

MEET THE PRESS

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INTERVIEW WITH SCOTT LUDLAM

KATHRYN ROBINSON: Senator Ludlam, good morning to you. As we just mentioned in the introduction then, you're fighting for your Senate spot - a recount is underway. Just how urgent and how necessary are these reforms to the way that we vote in the Senate?

SCOTT LUDLAM: I think they are urgent and necessary. And it's something Bob Brown introduced - a proposal in 2010. And the Greens in NSW actually, in state politics, were successful in reforming upper house voting there. And the essence of the idea is you transfer the power from the preference dealers back to the voters. So if you can vote on your Senate ballot paper above the line, as you can do in NSW across the top, it effectively puts the power back into the hands of the people who are voting.

KATHRYN ROBINSON: So you're opting for an above-the-line preferential voting system, as opposed to numbering one box?

SCOTT LUDLAM: Yeah. And effectively, as I say, it puts the power back in the hands of the voters. So I haven't yet heard a good argument against that. I think now Tony Abbott's got a real headache, I would imagine, trying to negotiate with the new Senate after the 1st of July of next year. So we might see some interest from the major parties, even though we unfortunately weren't successful when we put it up in 2010.

PAUL BONGIORNO: Well, Clive Palmer says this recount is undemocratic. In fact, breaks - he believes it breaks the AEC's own rules. The fact of the matter is, we do have a preferential system, so it is possible for people not to get a majority of the primary vote but still to be democratically elected.

SCOTT LUDLAM: Yeah, of course, and we've got no argument with that at all. I guess Clive just thinks some recounts are more democratic than others. He fought pretty hard to get Fairfax recounted on a very fine margin - that seemed reasonable to me. There's only 14 votes in the margin here in Western Australia, so I'm glad the Electoral Commission has done that. They provided us with a really detailed statement of reasons. They haven't gone against their policy at all. They've sketched out, with great care, the reason that they've made this decision.

LAUREN WILSON: Senator, can I take you to your own party? What do you attribute the swing of 3% against the Greens in this last election - do you believe that if someone other than Christine Milne was leading the party - Adam Bandt, for example - you would have got a better result at the ballot box?

SCOTT LUDLAM: Not at all. I think Christine has done a fantastic job. She's great to work with. I've learned a great deal from her. And she's obviously spent a lot of time in state and federal politics. To go to your question, though, as to - I think it's quite complex. I don't know that there's a single factor. I actually polled higher in September than I did in 2007 when I was first elected. So we've come off a historic

high vote in 2010, apart from in Melbourne and a few other places around the country where we've actually improved our position. Our vote tends to map on, in one sense, to how concerned people are about climate change. And we've just had three years of people being saturated in the media and in the public debate with rhetoric and arguments designed to confuse the debate around global warming. So I think that probably is in part-

PAUL BONGIORNO: But you think there's been a reaction to the parties of the left, centre-left, and particularly over the carbon tax? It looked like the Greens had forced Julia Gillard to break a promise, and that was lethal politically.

SCOTT LUDLAM: Yeah, I think that's certainly part of it. I think being associated with that process, it's certainly been damaging for the Labor Party, and I think some of that did wear off on us. We didn't force anybody to do anything, of course. Julia Gillard made a promise before the 2010 election, or she made a commitment not to introduce that. Under a Government that she led. And quite clearly, she didn't predict that she would be in a minority Parliament, that there would be a hung Parliament, that she would have to negotiate. That's what Parliament is for. That's why you elect people – to negotiate and get the best outcomes that they can.

PAUL BONGIORNO: Well, would the Greens - would the Greens support Anthony Albanese, should he win today, winding the carbon tax - or offering to wind the carbon tax back to zero?

SCOTT LUDLAM: I think Labor's got a pretty unhappy history of chopping and changing on climate change. You can't negotiate with the weather. I haven't seen a proposal yet - I've seen one press article, apparently there was a caucus briefing, or, you know... I'll wait, rather than casting some final judgement on a rumour. But the fact is, we've got a very serious problem on our hands with global warming. There's no time to waste. I think Albanese, if he's the leader, or Bill Shorten, or Christine Milne or whoever it is, will find it very difficult to negotiate a good outcome on climate change and global warming with a Prime Minister who's fundamentally in denial of the enormous problem that we've got bearing down on us.

LAUREN WILSON: But it looks like -

SCOTT LUDLAM: It's going to be difficult for everybody.

LAUREN WILSON: It looks like Tony Abbott has the repeal of the carbon tax in the bag. Are you concerned we might end up with a situation where there's absolutely no climate policy whatsoever, there - he isn't able to legislate for direct action and there is no carbon tax?

SCOTT LUDLAM: Yeah. Yeah. And it's going to put a wrecking ball through the renewable energy industry at a time where it's really starting to take off around the world and here in Australia. Ordinary people trying to do the right thing - there's well over a million PV panels on Australian rooftops these days. There's solar developers from the United States and Europe wanting to set up shop here. And the Abbott Government is proposing to just smash that all up. It's absolutely unconscionable. I don't think a senior politician in a modern industrial country should be considered fit

for leadership if they're in fundamental denial of global warming. I think it's a disaster.

KATHRYN ROBINSON: Senator Ludlam, just briefly before we go, what do you think the future holds for the Greens? Are you confident about its future?

SCOTT LUDLAM: Yeah, absolutely. We elected our first Federal MP in Western Australia - before the Tasmanians - in 1984. We've been around for a long period of time. We've seen ups and downs. We're a strong party with a very strong grassroots base right through local government, state parliaments and into Federal Parliament. So I am very confident about our future. But we do have to learn from the 2013 result. We have to find out why some of the people who voted for us in 2010 voted for somebody else this time. That's part of politics - you have to do that.