

28 August 2016

**TRANSCRIPT OF SENATOR THE HON. ARTHUR SINODINOS AO  
INTERVIEW WITH PATRCIA KARVELAS, SKY NEWS**

*Subjects: Bi-partisanship in the Parliament, Government legislation, Superannuation, SSM Bill, Budget revenue issues, NBN Co AFP raid.*

EO&E.....

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

Arthur Sinodinos welcome.

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

Hi Patricia good to be with you.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

Opposition leader Bill Shorten said today he is willing to work with the Turnbull Government, but warned he won't be bullied into accepting your policies. Is the Government trying to bully Labor?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

I don't think so; we want the Parliament to work. Bill says he wants the Parliament to work, I am sure we can work together. It is not a matter of bullying one side or the other.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

Well Sam Dastyari says the Turnbull Government won't last 18 months, is he right?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

Well look, with respect to Sam he would say that wouldn't he? I mean the person who is desperate for this Government to fall is Bill Shorten because he knows the longer we go on the more likely it is that his job will come under pressure. So there is a lot of this sort of white noise and argy bargy. Legislation is being drawn up; it is going to be brought into the Parliament this week. This is when it gets real; Labor lost the election we won it. We are keen to work with them, with the Greens, with the Crossbenchers in the House and the Senate to get on with making the Parliament work.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

The Leader of the House Christopher Pyne says there will be a number of Bills including the restoration of the ABCC, the Australian Building and Construction Commission for anyone who still doesn't know what that is. What do you expect to have completed this week? Is it the omnibus bill that is your priority, do you want that done and dusted by the end of the week?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

Well what would happen initially is a number of bills would be introduced in the House and those that are passed this week would go on to the Senate in due course. You mentioned the omnibus savings bill, the reason that is being put up is because it contains a number of measures that Labor either supported or counted towards savings during the campaign, and we would be keen for those sorts of measures to be wrapped up sooner rather than later. But we are happy to sit down and talk and take them through in due course. That bill will go through our backbench policy committee and Party room and all the rest of it, and then we will be able to talk with Labor about it.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

The Prime Minister has urged as I said the Federal Opposition to meet him in the sensible centre to fix the budget deficit. Does that intimate you will work with Labor this week to reach a compromise on superannuation reform?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

Well superannuation changes have been, or the superannuation reforms rather that we took to the election have been canvassed again with stakeholders and with our backbenchers in a series of meetings across the country by Kelly O'Dwyer and Scott Morrison and legislation is being drawn up, that will go through our backbench committees and Party room, and again then we will be in a position to talk with Labor about that. Making the Parliament work suggests that each side has a willingness to come to the table and talk turkey about how they can meet each other's concerns. But at this stage I'm not in a position to speculate on what that might mean in practice. Let's get the bills out and ventilated.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

When will the bill be out and ventilated so that we can all have a look at what you have come to the conclusions on? Particularly given some of these very contentious areas.

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

The bills are being drawn up, I am not sure they will be ready to be introduced right away this week, that is a matter for the Parliamentary business committee. But obviously we are keen to get on with all of the legislation that the Prime Minister recently prioritised, half a

dozen or so areas that we talked about, the ABCC, the Registered Organisations, our Omnibus savings bill, other budget measures which are important to us, the Country Fire Authority measures which we committed to implement. So we are hoping to get along with it sooner rather than later, there will be plenty for everybody to do.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

So you say you think it is unlikely we will see the superannuation bill this week, we obviously need to see it sooner rather than later, is there a timeframe?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

It will be done sooner rather than later, I am just not giving you a commitment it can happen this week.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

Do you support the principle Labor has put forward not to backdate to 2007 the proposed 500,000 lifetime cap on non-concessional contributions, to maybe start it from Budget night to make it fairer for people who've made plans from 2007 that would no longer be honoured?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

I don't accept the premise of the question, that it involves retrospectivity, but I'm not going to get into individual features which are clearly...we're now in a stage where bills are being drawn up, they'll be put before the Parliament, there will be plenty of time for people to argue the merits. I just remind people that we did go to the election with a number of policies, we were returned as the Government, yes, we have a slimmer majority, but we were returned as the Government. We've got a majority in the lower-house, and, which has been the case for most governments for the last thirty to forty years, haven't got a majority in the Senate, and we're willing to get on with the job.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

I read very carefully the Treasurer's statement after Bill Shorten's press club address where he put forward what Labor believed in terms of superannuation reform and Labor made clear that it didn't support this 2007 start-date. What seemed very suspicious to me, as an analyst of politics and political statements of some time, was that there wasn't any critique of Bill Shorten's policy rejecting that 2007 start-date. Does that mean that, perhaps, you are revisiting that date, and that you are prepared to work with Labor on this issue?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

I'm not here to canvass changes, to rule things in or out, that's a process which will take its own natural course over the next few days and weeks. What I will say is that I'm very proud of the fact that we put together in the superannuation area a series of measures to promote

fairness in the use of tax concessions when it comes to super, while putting more in in the way of helping low-income people build up their super balances, help women who come in and out of the workforce with their concerns, self-employed people, and give older Australians greater access to the superannuation system for those who continue to work, because as you know, as we are getting older these days – touch wood – we’re also staying healthier for longer and people want to work. So, what I’m keen to make sure is that we promote the integrity of the measures we’ve taken because it’s about fairness for the Australian taxpayer and fairness for our fellow Australians who can’t access the super’s concessions in the way that high-income people can.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

