLAUSE

Rob Oakeshott.

Thanks Chris, thanks to the media, parliamentary colleagues of all persuasions who have come together today. It's a nice unity moment right there.

You're standing next to a Green!

And to all the orange people in the room and I guess to Simon Sheikh, thank you for pulling together this function and can I publicly congratulate you and the organisation for taking the High Court action you did. The significance of that for the potentially if it was a loss, I gather it was going to cost you an awful lot of money, but because it was a win in a seat like Hasluck right now, there were more people enfranchised than is the difference between the two major parties fighting out the seat of Hasluck. So by logical extension if Antony Green and others are to be believed, the action that GetUp took during the election campaign to enfranchise Australians to participate may actually influence the outcome of this national election. Job well done.

APPLAUSE

Look, Tony talked about the roadmap and we're working through that with both party leaders today. I wanted to talk about the return of the local member and the importance of local members as the building blocks in our parliamentary democracy, not our political party

democracy, and I get the irony that a new gang of four's in town, but I assure you we act for good not evil. We act for good government, not bad government, because what we are advocating is more power to 150 members of Parliament in representing their electorates and by logical extension, representing the people of Australia. Where we have gone wrong in Australia today by making it about the red team or the blue team and focusing so heavily on the executive, the gang of four, the Prime Minister, the vested interest, the head office, the polls, we have on the local member. So I'm thrilled if the negotiations... well, if the counting comes in where it's close and we are put in a position where we have to enjoy the moment of reforming the process, I am more than happy to reform the process with 150 members of Parliament participating in that exercise, and I hope that's why colleagues from within political parties are here, because I know as most who know members of political parties as well as cross-benchers, know there is frustration across the board on many topics relevant to the way our political system is run. So I've had plenty of comments, I'm sure the others have as well, about who is Rob Oakeshott? All that flirting with what have I been doing with the first two years in Parliament? I want to outline what we've been doing in the seat of Lyne very proud of for the past two years and making that link to the theory we've been talking about for the last two days as to the importance of local members in members in the system. We have worked with government locally, 17 stakeholders pulling together a job strategy for the Mid North Coast. We've done it, from Gloucester to Kempsey on the Mid North Coast we have a working document with nine key principles for implementation happening now to try to resolve what has been a generational issue of accepting unemployment rates on the Mid North Coast about 2-5% above State and national averages. It was accepted and it shouldn't be accepted. We now are quite proud of the fact, the figure right now is 6.1%, by comparison with the seat of Lyne itself, it is the lowest figure in history. I'm sorry to political colleagues here in Paterson in the seat's and in Cowper, the seat of Lyne stands out in the pack and is the lowest unemployment figure of all. The sky doesn't fall in when we think differently. We actually achieve better results on the ground and if we are serious about this whole exercise being about results, then therein lies the example of what we can do by making the local member the focus and 150 local members regardless of political persuasion, fulfilling their responsibilities, we can achieve some good things through this process and hopefully both major political parties are up for it. We're about to find out this afternoon, and hopefully we can get some change going in Australian public policy.

APPLAUSE

Adam Bandt.

Let's begin on behalf of the Greens I'd like to extend the respect of the family of the young Lance Corporal who's recently killed and welcome Senator John Faulkner's commitment to a parliamentary debate on our ongoing involvement. We do indeed live in interesting times and while Bob Katter may never have thought he'd be sharing a panel with the Greens I never thought I'd find myself to the right of Bob Katter! I've made a number of public statements about my and the Greens' involvement in the discussions taking place and just to recap, we are, of course, committed to forming effective and stable and also progressive government and helping form a government that will go for the full term and I've made our position fairly clear about where we see the best chance of that happening. But one thing that is also clear is that over the coming weeks there's going to be opportunities to explore how the will of the Australian people is expressed and to hear more from third parties and Independents can be effective in the Parliament and that's something I look forward to discussions over the coming weeks, people here on the panel. If there's a positive side about a situation where no-

