

**ABC 666 CANBERRA
ROSS SOLLY INTERVIEW WITH KIM SATTLER
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Senate F&PA Committee
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ROSS SOLLY:

Good morning to you, Kim Sattler.

KIM SATTLER:

Hi, Ross.

ROSS SOLLY:

Look, I do want to go back to the very start, because we haven't had a chance to speak to you about the events of that day, so I want to just start by asking, you got a phone call from Tony Hodges from the Prime Minister's office. We know that happened. What did he actually...

KIM SATTLER:

Well, in fact that's not how it happened...

ROSS SOLLY:

Right.

KIM SATTLER:

...I was rung by Chris Bourke's office and asked, "Would I take a call, or make call to someone from the Prime Minister's office?" So, obviously some discussion had gone on elsewhere and then because I was identified as being someone who is still out at the tent embassy site, so...

ROSS SOLLY:

So did you make a call, or did they call you?

KIM SATTLER:

I made the call, because I was asked to ring the Prime Minister's office.

ROSS SOLLY:

And were you told who to ask for when you rang the office?

KIM SATTLER:

Yes.

ROSS SOLLY:

You were told to ask for Tony Hodges?

KIM SATTLER:

That's right.

ROSS SOLLY:

Ok. So then when you spoke to Tony Hodges, what did he say to you?

KIM SATTLER:

He...look, the other context I need to give you. I'm standing out in the middle of a paddock with a thousand people and a concert going on and speeches going on. So, I'm trying to go somewhere where you can hear on the phone and he said, "Have you heard that Tony Abbott has made a statement about the tent embassy?" and I said, "No. I haven't heard anything and I don't know if anyone else has heard anything here. It certainly hasn't been mentioned." And, what the exact words were is something that is not the critical thing, as far as I'm concerned. I'm not the only person who misinterpreted what he might have said or gave it another meaning. It happened in every single media outlet, from AAP, 2UE, to everybody else that actually received the information...

ROSS SOLLY:

But with respect, Kim Sattler, it probably is a critical thing. Let's have a listen to what George Brandis was saying afterwards:

GEORGE BRANDIS:

The most important and central question here is what Mr Hodges in fact said to Ms Sattler and until we know that, then it is not possible in my view for anyone to conclude either that there was no incitement or that Mr Hodges was not involved in a censurable breach of the Prime Minister's security.

ROSS SOLLY:

See, it is incredibly important, because if Mr Hodges told you that Tony Abbott had said that it's time to tear the tent embassy down, then...

KIM SATTLER:

At no point did I ever use those words, Ross, and this is exactly what the problem is.

ROSS SOLLY:

Ok. But let's go back, can you tell me though, did Tony Hodges...

KIM SATTLER:

And every media outlet was using their own interpretation. It is not reasonable for people to keep doing it themselves and then say "these are the only words that are allowed to be used to describe." Each Liberal government from McMahon to Howard, had a period where they tried to take that embassy down. For those of us who've had an association for 40 years with the tent embassy, we are very clear that Liberal governments want it gone and they have made serious attempts to actually pull it down.

ROSS SOLLY:

Ok. But on that day, we all know that Tony Abbott said nothing of the sort. So, what we need to find out is what did Tony Hodges say to you?

KIM SATTLER:

He said he wanted me to let people know that Abbott has made a statement and that people needed to decide whether they wanted to respond to it.

ROSS SOLLY:

Ok. But he didn't at any time tell you what that statement was?

KIM SATTLER:

He talked in vague terms about...he didn't give me a direct quote of what he said.

ROSS SOLLY:

But in vague terms, what was he saying? In vague terms.

KIM SATTLER:

That Abbott was attacking the embassy and saying that it shouldn't exist anymore; it should move on.

ROSS SOLLY:

It should move on. That was the strongest he said, that it should move on?

KIM SATTLER:

That's right. That's right.

ROSS SOLLY:

And you were clear that what Tony Hodges wanted you to do was to pass that news onto the gathering there?

