



THE HON GREG HUNT MP

Shadow Minister for Climate Action, Environment and Heritage

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID SPEERS

SKY NEWS ON THE HOUR

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E&OE....

Topics: Marriage Amendment Bill 2012, Carbon Tax

DAVID SPEERS:

Well joining me now to discuss this and portfolio issues as well is Shadow Environment Minister, Greg Hunt.

GREG HUNT:

G'day David.

DAVID SPEERS:

Thanks for your time. I want to get on to the legislation that was introduced at Parliament today on the Carbon Tax as well but firstly on Cory Bernardi – are you embarrassed by what he's done?

GREG HUNT:

Well the comments were wrong, they were unacceptable and the Leader took swift, decisive and very powerful action. So my view and our view is that they don't represent the party, they don't represent what we believe and they don't represent what is acceptable. The action could not have been more swift, more immediate or more decisive.

DAVID SPEERS:

And is it, why do you think he was told to go. Is it because of ill discipline as Tony Abbott did suggest in his press conference, or because the comments were offensive?

GREG HUNT:

Well both elements are embodied in the decision. The nature of the comments and then the fact that it was so outside the belief, the practice, the history, the mainstream of the party, so the combination of substance and of discipline came together and it was a swift, immediate, decisive and could not have been a faster response.

DAVID SPEERS:

Are you disturbed that Cory Bernardi in his statement this afternoon's expressing no regret for the comments that he made?

GREG HUNT:

I'll let him speak for himself, I'm speaking for the party. Our view is deeply different. Our approach, our commitment is towards genuine rights but let's be clear, the comments were unacceptable, the price was immediate and absolute.

DAVID SPEERS:

And on gay marriage itself, you're amongst the majority of the house that rejected the bill in the house today. Do you think it will ever get through the parliament?

GREG HUNT:

Look I can't speak for decades or generations hence. The Parliament made a decision today on the bill before us today.

DAVID SPEERS:

Well what was the basis of your decision?

GREG HUNT:

My view, and I have said this before so it's not a new position it's what I've held for a long while, is that the right step at some stage will be civil unions. I think that will deal with the concerns of those who have a belief that within the church they have a deep commitment to the notion of marriage and with equality in real terms in terms of rights. So my view is that the likely course of action, and one which I would support, is civil unions.

DAVID SPEERS:

But what was on the table today was gay marriage. Am I right in interpreting it's a religious argument against gay marriage?

GREG HUNT:

Well it's about the balance within society. For me I have a strong, clear, absolute view that the right step forward is civil unions.

DAVID SPEERS:

Okay, let's move on to the portfolio. Now Greg Combet, the Minister, today introduced legislation to link the carbon price in Australia to the European scheme and do away with the floor price after 2015. The bill's been introduced, which way will you vote on this?

GREG HUNT:

Well we have said that we won't be supporting it because this is a deeply flawed approach. By the way this bill represents complete chaos. It's the eighth major change in the Carbon Tax in just over 8 weeks. So what we've seen....

DAVID SPEERS:

Isn't it a change you'd welcome though? Presumably lower the price and link in with Europe?

GREG HUNT:

Well the Government says that it's not changing the price. Mr Combet has said that the Government stands by its estimates. That means no change in electricity prices, but more than that there are deep flaws in it. There is a dud deal which puts back the ability of Australian farmers to sell anything to Europe to 2018. They have been locked out of Europe whilst we've given virtual monopoly (inaudible) to Europe. So we've seen bail-outs, we've seen

changes in the liable parties, the people who have to pay the tax, we've seen changes in the grants, we've seen freezing of the grants. Now we've seen the floor price removed which on this program on the 21st August Greg Combet said, "Not on my watch mate. It's staying". And the Prime Minister said was "vital, essential, critical." These things change by the day. The Carbon Tax is in absolute chaos.

DAVID SPEERS:

The Reserve Bank doesn't seem to think it's had any impact or much impact at all on price. In its minutes released this week it said the introduction of the carbon price had not yet had a significant effect on downstream price pressures. There's no evidence the carbon price has raised medium term inflation expectations.

GREG HUNT:

There's absolute evidence that the carbon price has raised electricity. It's an electricity tax. And that's what it is.

DAVID SPEERS:

So the Reserve Bank's wrong?

GREG HUNT:

No. What I am saying is that electricity prices have gone up in NSW. Nine out of an eighteen per cent increase which is arriving for small businesses now and for families in about a month's time.

DAVID SPEERS:

But that's what the Government estimated. And that's what is compensated for.

GREG HUNT:

Well what small businesses are finding is that a large number of them - and there are 2.7 million small businesses - a large number of them had what are called discounted tariffs. What that means is that when they get the Carbon Tax the real impact on their electricity bills has been 10, 15, 20, 25 percent because they were on a low tariff the Carbon Tax comes in at a fixed rate and they are getting the shock of their professional lives that their electricity bills are being driven up. Whether it's hospitals, which have contacted us, motels, whether it is small corner stores, whether it's small manufacturers - they are being hit and they can't pass on the costs.

DAVID SPEERS:

Greg Hunt good to talk to you.

GREG HUNT:

It's a pleasure.