one has an absolute majority, is that it does open the space for people to reconsider their positions and potentially change their minds and engage in constructive discussions and in good faith discussions, and that's certainly the spirit in which I'll be conducting the discussions over the coming weeks, is in good faith. One thing I want to remark on that perhaps has perhaps has been a bit lost in the last few days is the rise of the Greens at this election. The swing to the Greens was almost double that of the swing to the Coalition, 3.7% to the Greens, compared with 1.9% to the Coalition on the current numbers and in rural and regional Australia we are polling on average 10% and across the country, more than 1 in 9 people is now voting for Greens and if there was proportional representation we would have 17 seats in the current Parliament rather than the current 1. We have outpolled the Democrats' highest ever vote and in my seat of Melbourne, the vote on the last count has increased from 23% to 36%, which is I'm told, a record for a third party at a single House of Representatives level and we, with a Senator being elected from the Greens in every State we're in a position where we're likely to be in balance of power in the Senate for quite some time. Why did this happen? In an election campaign where the two major parties, one would have to say on any objective analysis ran a negative campaign, both against each other and in general, we put forward a positive vision based around values of compassion, sustainability and equality and during the course of my campaign, I was asked what are my priorities, and certainly representing the seat that I represent, but also giving effect to a broader sentiment. We wanted to see an end to discrimination facing same-sex couples. They are unable to get married and there's no basis in today's society for continuing that discrimination. We want to see a more compassionate treatment of asylum seekers, but most importantly - and I said this was my number one priority during the campaign - we want a price on carbon and we want it soon.

APPLAUSE

When the only party goes to the election asking for an immediate price on carbon is the party that has the largest swing to it, that is a message that can't be ignored. Scientists are telling us that we need to act urgently, the business community certainly the sections of it that I have communication with are saying, "Let's just get on with it and get a scheme in place so we know what's going to happen" is standing up and responding to the message and sending a very clear and loud statement, and I'm very proud to be the representative of that sentiment in the Lower House and I think we can't lose sight in all of the tumult of these current weeks that we are in, what the Secretary-General of the United Nations has called a climate change emergency, and while both the major parties engage in a combination of delay and denial, the swing to the Greens and what we stand for and the need for urgent action and the opportunity we now have in this Parliament business, community and everyone can move on and that we can safeguard this planet for future generations, that is something that needs to be at the forefront of people's minds and I'm, I hope, the embodiment of that sentiment.

APPLAUSE

Just before we go to questions from the floor, I have one for you all. One person not here the Tony Crook for Western Australia, he's a National, he's been counted in the count for the Coalition but has made it clear he might sit in the National partyroom but not in the joint partyroom. Can I get a view on whether or not you would count him as being a one for the Coalition?

Well, I wouldn't and I don't I don't believe he is. He may well change his mind when he gets here. On Saturday night he wanted to as I understand it, sit with the cross-benchers and a discussion I had - not with him, but with others - was that he would act as an Independent. I've since heard other things through television screens that he's a National and would sit with the Nationals, go to the National party room, if he's not part of the Coalition, he's a cross-bench and that's the way I look at the numbers at the moment.

Rob

? Look, that's up moment.

Rob

? Look, that's up to him. The reason we are in the situation we are in, though, let's be very clear about it, is by the looks of it 146, maybe 145 other members of Parliament are opting out of sorting out this problem and leaving delegated authority in the hands of four people, so pressure and people are trying to work out what we're thinking, but I would hope there's some reverse pressure and GetUp can play a valuable role in this exercise, in asking where the other local members of Parliament are in this issue of national interest? Are their electorate offices? Are they actually at work? We are all tired after six weeks of campaigning, but if we are serious about resolving it in the national interest, not in anyone's political party best interest, not in anyone's self-interest. Whether they're a West Australian National, whether they're a Green, whether they're Labor or Liberal, it does not matter. If we put the national interest first here, we can resolve this, it will be good and it will engage people.

We're going to have get consensus on two things. Adam?

I don't know, you'd have to ask you'd have to ask him.

Bob

? He can make that decision himself. I sat for the first seven years and never asked a question, because they told me what question I was going to ask. I didn't come here to represent a party, I came down here to represent the people that sent me down here, so I didn't ask any questions. I told them in fairly undelicate and fairly uncharacteristically indelicate language. Adam will come here, and he'll be able to ask a genuine question of the Parliament, and that is vitally important and the value of the partyroom you get two minutes every 10 weeks or something, and no-one takes much notice of you there, I can tell you and that's from a fairly forceful presentation.

