

Interview between Kieran Gilbert and Tim Ayres

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Kieran Gilbert: what's your reaction to that number today the unemployment, the highest in two years?

Tim Ayres: It's obviously not a good thing when unemployment tracks a little bit higher. It does occur against the backdrop of unemployment been at historically low levels for a very long period of time. I just think having unemployment with a three in front of it for such a long period of time has been an extraordinary and welcomed thing over the course of the period of this government. Last time I looked at the number it was 650,000 new jobs in the economy over the life of this government so far that is a record number of jobs. It is one of the features of

KG: 500 in January, 500 new jobs?

TA: that is this is an anemic labor market in the sense of growth right now.

KG: Do you expect rates to come down soon?

TA: Well, as the Treasurer said, a slowing economy. We saw we saw the moderation to in the inflation. rate. Now, of course, ministers will say of course in interviews like this, that these matters for the Reserve Bank Board, the independent Reserve Bank board, but obviously those two figures add to the story that they've set against all the data that that board will consider. For the government's part, we are focused on two things. Number one is the role that we can play as a responsible government in fiscal terms putting downward pressure on inflation. And number two, the big task, exemplified by the tax package that we brought to the Australian public just a few weeks ago. tax cuts for every single Australian more tax cuts bigger tax cuts, will people who wouldn't have got tax cuts under Scott Morrison's old package. That is that is the government's approach. Now. It's interesting this week, but right now we are talking about the big issues facing the Australian economy. We're talking about inflation, about unemployment, about the biggest tax package for low and middle income earners in recent history. Crickets from the opposition, they want to talk about everything but everything but the cost of living everything but what the government's doing in this area. It is it is a pretty shambolic approach on Peter Dutton and the opposition, but what they need to do is to focus on the issues that matter for ordinary Australians.

KG: Now, you're about to go into industry estimates. I've just received some information from the opposition on what they're going to target you. And I'm going to put this to you because you're going to find this out in 10 minutes, 15 minutes from the opposition. They're

suggesting that this scenario took place that you were appointed as an alternate director on seabass by a gentleman called Glenn Thompson. Yes. And then as Minister, you saw his appointment to the rail industry Innovation Council. They're going to put that to you and they're going to and I ask you is, is that correct? Then you received obviously payments as a director of Cbus but did you declare a conflict of interest in that?

TA: this is this is the oldest news some of this was traversed in that last Estimates. There are no issues with my conflict of interest. There was no remuneration received by me for this alternative director appointment which must be I haven't checked, must be 10 or 15 years old. This is 2009-2010, so 10 or 15 years old. This is absolutely normal for people who serve as union officials to serve on industry boards, including separate, so there was no conflict of interest. It was an appointment. That wasn't an appointment for Mr. Thompson to make it was an appointment that the Union made. And there was no remuneration received no remuneration, no conflict and no conflict of interest then and what this is all really about is we have as a government in an effort led by me, in in terms of its implementation, embarked on this big program of giving the states and territories to work together on rail procurement. We have seen over the course of the last decade 1000s and 1000s of jobs shipped offshore state Liberal government's offshoring, big rail contracts and that's made disinvestment apprenticeship opportunities lost. We have a plan, that that that involves giving the states and territories to work together to lift the scale up, reduce the costs, strengthen the competitiveness of the Australian rail sector, to make sure that we're delivering good blue-collar jobs in rail manufacturing, in freight rail manufacturing and feeding into the supply chain to the world. That's the big story. You know, we've made board appointments the board the board that the government appointed, is one of the highest calibre boards, and Mr. Thompson serves on that board. He is a union official. The opposition doesn't like it, but he has made an enormous contribution to the debate about protecting Australian rail jobs. He's up there at a table with people who come from right across the industry and the rail manufacturing research community I am absolutely confident about the appointment process. And I'm absolutely confident about the big contribution that we're going to make to the EU as I said, you're about to represent the government and industry estimates in about 10 minutes and they will be I can't wait returning by can't wait. It is an issue. It is the most low rent. Okay, doll you're entitled to oh no, no criticism.

KG: It's just in terms of clarifying. You've said there's no conflict of interest and I take your word for it. Absolutely. Now. It's a bit of a change of time, but we should finish on now. Congratulations for your colleague.

TA: I'm so delighted the prime minister in November. I really am.