KIM SATTLER:

He wanted to know if people knew and did they want to respond to that. Now simultaneously, there were people going back and forth from the café to the embassy site because the toilets were very inadequate on the site. So they were using the Pork Barrell toilets. So, anybody who went past the Lobby side of things, would've seen what was actually happening. The media gaggle is the first clue. When you see ten cameras and a whole lot of people with microphones in their hands, it generally means in Canberra that something's happening.

ROSS SOLLY:

That may well be the case but did Tony Hodges tell you where Tony Abbott was?

KIM SATTLER:

Abso [inaudible].

ROSS SOLLY:

But did he also tell you to tell people that that's where Tony Abbott was? Or did you take that action off your own bat?

KIM SATTLER:

No, of course I didn't take that action off my own bat.

ROSS SOLLY:

So Tony Hodges also asked you to tell the crowd...

KIM SATTLER:

He didn't ask me to tell the crowd, he asked me to tell the organisers of the tent embassy.

ROSS SOLLY:

That Tony Abbott was in the nearby restaurant?

KIM SATTLER:

That's right.

ROSS SOLLY:

Ok. So did you then, did you at some stage pass on the information that Tony Abbott had said that it was time for the tent embassy to be torn down?

KIM SATTLER:

I went and consulted with one elder who was Michael Anderson who was doing a radio interview at the time. He then said 'I'll speak to you later'. I then went and sought some advice from someone else about which elders should be asked or included. For people who don't understand how to actually work with Aboriginal people, there is no one leader. There is no one media spokesperson. There is no one person that all power resides in that you can go and say, you know, what's your response to this, do you want to do media on it, blah, blah, blah. Look, I have developed relationships with Aboriginal people locally and throughout my life. I grew up with Aboriginal people. I respect the way they operate and I respect their decision making processes. I did not speak directly to Barbara Shaw until she got up on the stage after taking the microphone off the person who was speaking and declared that Tony Abbott was the Deputy Prime Minister. I couldn't let that go. I thought that was a very unhelpful remark to make to a crowd of people and it in fact gave the suggestion that the Government was threatening the tent embassy which was totally incorrect so I went to the side of the stage and I said to her, 'Barbara, that is not right. Tony Abbott is the Leader of the Opposition and he is the person who has made remarks about the embassy. Not the Government'.

ROSS SOLLY:

Right. Barbara Shaw says, this is a quote from Barbara Shaw, "This person" – and she's referring to you – "said Tony Abbott is in the coffee shop talking to the press about closing down the Aboriginal tent embassy".

KIM SATTLER:

Well, at no point would I ever describe the Lobby as a coffee shop for a start. Barbara would not have understood the difference between the Pork Barrell and the Lobby. She's not a local. She doesn't actually...

ROSS SOLLY:

Ok, that's probably by the by anyway, though...

KIM SATTLER:

I never used those words and I did not speak to her directly until she was on the stage.

ROSS SOLLY:

So did you tell anyone that day, Kim Sattler, that Tony Abbott had said that he wanted to close the tent embassy down?

KIM SATTLER:

I said he has made comments about the tent embassy shouldn't exist anymore. They're the words I used to people. And I only spoke to two people and I was going

about the business of consulting in a respectful way with people who needed to make their own decisions about how they might respond to that. It was all academic, Ross, because people had already left the embassy grounds and gone over there because they'd already seen the officials arriving and the press outside the Lobby.

ROSS SOLLY:

Well, now, in hindsight, do you believe that that is an accurate reflection of what Tony Hodges told you?

KIM SATTLER:

Do I believe what is an accurate reflection...?

ROSS SOLLY:

That Tony Abbott said it was time to get rid of the tent embassy?

KIM SATTLER:

Look, I made the same assumption and interpretation as about five media outlets, including the first one who actually put the direct question to him.

ROSS SOLLY:

But in hindsight, now that you've seen his comments in full – and I'm sure you have Kim Sattler – do you think that that is an accurate, what you passed on, that information that day was an accurate reflection of what Tony Abbott said?

