



# TRANSCRIPT

## ACCI CHIEF EXECUTIVE PETER ANDERSON DOORSTOP, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA 23 NOVEMBER 2009

### ACCI RESEARCH ON CPRS

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#### **Peter Anderson**

Today the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is releasing public opinion survey work commissioned by the Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry and conducted by Galaxy Research over the weekend on the Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme.

That survey work compliments survey work by businesses, which ACCI conducted in October and was specifically directed at trying to secure for our federal parliamentarians a good grasp of what is the priority the Australian community and the business community give to the passage of the CPRS prior to Copenhagen.

The survey conducted over the weekend was conducted in the context of this week being a critical week for the fate of the Government's CPRS.

On an issue, which divides the community quite significantly, the results of the Galaxy Research send a sobering message both to the Government and to the Opposition. The survey shows that 71% of consumers believe that electricity prices will rise as a result of a CPRS. It shows that 49% of the public are concerned about job losses if Australia was to move in isolation from other nations. It shows that more than 80% of the public do not believe they have sufficient information to make informed decisions about the impact of a CPRS. Critically, it indicates that 54% of the public do not believe that Australia should proceed to implement a CPRS in advance of global agreements being reached. That is, 54% do not believe that we should move in advance of Copenhagen.

What this survey does is to send a warning light across the bows of both Mr Rudd and Mr Turnbull as they conclude negotiations this week. The community and the business community are saying that it is a greater priority to get the CPRS right, it is a greater priority to act globally rather than unilaterally and there are great risks for Australia both in terms of jobs and energy costs if we are to move unilaterally and get this wrong.

There is no need for the CPRS to be concluded this week, even though the politics in Canberra suggest this will be a week where there will be a desire to have negotiations conclude, rap things up, get out of the place, and look towards Christmas.

Rather, the national interest is to ensure that the CPRS is a responsible economic model that does not undermine Australia's economic competitiveness.

The geo-political position has also changed in recent months. The Copenhagen summit is now not going to be a treaty making national and international meeting. It is going to be, at best, a meeting where framework agreements for further negotiations are concluded. In those circumstances and on the back of the Galaxy Research that's released today, there is a good deal of caution being expressed by the public to our political leaders to take a deep breath, act cautiously rather than act as a result of the political moment, which currently would suggest that the federal parliament is going to deal with the legislation.

#### **Journalist**

Why didn't your survey ask people whether they thought any action was needed with climate change?

#### **Peter Anderson**

People were asked four questions.

They were asked questions about electricity prices, they were asked questions about the potential impact on jobs, they were asked questions about whether they believed there ought to be a delay and they were asked whether or not they believed there was sufficient information at hand to make informed judgements about the CPRS at large.

Whilst the public have divided views about the overall CPRS, they are concerned at the costs that are associated with implementing a CPRS in Australia. That is consistent with our general business survey work.

**Journalist**

Why didn't you ask the obvious question, about whether you think that something needs to be done, or an ETS needs to come into play to protect against greenhouse emissions?

**Peter Anderson**

We were surveying the impact of a CPRS, not the underpinning science or the underpinning cause for greenhouse mitigation policies.

We are not debating with Government the underpinning science, that's a matter for others and the community to do. Our position as a business community is to look at what the impact, particularly the impacts on business and the impacts on the economy will be from a CPRS. That means focussing on what a CPRS does to energy costs, what a CPRS means in terms of employment, and the change and the transition in our economic base as a result of moving towards a lower carbon economy.

**Journalist**

Some people say that this will give encouragement to those 'some would say' sceptics or reluctant within the Coalition, that this would give them encouragement not to pass or to reject the deal. Would you say that interpretation is a fair one based on what you have got from your survey?

**Peter Anderson**

The survey should indicate to all politicians, all federal parliamentarians, that the public will support them if they take their time to get the design of a CPRS right and that the public are not insisting on a deal being done by the federal parliament before Copenhagen. The public are also aware now, as the CPRS debate has occurred in recent months, of the costs and the consequences of a CPRS, particularly if we move unilaterally. They are not just expressing the general principle of wanting to do something about greenhouse mitigation.

**Journalist**

And what does the public say is the right scheme?

**Peter Anderson**

Well I think the public are divided on those questions.

What we say as a business community is that there are multiple different ways which nations and economies around the globe are taking to deal with greenhouse mitigation.

A cap and trade scheme, or an emissions trading scheme as we are proposing here in Australia, is just but one measure. It's a very regulatory measure, it establishes a complex regime of new laws and new governance arrangements and sets up an entire market for the trading and selling of carbon.

In other countries much greater focus is placed on technology transfer and the capacity for new technology and wiser and more efficient use of technology to reduce greenhouse emissions.

Some of those other mechanisms being used in some of the nations with whom we compete are worthy of just as much scrutiny as we are giving in Australia to the emissions trading scheme.

**Journalist**

Thank you Peter.