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LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR HUME

TRANSCRIPT
INTERVIEW WITH BEN FORDHAM
2GB

Friday, 13 November 2026

E&OE…

BEN FORDHAM:

Angus Taylor is the Opposition Leader, he's live in our studio. Good morning, Angus Taylor.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

Good morning, Ben, good to be with you.

BEN FORDHAM:

We have seen people lose their jobs for a lot less, haven't we?

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

Sure. I mean, he lied clearly three times. He lied about the value of the membership. He lied the purpose of the grant. He also lied about whether the grant was open access, whether it was invitation only, and I think in some ways the worst part of this is he can never admit that he got it wrong.

And of course, lots of people make mistakes. Prime Ministers, it doesn't really matter. People make mistakes. But this bloke can never admit it, and the broader problem we see every day with this Prime Minister is if you can't admit you got it wrong, you can’t fix the problem, and you see this right across the country now, time after time, we see it with the economy, we see with interest rates, with inflation, with spending.

If you can’t admit you got wrong, you can’t fix the problem. This is the character flaw of this Prime Minister that I see across the chamber every time I'm there and what we're seeing with Marrickville is exactly what we see all the time.

BEN FORDHAM:

What do you think the Prime Minister was thinking? And I know it's hard to get in someone else's head, but when he wrote to the golf club saying, 'To provide certainty, I want to make it clear I decline any honorary membership', and this was after the ABC had started asking questions about it. What do you think was going on in Anthony Albanese's mind?

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

Oh, he's just trying to cover it up. He was trying to say, oh, you know, it's all right. Then he carried on about the value of the membership. I mean, he carried it on in the Parliament. He made a big deal about how it was only worth a couple of bucks. What we now learn yesterday, it was worth $1,100. It was a playing membership, and this is the problem with the Prime Minister. He can't come clean on things. He cannot. This is a guy who fell off a stage on film. We all saw it. And he said, 'Oh, I didn't fall off the stage.'

I mean, there's just something in his character that means he keeps doing this, and now it's showing in what's happening around our country, it's showing in our economy, it's showing in his failure to deal with the toughest issues that we've got as a country, on five interest rate increases in a year. He just looks around for excuses.

BEN FORDHAM:

We know the cover-up is always worse than the crime, but if you go back to the start of this whole thing, one of the smelliest aspects of the whole scandal is the fact that this money was awarded before the grant scheme had been launched.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

Well, you know, and the grant scheme was invitation only. He claimed it wasn't. He stood up in the Parliament. He stood up in the Parliament, and he said this was open to all, and then we tabled straight afterwards the documentation that said it's an invitation-only grant program. I mean, this is the problem with Albanese, time and time and time again. Now he could then stand up and say, 'Well, I got it wrong. I'm sorry I got it wrong.' He will never.

BEN FORDHAM:

In light of these lies, and that's what they are.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

They're lies.

BEN FORDHAM:

What should the Prime Minister be doing?

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

He should apologise. He should say I made a mistake. Frankly, he should go, but that'll be up to an election. That's the reality.

BEN FORDHAM:

So, you're not calling on him to resign?

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

Well, I want him gone tomorrow, obviously. But he's not going to. He'll wait for an election. But we need an election to get rid of this guy, frankly. He is not up to the job. He's not fixing the problems Australians are facing, with cost of living pressures bearing down on Australians on a scale we haven't seen in a lifetime, and he is not up to the job of fixing it. He has fled the country. His Treasurer is in hiding, and we see a Government in chaos. We've got backbenchers briefing against the Treasurer and others, we've got senior ministers coming out defending the Treasurer against those backbenches. We saw Burke today backtracking on his immigration policies because he's got them all wrong.

BEN FORDHAM:

Let me ask you about the boss of ANZ Bank who says he's seeing world markets at the moment in a dangerous situation. He says, 'We've never seen this amount of spending in our lifetime.' So, you've got, here we have it, bank bosses, Treasury officials, economists from all across the country all saying we're spending too much, but the Prime Minister and the Treasurer can't see it.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

They can't see it. They won't admit to it, and you can't fix a problem if you don't admit to the problem. Spending is out of control. We've laid out $31 billion of savings. If they adopt those tomorrow, we'll support every dollar of that. But they won't do it because they can't bring themselves to do it, and that means they can’t fix the problems we've got. They can't bring down inflation. They can't bring down interest rates. They can't get the economy going again, and that is the fundamental problem with this Prime Minister.

BEN FORDHAM:

Just on spending, Chris Bowen and Anthony Albanese have been in Turkey at this COP31 climate conference. They've taken along 193 official representatives and of course we've all picked up the bill, and this is the same Anthony Albanese who doesn't think we have a spending problem.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

And this was after, you know, Chris Bowen's $35 million pre-COP flop, the snooze fest he had in the South Pacific, which he and the Prime Minister went off to because they insisted on being co-presidents of COP. I mean, seriously, Chris Bowen should be working to get electricity prices down in this country because he's pushed them up by 40 per cent, having promised a $275 reduction. Then he takes this great entourage of almost 200 people off to Turkey to parade to the world, and, you know, frankly, what he should be doing is sitting here in Australia getting electricity prices down.

