

16 December 2016

**TRANSCRIPT OF SENATOR THE HON. ARTHUR SINODINOS AO
INTERVIEW WITH PETER STEFANOVIC & ANTHONY ALBANESE
THE TODAY SHOW, CHANNEL 9**

Subjects: Pension robo calls, Medicare,

E&OE.....

PETER STEFANOVIC

Joining us is Cabinet Secretary, Senator Arthur Sinodinos and Shadow Infrastructure Minister Anthony Albanese, good morning to you chaps. First of all your reaction to this [union pension robocall]?

ARTHUR SINODINOS

Well look mate; we can't have these sorts of ads because first of all it's misleading. Most pensioners are either going to have no change or they are going to have some increase in their pension if they're on the full pension. Some pensioners who have more assets above a certain threshold are going to be asked to use some of those assets to help top up their incomes and we will reduce the pension accordingly. And the reason we are doing that is because we face a budget repair problem, and we are trying to get every part of the community, look at our super reforms, that was to hit the big end of town which it did. And the whole point is across the board we have got to have an approach to the budget that helps us get things under control. But the most important thing mate is its misleading because it's not giving all the facts. It's suggesting to any pensioner who may in fact benefit from our changes that they are going to lose, that's what's misleading about it.

PETER STEFANOVIC

Bill Shorten is facing pressure to distance himself from this; do you feel pressure as well?

ANTHONY ALBANESE

Not at all. What I-

PETER STEFANOVIC

Or that the party should?

ANTHONY ALBANESE

I tell you what I feel pressure from Peter is that I've got constituents who are on fixed incomes who work, particularly public servants; it particularly affects people who are on defined benefits schemes. They are on a fixed income, they have made plans for their retirement and all of a sudden without notice, and many of them are just finding about it now, due to a deal between the Liberals and the Greens, they are going to find themselves with less income from January 1. That is the pressure that I feel, the concern that is out there in the community about this. And I feel for the people who have been subject to this change, made retirement plans based upon expecting a certain amount of income and all of a sudden you have these changes, which are effectively retrospective and are having a real impact and certainly aren't being advertised by the Government.

ARTHUR SINODINOS

No, no, Albo, we have put all sorts of stuff out there, Peter can I tell you something – if Albo had been leader these ads would not have happened.

PETER STEFANOVIC

Well I mean these are very similar to the so called maybe 'scare campaign' that came through earlier in the year, I mean, is this something –

ANTHONY ALBANESE

And what's happening with Medicare Peter?

PETER STEFANOVIC

But did Labor know about this before, that these were going to air?

ANTHONY ALBANESE

Well I wasn't consulted, but I tell you what, there is a real impact of it. What I knew about was constituent impacting on their incomes, that's what I knew about, just like I know that there are people visiting their local GP who have had, because of the Medicare rebate freeze, who are getting less access to bulk billing in my electorate, that's what I know about.

PETER STEFANOVIC

Alright, now, we've got to move along. This week, Senator Pauline Hanson got the Government to agree to her personally questioning bank chiefs over their treatment of farmers. Arthur, are you comfortable with the amount of sway Pauline is having, and her One Nation party in particular?

ARTHUR SINODINOS

Look, the crossbench are all God's children. They all got elected under the newly reformed voting system. We deal with all of them – whether it's Pauline Hanson, Nick Xenophon, Derryn Hinch, the Labor Party – we agree on certain things, we pass legislation together from time to time. You deal with people depending on what the issue is. Now, what Pauline Hanson is doing, of course, is: every time she thinks Labor or the Coalition do something

that she likes, she jumps on it and tries to take credit for it. I'm in the business of taking the One Nation voters away, the Xenophon voters away from them, and getting them to vote for us. We're not going to be in any sort of alliance with One Nation or anybody else. We're not doing business just with one side of the crossbench; we deal with everybody.

ANTHONY ALBANESE

Well, this is a Government that doesn't have an agenda of its own, so it's adopting other people's agendas. What we need here is a Royal Commission into banks. This inquiry is a good thing that's happening. It follows another inquiry earlier this year that reported that farmers were being impacted by some bad activities of banks. And we need a Banking Royal Commission, and whether it's Pauline Hanson or the Government, what they need to look at is: why are they running from having a Royal Commission into the banks and the finance sector so we can look at any abuses that are out there, and also so we can improve the system for the future?

ARTHUR SINODINOS

I mean, Peter, we're improving the system now. Albo, when you look at people in Marrickville and you tell them it's going to take two or three years for a Royal Commission, it's a lawyers' picnic which will help lawyers in the Eastern Suburbs – mate, that's the end of it!

ANTHONY ALBANESE

As soon as it's declared, the time when the Royal Commission was on the agenda was the one time that the banks all passed on the interest rate cuts –

ARTHUR SINODINOS

I disagree –

PETER STEFANOVIC

We've got to wrap it there folks, chaps, but thanks very much for coming on board this morning.

ANTHONY ALBANESE

Good to be here. We got none of the fun stuff, though! You bring us on –

ARTHUR SINODINOS

That's right! Not even a Hawaiian shirt! Where's the shirt?

ANTHONY ALBANESE

Who wants us to go on the water slide?

PETER STEFANOVIC

There we go – Anthony Albanese on the water slide. That's coming up soon!

[ENDS]