Do you think moving the cap to 750,000 is a better cap amount? Is that more palatable to your backbench?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

Look, I’m not going to get in the process of ruling things in or out. There will be discussions, there will be processes, and we’ll go from there.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

Do you think it should be on the table, perhaps, looking at that amount?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

What I think is promising, though, is that the two major sides of politics, the Government and the Opposition, both agree that more needs to be done to make the superannuation system fairer, and that what we’re talking about now is the way to do that, rather than arguing from opposed ideological positions. And I’m glad that’s the case.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

So does that mean that you are willing to, perhaps, listen to some of Labor’s proposals on the superannuation reform given you need to move towards them so they can move towards you so you can get something workable that passes the Parliament?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

Clearly it’s always good in this game to listen to what other people have to say and then weigh up those arguments against the cost and benefits of making changes, but at the end of the day we must not compromise the overall fairness and integrity of the package.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

On this plebiscite for same sex marriage, which has really dominated the news cycle again today, do you accept it's doomed? Labor makes it quite clear that it's likely to oppose it—there's no way you can get it through Parliament.

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

Oh Patricia, I'm not sure that Labor has categorically ruled out supporting a plebiscite. The problem we've got here as a Government is that people are telling us not to keep our promises. We went to the election with a promise to have a plebiscite. There are people out there—I've been to Greek Orthodox churches in Western Sydney where they say thank you for the opportunity to have our say in a plebiscite, as opposed to just leaving it to the Parliament. So people out there have an expectation they will be consulted through a plebiscite and we want to keep that promise. Why do people want keep trying to stop us keeping our promises?

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

I've spoken to a few of your colleagues who tell me the issue of a conscience vote will be revisited this term if the plebiscite is completely blocked. This idea that it's all over for the whole term is untrue. What do you say to those colleagues who say that they plan to bring this up, not immediately, but if the plebiscite is blocked, they plan to revisit this issue of a conscience vote?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

I say to my colleagues we've all got to work hard to get up the legislation on the plebiscite because that will keep faith with our promise to the Australian people and we go from there. And at this stage I'm not willing to speculate on anything else, I'm working hard to get the legislation up. And I'm encouraging the Labor Party, in the interests of having an early decision on this matter, to work with us to do that.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

But you're also not saying if the plebiscite is blocked, this entire issue is dead, are you?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

Because they're all hypotheticals, let's deal with the practicality of trying to get—

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

Not really, some people are saying that.

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

Well, as a Minister in the Government, I'm telling you that our focus, as a Government, is on getting the legislation through.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

Okay, but if you fail to get it through, if Labor does decide—and I'm going to ask Anthony Albanese, who I'm sure is near you in the studio there, next about this—but if you fail to get it through, if it is blocked, because, you know, we've all heard the Nick Xenophon Team say they're not in favour of the plebiscite either, we've heard Derryn Hinch. You know, you just need to look at the numbers in the Senate, and Labor now increasingly leaning towards wanting to block it, and it looks like it's doomed. So if it's doomed, is the issue dead? Are you prepared to say that the issue will not be revisited in this Parliament?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

I'm not prepared to speculate on outcomes that are not before us. All I'm prepared to do is speculate on our strength in trying to get the same sex legislation up. It's very important that we are allowed to keep our promise on this because there are people out there in the Australian community who expect us to keep that promise, and that's the thing that Labor and others should remember. There are people out there who expect us as a Government to keep that promise.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

I just want to ask you one more economic question before I let you go, Arthur Sinodinos, and I know you have a very busy week ahead. The Treasurer now says we have an earnings problem. That's a revenue problem, isn't it? And that's a change in line completely from what you've previously been saying?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

The reason he mentioned an earnings problem was that he put in context that ever since, you know, the peak in the terms of trade, which was in about 2011, the fact of the matter is income has been—income growth has been decelerating in the Australian economy from sources like the terms of trade and that has impacted on the revenue that the Government has had to play with. But the problem has been that while the revenue has been going down, spending—even though we've taken measures to restrain the growth in spending—has remained stubbornly high. And I don't think it's possible to deal with the Budget situation without structural measures to improve the spending side of the Budget. It is not a case of simply whacking up tax and saying that spending can be allowed to grow willy-nilly.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

And just finally I understand a story has broken that Labor has claimed parliamentary privilege on documents seized by the AFP and would like the Parliament to deal with this on Wednesday to keep parliamentary privilege on these documents. What's your response to this?

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

I haven't seen the announcement and we'll get advice on all of that. I'd just make the point that the issue of the AFP raids, which is what you're referring to, in relation to NBN leaks and all the rest of it, is a matter fundamentally for the NBN management. But obviously if it's going to be raised in the Parliament—

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

But it will be an issue the Parliament is forced to deal with.

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

And what I'm saying is when the issue is raised in the Parliament we'll address it there.

**PATRICIA KARVELAS**

Alright, well many thanks for your time tonight.

**ARTHUR SINODINOS**

Thank you, Patricia.

**-[ENDS]-**