BEN FORDHAM:

Angus Taylor is with us, the Liberal leader. Now you've been to these climate conferences before, spruiking net zero, haven’t you?

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

Well, I have been there, and we have realised, we came to realise, that we needed to scrap net zero, and that's our position. That's the right thing to do.

BEN FORDHAM:

So, you were talking it up once upon a time, but not anymore?

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

I was talking about how Australian technology, including gas, can play a role in all of these things, but the reality is we've realised net zero has become an ideology which is throttling our country. It's sending industry offshore, it's driving up electricity prices and it's got to go. So, I am happy to admit when I make a mistake. I am happy to admit that, but this Prime Minister will not do that, and that's why he can't fix the problems we've got as a country.

BEN FORDHAM:

On a few other issues, there's a proposal to introduce antisemitism training in workplaces around Australia. This comes from the antisemitism envoy Gillian Segal, and she's saying that we need to learn about antisemitism. And look, there is no question in the world, anti-Semitism is a very important issue, and it's had deadly consequences in places like Bondi, but do we really need businesses educating adults about antisemitism?

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

Yeah, I mean, look, I haven't seen that proposal, so it's hard to respond to that. I do think we need to be calling out Islamist extremism, which I think has been the most egregious form of antisemitism we've seen in recent times. We saw it at Bondi, and we need to call it out every day, and I will continue to. I'll call out all forms of antisemitism, but the Islamist extremism is where it has had very, very dire impacts in this country, and I will be calling it out.

BEN FORDHAM:

We seem to expect a lot of business leaders these days when we're counting up all the things they're supposed to do. I just look at this one and say, all right, well, this is a very important issue. I'm just not sure that corporate Australia has a responsibility of tackling it.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

Well, I mean, look, if there's antisemitism in the workplace, obviously, bosses and managers have got to deal with it. Of course you do, as you do with any bad behaviour in the workplace, but that's a matter for them to deal with. But I'll look at the proposal. As I say, I haven't seen the details.

BEN FORDHAM:

Are you a cricket fan?

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

I am a cricket fan. I played cricket for many years.

BEN FORDHAM:

Okay, the hottest topic this week in sport.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

I thought you were going to ask me this.

BEN FORDHAM:

Usman Khawaja claims the entire Australian cricket team knew about the ball-tampering plan in South Africa all those years ago. Our cricket captain Pat Cummins is going to be addressing the media this morning at 9.30 am. What do you make of the whole thing?

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

Well, obviously I want to see Australian cricket succeed, prosper, do well, because I love the game and always have. But I am not going to wade into making commentary on this one. I think it's a matter for Cricket Australia to deal with, and they're going to have to.

BEN FORDHAM:

Should they be prosecuting the case eight years on?

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

Well, it's eight years. It's a long time ago. I remember it well when it happened. And look, we haven't heard what Pat Cummins has had to say. I think this is a matter for Cricket Australia. I'm not going to wade into it. I know the Prime Minister at the time did wade into it, but I'm not going to, I think politics and sport should be as separate as possible, even though I love my sport.

BEN FORDHAM:

We did throw them under the bus in a major way. I'm very happy to say that I personally didn't at the time, and I thought Malcolm Turnbull was way over the top when he came out and said they brought shame on the whole country, when let's face it, you'd know as a former cricketer, ball-tampering has always happened. Maybe not in a way that it was done in South Africa, on a, you know, 4D big screen with bright yellow sandpaper coming out of someone's trousers, but it's always happened.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

Yeah, look, I've bowled for many years, not-fast-enough outswingers, but never used sandpaper, I have to say. But look, as I say, I don't know the details of this. None of us do. We'll see what Pat Cummins has to say, but I think this is a matter for Cricket Australia to deal with, and I'm not, as a politician, inclined to wade into these things.

BEN FORDHAM:

And if you're a betting man, what will Anthony Albanese say when he's confronted with all of these latest findings on the golf club funding fiasco?

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

He'll ignore it. He'll ignore it because he always does. This is the character flaw, Ben. If you can't admit to mistakes, as I just did on our energy policy, if you can admit to the mistakes, you can fix them. It's that simple, and we have a lot of things in this country that need fixing. Top of the list is cost of living and the economy. But that's not the only thing, and this is why he is not up to the job. It's why he's not succeeding in the job and it's why he's letting Australians down.

BEN FORDHAM:

Where are you today? What are you up to this morning?

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

I'm going to be out and about talking to businesses, as I do almost every day, and the pain I am seeing in small businesses, can I say, I've never seen anything like this. And to all the listeners out there, when you go and buy a coffee or go down to your local shop, just encourage the owners. They are battling now, working harder for less right now, with a Government that's putting more and more layers of red tape and cost on them, and we need to support these people because they are the backbone of our community and our country.

BEN FORDHAM:

No doubt about it. They do need support, and you feel for them at the moment. The real estate agents I talked to, boy, they're all getting ready to pack it in.

Thanks so much for coming in the studio.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION:

Good on you, Ben.

[ENDS]