Not everyone has to answer every question, we'll begin the questioning.

Gentlemen, I'd like to ask each of you, would you consider either side of politics if it was offered? Would you consider accepting the Speakership of the House of Representatives from either side if it was offered? Secondly, will you be taking your voters' views into account when you decide which person you're going to make Prime Minister and how will Prime Minister and how will you determine to take those views into account?

There's a couple of options. I know it of options. I know it received a mixed audience yesterday, but there is the mix and match option, the unity option, whatever you want to call

it, but the consensus option and I think if it was in that context that would be a really interesting environment to be involved. If this is going to be dumbed down and the language you just used there is the old language of one side or another... If this is going to be an exercise of red team plus, plus, plus, or blue team, plus, plus, plus, I'm not interested. That's for others to try and play that game. We're going to try to change some things and hopefully that engages everyone for the better.

The question was would you take a ministry?

We're taking everything into everything into account, constituent views running pretty hot and look, that's good but in the end, and this is a direct pitch to my electorate. I understand the views, I understand the history, but in the end they have elected someone to fulfil responsibilities as a member of Parliament and that is to act without fear or favour and that is the role of all members of Parliament in a situation like this. Put the national interest as well as electorate interest into consideration, but I would be abrogating my responsibility if the - I've been criticising polls - if the latest poll in the Port Macquarie News was going to drive a decision in the national interest first.

Adam

? During the course of the election campaign I was asked if we ended up in this situation who I would prefer to work with and I made the position clear and we've had some good discussions with the Prime Minister and those will continue later this week together with Senator Bob Brown. I'm acutely conscious of the views of the people in the electorate of Melbourne and I think that like Rob, though, I think that the responsible thing to do in a position like this is to have open and good faith discussions with everyone who's involved in this, because what needs to come out of this is a lasting outcome and one that's simply designed to get past tomorrow is fraught with problems and so the discussions faith and people need to know clearly where people last.

Is that a yes to whether you'd take a ministry or a Speakership?

That's not a high priority for me.

But a possibility?

I

I think I've answered that.

Very definitely no and very definitely no on the first two. On the third one, I clapped when Rob said that, because I'm sorry, people in this room don't understand. You're living now in a different paradigm. You're living in the same paradigm as people in Europe and all the people now. Even England has that. The same paradigm as Canada and New Zealand. The rest of the world hasn't got this primitive, and it is an 18th century model. It is not a model for the modern day, in answer to your third part of the question, I'm not backing Julia, or I'm not even interested in considering Julia or Tony Abbott. All I'm interested in is the people back home, the people of North Queensland. I'll be voting for them, and that means that the deal

that's on the table that is most acceptable to them and I've bought and sold cattle for a large portion of my life and I'd like to think I can drive a deal. My colleagues here have been very conscious and have impressed upon me quite rightly so the responsibility we have to deliver secure government to the people of Australia. All those European countries have no stability.

The answer in terms of the ministership and the Speakership is no, and no. Yes I would take into account as part of the mix the electorate's views, but I say to them and you as well, the main agenda here in my view is to get something that's workable and if people from either side of the Parliament think they're going to play some sort of a game in terms of conjuring up some sort of temporary Parliament I temporary Parliament I won't support either of them, and if I sense that either side is not serious about doing this - and there may be something in our final document which has something to do with this very issue - but if they're not serious about it, I will support that party that is the most serious about looking at some of these issues and the reform processes that we may have to be interested in if, in fact, there is a hung Parliament.

Today you put out a statement about seeking some briefings from the top of the public service. Before each election there are briefing documents prepared for Government and Opposition. Do you want to see those documents because that would then allow you to evaluate the policy platforms of both the major parties and see how they would govern? If there are costings blow-outs identified in those documents would that be a factor in you evaluating how either side would govern? And also, do you want to make that information available to Adam and also to Andrew Wilkie?

