



**LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION  
THE HON. TONY ABBOTT MHR  
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR WARRINGAH**

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22 April 2012

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE HON. TONY ABBOTT MHR  
PRESS CONFERENCE  
SYDNEY**

*Subjects: Peter Slipper MP; Craig Thomson MP*

EO&E.....

**TONY ABBOTT:**

The Speaker of the House of Representatives has stepped aside until very grave allegations against him can be resolved. There are allegations of sexual harassment and there are also allegations of a criminal nature, of the fraudulent misuse of Commonwealth entitlements.

It's good that the Speaker has stepped aside until these matters can be resolved but plainly, this is Peter Slipper's doing, this is no doing of the Prime Minister. As late as this morning the Deputy Prime Minister himself was insisting that there was no reason for Mr Slipper to stand aside and in fact the Speaker must not step aside.

So again, as this day ends, we are left with huge question marks over the judgement and the integrity of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister forced Harry Jenkins to leave the Speakership so that Mr Slipper could assume the Speakership in a squalid and tawdry attempt to shore up her numbers, a squalid and tawdry deal which has now ended in tears.

Now, yet again, members of the Labor Party, members of the Australian public would be questioning the standards and the integrity of this Prime Minister. This is a Prime Minister who has consistently shown that the only standard that counts for her is what will protect her embattled government, what will shore up her numbers in a very shaky and fragile parliament.

The final point I should make is, now that one question of integrity has been dealt with, at least for the time being, the Prime Minister should resolve the other question of integrity hanging over the Government, that is the issue of Mr Craig Thomson. Now, the Prime Minister must insist that Craig Thomson fully cooperates with police inquiries into the very serious allegations against him that he misused hundreds of thousands of dollars of low-paid union members' money on his own election and on prostitution services. She must insist that Mr Thomson fully cooperates with police inquiries and she must do whatever she can to ensure that the Fair Work inquiry is released immediately. That Fair Work report should not be buried, it should not be hidden, it should be released and the Prime Minister should exercise the same kind of suasion on Fair Work Australia that she was happy to exercise on the Reserve Bank just last week.

**QUESTION:**

So if Peter Slipper, they've stood him aside until the criminal matter's resolved. The Government seems confident it can have it resolved before parliament sits. Do you think that's the case?

**TONY ABBOTT:**

Well, let's wait and see. They are very serious allegations. My understanding is that the Government itself last year referred matters to the Australian Federal Police. Let's see how quickly these matters can be resolved. Let's hope that these matters can be resolved faster than the matters against Craig Thomson have been resolved and I think the Government should be just as eager for the matters against Craig Thomson to be brought to a head and decided as it apparently is for the matters against Mr Slipper to be brought to a head and decided.

**QUESTION:**

If it can't be resolved and Anna Burke is in the chair does it mean the Government will still have the numbers to hold its majority?

**TONY ABBOTT:**

Look, I'm just not going to go into that kind of calculation. I think the Australian public expect its leaders, they particularly expect prime ministers to observe ordinary standards of decency and political integrity and I think what we've seen from this Prime Minister repeatedly is that this is a government that, when it comes to standards of integrity is seriously challenged. This is a Prime Minister whose only standard appears to be, "What will help my government to survive", given that it was the Prime Minister herself who engineered the removal of Speaker Harry Jenkins and who insisted that Mr Slipper take the chair in order to shore up her numbers in the Parliament. Now, there were fears late last year that this would all end in tears and yet again the Prime Minister's judgement has turned out to be fatally flawed.

**QUESTION:**

Do you think this...how close to losing its majority do you think the Government really is?

**TONY ABBOTT:**

Well again, I'm just not going to go into that kind of calculation. It's not a question of whether the Government might lose its majority; it's a question of whether this government has lost its integrity. That's the issue, not whether the Government will keep its majority but whether the Government can keep its integrity and the only way this government can redeem any shred of honour is if the Prime Minister now urgently resolves the second integrity issue hovering over this government, the Craig Thomson issue. I think a lot of Australians have thought for months now that this is a government which should have died of shame. Let's see how the Prime Minister now handles the Thomson matter.

[ends]