KIM SATTLER:

Look, my impression, it was an accurate reflection of my impression of what he was actually commenting about. I mean, he was hardly passing the time of day. He has a very well known and articulated position about the tent embassy and about Aboriginal issues in Australia and it's well known to the Aboriginal community and it's well known to people like me. I mean, he has made it many times. That was very insensitive to make a comment on that day where people are celebrating a history of gaining a right.

ROSS SOLLY:

When you started spreading the word around, around the gathering there, what did you expect they would do with that information? Given that you had just told them what Tony Abbott said and it was quite an inflammatory comment, plus told them that Tony Abbott was just down the road?

KIM SATTLER:

I didn't spread it and I didn't...

ROSS SOLLY:

Well, you told a couple of people.

KIM SATTLER:

Two people I consulted with...

ROSS SOLLY:

Who were addressing the crowd. So, it was going to be passed on to everyone.

KIM SATTLER:

No, I corrected one of them in the crowd. I never told her directly the information. She got that information from somewhere else.

ROSS SOLLY:

So, it wasn't your intention to pass it on even though Tony Hodges from the Prime Minister's office had wanted to contact you so that you could let the crowd know that this is what was going on?

KIM SATTLER:

Look, I'm not responsible for what other people's intentions or beliefs were. He obviously was expecting that the people there might make a media comment. That's what the purpose of the information was.

ROSS SOLLY:

But, Kim Sattler, you were there on the ground. You felt the mood that day. You could feel the mood.

KIM SATTLER:

The mood was very peaceful and very quiet at the tent embassy. In fact, in my communications with police throughout the day, we were quite pleased that in fact it was going very smoothly. I had been working with police since 8.30 that morning to guide the march from Civic up to the tent embassy site and to ensure that things were running smoothly. That's the role I play in every one of these kinds of protests.

ROSS SOLLY:

That's right. So you more than anyone should know that all you'd need to do to inflame that crowd was tell them that a politician had called for it to be, you know...

KIM SATTLER:

No. That is just deliberately misleading what in fact happened. I was asked to go and talk to a couple of people to find out if they'd heard a comment that was made on media and that's exactly what I did.

ROSS SOLLY:

Why do that? Why would you go and tell them?

KIM SATTLER:

Why wouldn't you? It's not against the law!

ROSS SOLLY:

No, but, did you tell them just because you thought...?

KIM SATTLER:

If someone's giving them information about what's being said over the national media about an event that's actually happening, well, of course they've got a right to comment.

ROSS SOLLY:

So, your intention, at no stage did you intend for the crowd to then move down to the Lobby restaurant?

KIM SATTLER:

Absolutely not.

ROSS SOLLY:

So, were you shocked when they started to head down there?

KIM SATTLER:

When you deal in these situations, nothing surprises you after a while. Earlier in the day, they'd changed the route of the march. So, you just have to deal with these situations and you cannot control everybody's receipt of the information.

ROSS SOLLY:

Somewhere along the line...

KIM SATTLER:

I mean, you do not hold an event at the Lobby. I endorse Jack Waterford's comments in yesterday's *Canberra Times*. Now, Jack is someone who's been around a long time and he came up with the same conclusion I did. Where was the

risk assessment in putting these two events within 50 metres of each other? Without the incendiary – the added incendiary – of what Abbott had to say. Now he knew exactly what he was doing, by making that comment. He knew he was going to be there, next door to that event.

ROSS SOLLY:

Yeah, but I've seen his comments as have you, Kim Sattler, and they were pretty harmless. They were basically saying that he thought that Aboriginal people should be proud of what they've achieved and maybe some of the issues that were there when the tent embassy was originally set up have now been addressed or are being addressed. That's what he was saying – that's nothing like...

KIM SATTLER:

He was deliberately provoking the people at the embassy. He knows he's doing that, by making that comment. He's trying to drive a wedge between different groups of people within the Aboriginal movement. He is very deliberate about that.