Yeah look, I've spent the last three team-blue team concept and only just found out that under caretaker conventions both sides get a red book or a blue book, so it is entrenched the system that we've got and we have flagged that we are seeking access to both Ken Henry and costings on election promises and the impacts on the Budget and everything will be taken into consideration when we draw conclusions we draw conclusions if, in fact, as Tony just mentioned we do actually enter into a negotiation stage. So we're doing what anyone would do if they're buying a house or going into any negotiation, we're seeking all information available to try to make some sensible decisions. That is the stage we're in. Today we're meeting with Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott this afternoon and essentially the seven key issues we're looking for is a call for papers or a call for information so we can if it does come around towards the end of next week where we are at the pointy end of having to start to negotiate, we will be forearmed and ready to negotiate on fair territory.

Anyone disagree with that?

No

. Just quickly, would you make them public?

Depends what's in them. There are sensitivities. If sensitive to national interest, we're not here as wreckers, we're here as builders, so if there are sensitivities in the national interest and if we are all serious about the national interest question, well no, but that depends on the advice we get. I think we're taking a huge step if we can actually get access to them under caretaker conventions and I hope both Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott are up for it.

One of those issues is the defence area and there may well be some areas there that should not be made public, but my view would be that if... be. It's a test for the existing parties in terms of their promises going into the election. I'll give you an instance, broadband. This \$43 billion figure that's bandied about. I haven't seen the real trail that ends up with that number and I think it's number and I think it's a fictitious number, but we want to find out what the real one is and there should be a trail that leads us to that.

To the three country Independents, if one side gets more seats do they have an automatic right to be chosen by you? Secondly, Tony Windsor in particular has stressed and again just then that you don't want to sign up to something and then find the government goes to a premature election. Are you suggesting you government to run the full three years, and isn't this really a bit of a bridge too far?

In our statement today, we've actually outlined a whole range of issues and one range of issues and one of those issues that is raised... and it gets to the seriousness issue of do they actually want to govern? Or would they rather go back to the people? Now we may gauge that in different ways, but it means a lot to me, I think, if the parliamentarians that have been elected and it goes a bit to what Rob was talking about earlier. The people have had their say, they want a Parliament for three years. I'm not interested in having a Parliament for three weeks. We'll call it off now if that's the case, and what was the first part of your question? It's one of the mix, but the key thing again is stability. It has to be stability and it gets to the first part of the answer. If it's not stable, if it's untenable at the start we should recognise that and call it off.

Can I just add on the back, and this is another one for GetUp and for Australians to watch. In Tasmania when a situation like this arose there was a political strategy by one of the organisations involved seriously considering pulling out of government and destabilising to try and then push everyone back to the polls as quickly as possible. If anyone plays that game in this situation, putting the national interest at the expense of some political party interest, that is a blight on our that party should not be rewarded. But we need to put that upfront early. We need to get people locked in, in good faith and we need to make sure we have the national interest at the core of these negotiations that more than likely look like they're going to happen over the of weeks.

Michelle's question, I have very strong feelings about this. The government of Australia is not a political toy for the political parties to play with. Both Tony and I were savagely attacked continuously and probably Rob as well, but I note Tony and I were about not turning up for votes. I'm not running down every two minutes you want to play a party political game and the people of my electorate had a good look at the advertising used and made a very strong judgment. I think more seats and more votes should be taken into account, but it's only one of a number of factors. I am a person fighting for survival for the area I represent, I'm not really too worried about any other considerations. These people are fighting for survival, but if I have any say in our little group that are talking together then I will be pumping very strongly for the strongest of strong positions that the people have made their decision, they've put these people here whether you like the people that are sitting up there or not, they have made that decision and you will live with it, you will live with it for three years. The Australian people won't be told they're wrong and now we're going to play some cunning political devious games.

Good on you, Bob.

If it does end up... I guess this is a question to relevance to Mr Bandt. If it ends up at 72, 73 with the Coalition on 73 you've said that will be one of the factors in that. Now given that's a Coalition that's 73 and given Mr Bandt has declared he would and int mated he would go for Labor, would you other three regard him as part of a Coalition with Labor effectively and, therefore, both at 73, and Mr Bandt, would you consider formalising that if that's what you needed to if that's what you needed to do to secure progressive government as you've said was your aim?

Consider formalising what?

A Coalition arrangement with Labor?

