



Senator Mathias Cormann

Senator for Western Australia

Shadow Minister for Employment Participation, Apprenticeships and Training

**Transcript of Interview on ABC2TV, News Breakfast
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Presenters: Virginia Trioli and Joe O'Brien

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TRIOLI

Now you're watching ABC News Breakfast. The Government has launched an unprecedented attack on the Coalition, calling it the most obstructionist opposition in thirty years. Prominent government ministers fronted the media yesterday to demand cooperation saying important bills are being sabotaged by the opposition.

(Conroy comments not transcribed)

O'BRIEN

And for more on this Liberal Senator, Mathias Cormann, joins us now from Canberra and firstly Senator do you expect this Telstra Bill to be voted down in the Senate care of the Coalition and the cross benches.

CORMANN

We are opposed to the Telstra Bill. It's a bill that would destroy Telstra and its really all part of a political strategy by the Rudd government to try and cover up for their failure on their pre-election promise to deliver on a national broadband network.

If I can make the more general point, the Rudd Labor government clearly doesn't like it when we scrutinise legislation. The principle is really very simple. If the government puts forward good legislation we will support it and if the government puts forward bad legislation which is not in the national interest we will oppose it.

On occasions the government has agreed to make improvements to legislation as a result of pressure put on them by the Coalition and other Senators. However, some legislation just can't be improved and the Telstra Bill falls into that category.

O'BRIEN

But doesn't the government have a mandate on some of the key issues that have been frustrated in the Senate?

CORMANN

Well the government does not have a mandate for example to reduce or scrap private health insurance rebates for millions of Australians. The government gave a most emphatic pre-election commitment to retain the existing private health insurance rebates.

This government has become arrogant very quickly. They don't accept the legitimate and very important role of the Senate to scrutinise their legislation and to hold them to account. There is example after example where the Senate has stood up for people across Australia and for the national interest in the face of the government blatantly seeking to breach emphatic, most emphatic, pre-election commitments.

O'BRIEN

Do you see this as the government positioning itself to give it the option at least of calling a double-dissolution election?

CORMANN

Everything the government does at present has to be seen in the prism of their attempts to get themselves re-elected. They're not governing in the national interests at the moment they're governing in the interests of their own re-election and their own political interests.

We've wasted weeks and weeks in the Senate debating legislation which the government has known all along did not have the support of the Senate. If I can just make this point: the Coalition, while we can have a view we cannot block legislation on our own. We have to have at least two Senators sharing our judgement on a particular piece of legislation. That is something of course that the government conveniently likes to forget.

O'BRIEN

Something else that could cause a flash point between the Coalition and the government is the issue of parental leave and Tony Abbott is not ruling out the option of the Coalition moving to either block or seriously amend Labor's parental leave scheme. Is that what the coalition is planning to do in the Senate?

CORMANN

Well, the government should come on board with Tony Abbott's plan for paid parental leave. The government has put forward what we would describe as a mickey mouse scheme, which doesn't address the financial needs of parents.

Tony Abbott has put forward a scheme which would be good for women, good for families and children and good for the economy moving forward. Tony Abbott's scheme will help lift our productivity and increase employment participation rates. Really what we've said to the

government, we've put forward a very constructive, a very positive proposal, come on board with our scheme, but I guess this debate will continue to play out over the weeks ahead.

O'BRIEN

Senator Mathias Cormann thank you very much for your time this morning.

CORMANN

Thank you.

ENDS