ROSS SOLLY:

Do you accept, Kim Sattler, any of the blame for the events that then unfolded?

KIM SATTLER:

No, I don't, Ross, and it's really unfair to paint such – to absolutely beat up the role of people like myself...

ROSS SOLLY:

I'm just asking you a straight forward question, because we haven't had a chance to ask you...

KIM SATTLER:

You've interviewed me many times around many issues. You know what sort of person I am. You know what sort of work I generally do in the community. I'm too busy to create more issues and problems for myself and that I was already dealing with some very complex issues around logistics on that site, because the government authorities had not provided enough bins. There were twelve wheelie bins for the whole place – rubbish was just becoming a massive problem. The toilets were not cleaned for three or four days which is why people had to go elsewhere. Look, these are the day-to-day issues that you deal with and all of the tedium you deal with whenever you try to assist people to actually use the parliamentary triangle and for those of us on the ground like the police and myself and some of the other people who're responsible for servicing those sites, that's what we deal with and that's what I had spent 5 hours dealing with and when somebody else rings you and says, "Can you please go and pass this message on to somebody else," then you go and pass it on and that's all that happened. I mean, this – we live in a democracy, Ross. People have a right to protest and they have a right to oppose the comments

of other people. I do not control their movements. I'm not that powerful that I can actually manage to tell a whole group of Aboriginal people what to do. It's a nonsense to think that I could.

ROSS SOLLY:

Do you think Tony Hodges deserved to lose his job over this?

KIM SATTLER:

Look, that's an issue for them. They know what went on inside their office. I was put in a very difficult position. It's not often I get a call from the Prime Minister's office, Ross. It's not an everyday occurrence. I get lots of calls from lots of people.

ROSS SOLLY:

Do you wish now that you never got that call?

KIM SATTLER:

Of course I do. I have enough to do, but I also resent the fact that it was the call that was made to someone else who then punted it to me.

ROSS SOLLY:

Alright, can I just quickly ask you, I know that since then you've been a victim of some hate mail etcetera, what is happening? What exactly is happening?

KIM SATTLER:

Well, it's coming to my home address which is not known widely at all and never has been, because I used to be a crisis worker and most of us who work in the community sector try not to have our addresses revealed. It's coming to my home, it's very clearly addressed to me and it's very clearly attacking me, both as a Jewish woman and as a friend of Aboriginal people, somebody who advocates for Aboriginal causes. It is disgusting. It is quite crazy. It makes you feel very unsafe in your own home. Look, I know, I grew up in Adelaide, I know these people. Those white supremacist groups have always had quite a base and they're very scary. They're very intimidating...

ROSS SOLLY:

And that's who you think this has come from?

KIM SATTLER:

Absolutely. The police confirm all of this stuff that gets churned out. Lots of Aboriginal leaders received this mail. Lots of Asians, prominent Asian people in the community received it. Jewish activists of various kinds or commentators receive it regularly. It always looks the same, it's very cobbled together bits of newspaper

articles, their own commentary, handwriting. These people are unpredictable, they are unregulated in any way. They never sign their name to anything. Now, I've had a report that on the Friday night, three people turned up in hoods – white hoods – at the tent embassy and burned the Aboriginal flag outside the embassy.

ROSS SOLLY:

This is on the Friday night just gone?

KIM SATTLER:

Friday night, which means some of those people are here.

ROSS SOLLY:

People, what, KKK type?

KIM SATTLER:

KKK. That's right.

ROSS SOLLY:

Now who told you that?

KIM SATTLER:

A woman who I know quite well who's a union member.

ROSS SOLLY:

Have the police been told about it?

KIM SATTLER:

Yeah, the police have been told about it and the media were told about it, but no one took that up at all.

ROSS SOLLY:

It's a strong allegation to make. Kim Sattler we'll have to leave it there, but thank you for talking to us this morning and obviously the police are now investigating those and other events. Thank you for your time this morning.

KIM SATTLER:

That's alright, Ross. Thank you.

[ends]