Yes, but I don't know that Coalition is necessarily the right word. At the moment there's nothing on or respect. The discussions have only just begun. We don't even know results from the rest of the country yet and so it's far too premature to be talking about whether, what kind of arrangement it is and so on. Ultimately, however everyone wants to describe it, what I'm interested in is an arrangement that delivers stable, progressive and effective government and I'm not particularly hung up on one describes that and I'm certainly not going into the discussions I'm having with preconditions, or with any requirement for anything at the end other than an arrangement that will result in stable, effective and progressive government.

It's a numbers game now. We've got to wait for final counting. All factors will be taken into consideration. In the end, everyone who is going to be part of a minority government, regardless of political persuasion will have to the floor of the House and supply. They're the two key issues where that's at the core of what stability is, now how formal that arrangement is, let's let this whole thing play itself out.

People of rural Australia have put some of us here, they expect a return having done that and as far as I'm concerned they will get a return for having done that and the major political parties have treated us with contempt to a point of where I think three, four years ago whenever it was we had a farmer committing suicide every four days in this country. That will stop, and please God, we have the power to stop it, at least to start turning its around again into a paradigm that is fair to all Australians. Fair to all Australians.

I've got a question about a carbon price. We know Adam's view, he's a member of a party with a member of a party with a very strong view on the need for a carbon price, I'd like to ask all three of the rest of you, would you be likely to support a government that proposed a carbon price and if so, what kind of mechanism would you like to like to see as the best way to put a price on carbon?

I'll lead, because one of the highlights of my last week of the election campaign was watching you and Bob Brown going head-to-head in the Press Club. I gather you're not on the side of action. I don't know what dot com website that is. My idea is, and I hope it's the idea for the future is eminent scientists, people who've dedicated this issue have done good work and the vast majority of the scientists who work in this area in Australia today say there's an issue. Yeah, there's a debate about it and stratospheres and sun and whatever, but in the end the best advice from the best people is there's a problem. We then quite rightly shifting the process along engaged an eminent economist Ross Garnaut and quite rightly left it to him, time resources and money to pull together that science and try to turn it into policy. Then when it came to politicians the thing went to mush and I think we can go back to Garnaut and start to

work on that again in this environment and try and find a way through. Now whether that's a price or not, those conversations are going on with two party leaders at the moment. We are living in the world now of compromise and negotiation. Everyone knows my personal preference. Greg Combet and I banged heads on regular occasions as it got dumbed down three times dumbed down three times through the Parliament through no fault of Greg's. Let's get something on the table for all that work, and it's not just on this topic. You could do Henry Tax Review, you could do 2020 summit, you could do about 100 things from the last Parliament where good work was done, people were engaged, we failed to deliver.

APPLAUSE We are members of Parliament, so when these things come before the Parliament, we actually get a vote, it's not bar room talk and argument to me when those sorts of things come up. I didn't support the CPRS, I won't get into the reasons why, but my personal view on this is that I support whether it applies to a market or not or a carbon tax or whatever else, I have great concerns as a parliamentarian and as a parent that if the climate scientists are, in fact, right - and I'll be dead before whether I know whether they're right and most of us in this room - this room - if the climate scientists are, in fact, right and we do nothing, what have we done to future generations? If they're wrong and we do something, we've probably paid a little bit more in electricity bills and ended up with a cleaner more sustainable world. So I think it's self-evident whether it's through a market mechanism or market mechanism or not, we have to make substantive changes in the way in which we live. In the renewable energy areas, they constantly introduce policy direction and then change it, and the community keeps getting these mixed signals. They want to go in the right direction, but policy starts them and then stops them and I think we have a unique situation in this Parliament Estimates Committee to start and drive this thing forward. There's no my mind, most of the parliamentarians in their heart of hearts are concerned about this issue and they're absolutely reflecting the views of their constituents.

APPLAUSE

I go into Sydney a lot and you ask the taxi drivers what people are talking about, at the height of the carbon debate I said "Anyone talking about carbon?" "Nup". We did intense discussions with balance discussions with balance of power meetings with people, very, very intense discussions. I was absolutely amazed, not one single one of those 20 meetings, and some of my areas are the strongest green areas in Australia places like Mission Beach, those areas, not one single person raised the issue. Let me tell you bluntly what happens here, because all you've got left in this country now, you've destroyed your manufacturing, you've played down most of your agriculture, all you've all you've got left is mining and mining consists of three products - coal, iron ore and aluminium. Aluminium is congealed power. If you want to increase the price of power then you can kiss goodbye to aluminium. It's an industry that will close down this country and as far as coal goes, well who are the champions of anti-coal on the nation? Australia. Who are the greatest exporters of coal in the world? Australia. So if you want to do a deal the most terrible body blow to your economy go down that pathway. I'm sorry to be disagreeing with Adam, but I'm disagreeing strongly because I'm very aware of the dangers to my coming up here. Having said that I was mines and Energy Minister in Queensland. I did not want to build another coal fired power station. We had four, I didn't want to build a fifth one. I found out if we put solar water systems on all of the Government Houses I could postpone for nine years the building, I could postpone for nine years for building that power station. Now if you are serious about doing something, don't make the corporations in Sydney that buy and sell securities, because they're going to buy and sell units which are going to race out there and plant millions of trees all of which

will die. I can give you actual figures from North Queensland when trees were planted. I thought it was excellent, I had egg all over my face, because the vast bulk of bulk of them tied. But Morgan Grenfells the Goldman Sachs they're rubbing their hands together. If you're selling carbon units through carbon taxes and that sort of approach, but if you act... I mean, for heaven's sake the clean energy corridor is out there. Al Gore, I'm no fan, but he's the patron saint of greenies, his first solution is ethanol. The solution is here to me if you're in to me if you're in any way serious about it... and I'm not a sceptic, I'm Anthony Laffranchiy on the global warming connections, but in the oceans I can give you the science of why the global warming connection, there's just no science, and why there is science in the ocean. So even an ante like me says "Hey, fellas, we better pull in the reins here" , but there's the way to do it. There technologies for producing no carbon emissions coal and why isn't that being done? That's all I can say to you. So I'll conclude on that note and just say I was in the box seat, I made those decisions and by the way I won the science prize for Australia for putting a solar stand-alone system into Coconut Island.

The countries and economies that are going to do well in the 21st century are those that lead the world in renewable energy technologies and one of the things that the outgoing Member for Melbourne Lindsay Tanner said was that a key question we need to ask ourselves is what is Australia going to sell to the world in 15 years' time? And it's a good question and if you ask the major parties the answer they will give is coal, maybe a bit of uranium, and I think if you ask The Greens the answer is we should be exporting world-leading renewable energy technology. Now at the moment what we've got is a massive misallocation of subsidies within this country and we've seen it including around the current Labor Government in its last term, while solar technology companies go under, they can find the better part of half a billion dollars to go almost immediately to capture and storage and meanwhile, renewable energy technologies are struggling simply because their lobby groups and businesses don't exist with the same force yet as coal. So there's two things that we need to do. One is to begin a proper process of redirecting those subsidies and that investment into the industries of the future and secondly, as Rob has said, there is a roadmap and a script for us and what the Greens have been taking to the election and what was responded to so well with a larger swing to any political party is a 2-stage process, as set out by Ross Garnaut. That is first, let's put a price on carbon, a price and have that in place until we have a fully-fledged robust Emissions Trading Scheme up and running. Get that in now, we can have the debate over the next couple of years about what it should look like, but let's start acting now according to the script and the roadmap that Ross Garnaut has set out for us.

I've been listening carefully, I'm hearing the optimism, I'm hearing the new paradigm vibe, I'm getting the same vibe from the major parties and it strikes me you guys want to change what is really an ingrained political culture. These major party guys will smile, nod, say whatever they think you want to hear to get your support to form a government. Do you think that you can truly bust through what is culture and if you can't, what is the best you can hope for in terms of empowering local MPs for a system that going on beyond this period of a minority government and goes into the future?

Option B is minority plus, plus, plus, plus from us. Option C is we go back to the polls. Option B is minority government plus, plus, plus. We'll play that, how do we get to 76 game, but I'd like to think we are a bit more engaging in the moment. engaging in the moment. I would like to think that people within the political system heard what was said on last Saturday and in my view and reading of the ballot box and informal votes and frustration, that Australia was completely parties but by the way the Parliament itself has been behaving.

I'm optimistic... well, it's empty, but I'm a glass half full kind of guy and there you go, look what's happening. I'm we're doing our best and that's going back to my point about there should be 145 others involved in this. I shouldn't have to be living on hope, and the same for the others. This is a moment where we can all do some things for all of us to get some better outcomes. Now if we're left to the dumbed down decision of blue or red we'll do it, but there is a window of opportunity here to do something else and hopefully the Australian people put the burners on some local members so we can achieve it.

I'd ask people to have some faith in relation to this. This is the start of a process, not the end of it. Because we can't tell you everything that's in the document at the moment and we don't know the responses from the two major parties but I'd ask you to wait and see on this. I think there is a mechanism that can actually bind a good outcome, but no Parliament can bind a future Parliament to anything, but the people who can are the people and that's why I believe the media are very important in relation to this issue. If you people are sick of the nonsense you've had to put up with, get behind this, don't support us, but promote some of the concepts, because the people are absolutely sick of it. You people who are out there on those buses you saw the nonsense that went on. You had to listen to the drive every day and day and then try and make something of substance out of it for your readers and listeners, so the media could be invaluable in relation to pushing the system to improve itself. It's been improved in other parts of the world and it can be improved here.

You know the moment we've got. From the result on Saturday, we can if we want to move forward with real action. It is up to those involved in six weeks of campaigning who are tired and just want to get their lives back in order to embrace the moment and let's do it.

I thought someone might take me up when I said no country is left with a 2-party system on the United States. The United States doesn't vote along party lines. They have constituency-based democracy through their primary system and I followed the ethanol debate closely. The 15 oil-producing States opposed it tenaciously and everyone could see it was a good thing to do. They all backed it. Tony They all backed it. Tony and I have moved it in the House constantly, we get no-one in our Parliament to back it at all, except us. What is happening is a Prime Minister was sacked by a little tiny group of party people. The Australian people didn't have a say in that, but what is happening here is we are answerable whether we like it or not. We are answerable to the people in our electorates - nobody else. So the people are exercising very, very real power here and I must say before I became... I'm not allal true wistic, I checked out what was going to happen to me if I became an Independent and at that stage when I checked it out, no Independent had ever been re-elected to the Federal Parliament in Australian history and so I was walking into an open grave. At that stage it was a better fate from what I was suffering. That's not the case now. Not only have we been re-elected but we're getting new people coming in. Within an ace of getting another two. It's still argued whether there's two or three out there and maybe you could include Adam maybe at a person looking at different alternatives now. The people are not going to sit in a Woolworths-Coles democracy. They can't change Woolworths-Coles, but they can damn well change the Woolworths-Coles democracy.

It was Coles one of the two Independents in 1940s. Adam?

I think we've opportunity. Around the world there are many places where multiparty democracy is the norm and where minority governments are the norm and it's worked in State parliaments around the country in very recent memory. It's an enormous opportunity. I think

question is, how likely are we to be able to succeed? I think the answer has to be borne in mind is it's very clear from this election that's what people want. Neither major party can say they've won this election, whatever happens and what has been said very loud and very clear is that the voices of third parties and Independents deserve a greater say in the national Parliament. That is what people have voted for and the obligation is now on everyone, all 150 of us, to deliver that.

I've been given the nod to carry on for another 10 minutes.

One single discourteous to Adam, but if we're described as three friendlies up here, we Independents then we got the biggest increase in vote.

My question is short and sharp, do you support a profits-based tax on the minerals industry and do you, therefore, or not support the minerals resource rent tax?

It's a good question, because it's another example of where Parliament flopped at the end of the last term. There was a process where people were engaged not just Ken Henry, Heather Ridout and others were involved, eminent people from Australia engaged in the process. We all waited for a couple of years, we all got locked up for half a day of our life looking at the Henry Tax Review and what came out of it was a dirty big fight with the mining industry. What was in that Henry Tax Review is still there and that was the shift from a States-based royalties system to a resource rent tax and my were engaged and interested and supportive. It's there to go back to. Let's stick to the script, keep it simple - I don't say stupid - the KISS principle and let's work on genuine tax reform for the future of this country. There was good work done. I'd love a Government response those recommendations, not just a couple, and then let's have a genuine tax reform debate in this country and work forward from there. So for me, the Henry one makes sense. I won't there to pop champagne corks with Twiggy Forrest, there's no legislation to see. That's an example of what we're talking about today. If parliamentarians had been engaged and local members had been engaged and by extension communities had been engaged, rather than a gang of four and some vested some vested interests, we might have got a better result for Australia.

Rob's final point was a very important one that involved in that decision and the Government suffered because it didn't involve the Parliament. In technical terms yes, I do support a rent resource tax. I think it's a much more efficient way - and so does the minerals industry, the Minerals Council had a submission to the Henry review which was supportive of the concept of a rent resource tax as opposed to a royalty. A royalty based on production as compared to paying a tax when you make a profit. I would have thought it's almost by definition the way to go. I'm very surprised that the Coalition didn't adopt that particular way. In fact, I think the only reason they didn't... and I won't get to any relationships in terms of funding between various people and others, but I think the relationship, the only reason they probably didn't because it was a convenient add-on to the waste and ramblings going on in terms of the stimulus package and it became another development in terms of a political strategy rather than having anything to do with economics and the raising of taxation from our resources.

APPLAUSE

We supported and proposed tax and were pretty disappointed at the backdown. Both within my electorate and more broadly in Victoria around Melbourne where I was campaigning, I was surprised by the number of people who voluntarily came up to me and said "What a good

idea it was in proposal, and how disappointing it was in what it says about the current state of democracy in Australia think the mining tax would have done absolutely untold damage to the economy of this country and I speak with authority. I represent the richest mining province on earth and I speak with authority because I made my living out of mining at one stage of my life, I was a mining man, not a cattle man. 19 out of 20 projects will lose money, which means you've got to make super profits on the 20th to cover the other 19 and that is just an elementary factor and Tony and Rob's point was very right. If I'd been spoken to about that, I'm sure that Wayne or the Prime Minister would have listened, if they had spoken to me first and said "Mate, you've got to understand, 19 out of 20 are going to go down the shoot, you've got to have the super profits or no-one's going to go there, they're just going to go to other countries". BHP is not really interested in coal in Australia, they're going overseas. Also, it's a roller-coaster industry. The price I think... I'm pretty certain was \$4,000 three years ago. Last year it was \$1,000. If you're going to ride that roller-coaster you've got to be able to make the profits on the upswing to cover you for the upswing to cover you for the losses you're going to make on the downswing. It's just not that sort of industry that you can do that and come along and say "We can take that". The concept and the principle involved if it had been 5% returnable to infrastructure in those areas I would have been the first to applaud the Government, but it wasn't. It was highly destructive. My own home town lost 500 jobs immediately. Every marginal mine in Australia was threat.

We're going to have a quick word from Tony. One more question to go.

Just in terms of my answer, I didn't support the original rent resource tax, I thought the threshold level was too low and the definition of super profit too low and there were a lot of technical details I don't think details I don't think most of us fully understood. But the us fully understood. But the second package I think is getting closer, but the concept of a rent resource tax should be endorsed because it's a be endorsed because it's a more efficient and effective way of taxing profit than to tax production.

I've sat here and listened, I've heard different views from all of you on mining tax. Different views from all of you on climate of you on climate change, I've heard different views ranging from free from free trade. If you were all sitting in the same party, would it not be a recipe for actually nothing happening on any of those if you all held to your views and do you accept at it is, a 2-party system with an enforced minority within actually does get things done? If not, would you be prepared if you were sitting in one of those parties to accept the majority view of the party you sit with even sit with even if it went against your own view?

I'm not sitting in a party, and I don't intend to be.

I think you know the answer! The majority view that we have an obligation to accept is the majority view of the Parliament. That is the majority view that every single member of Parliament should be obliged to accept. Pushing decisions behind closed doors is the problem. The best point of engagement for of engagement for Australian people... and it's actually not rocket science, it's the original concept, is on the floor of the Parliament. We're not saying it's going to be holding hands and skipping down streets, we're saying it's going to be a fight and we