

# Radio interview with Em Rusciano and Harley Breen, 2DAY FM

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Welcome to the show Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull. Welcome Prime Minister.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Em, it's great to be with you and good to be with you too Harley.

**HARLEY BREEN:**

Thank you very much Malcolm.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Thank you so much. Now I know there is a few things you want to talk about. I just wanted to gently touch on my nerves over North Korea knowing who we are and basically saying that we need to look after our own backyard. How are you responding to that Prime Minister?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well the North Korean regime continues to illegally and recklessly engage in very, very dangerous and provocative conduct, you know, threatening its neighbours, illegally building up a nuclear weapons capability and all nations – including Australia, but in particular China who has the greatest leverage over North Korea because it is its neighbor – all nations have got to unite in bringing pressure on North Korea – economic pressure to bring that regime to its senses, so that it stops threatening the peace of the region and the world.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Obviously, yesterday we heard about the confirmation of the tragic death of seven-year old Sydney boy Julian Cadman and you've revealed that you have been working on a strategy for protecting crowded places from terrorism?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Yes. Look, firstly, I know I speak for all Australians in saying how heartbroken we all are to learn of Julian's death. When he was first reported to be missing, many Australians prayed that he would be found safe and sound. All Australians, whatever their religious views, hoped that he would be found and returned safe to his parents. It wasn't to be. So our heartfelt sympathies and condolences go to his family Andrew and Jom, and of course his mum Jom has been badly injured and we all wish her a swift recovery.

Every Australian, but particularly every parent, just grieves for that

family. You can imagine the anguish of Andrew Cadman flying there to Barcelona, hoping, grabbing at whatever, you know, shred of hope he could that his little boy would be found safe.

**HARLEY BREEN:**

Absolutely. Hey Malcolm, speaking of –

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Now, just in terms of what we're doing here, you asked me that.

**HARLEY BREEN:**

Yes.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Look, ever since the Nice truck attack last year – and indeed before then – we've been aware of the ability of terrorists to use vehicles as means of killing people, of attacking people. But after the Nice attack, I asked our Commonwealth Coordinator General of Counter-Terrorism to pull together all the expertise around Australia and internationally and develop a national strategy for protecting crowded places. That's been a very big piece of work. It's involved the private sector, people who own malls, football stadiums, local government, state government.

That work was completed recently and we've published it on the weekend. You can read it, there's a lot of material there, particularly for people who own venues so they can do checklists; where are the vulnerabilities? What can they do? Important advice to planners and architects, because of course protections against vehicle attacks are best built into spaces at the design stage. So it is all there, [nationalsecurity.gov.au](http://nationalsecurity.gov.au). I'd encourage your listeners to check it out.

**HARLEY BREEN:**

Sorry, Prime Minister, do you also have some provisions in there for money into mental health? Because obviously that's a big part of what's going on in the world.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Yes, well we are spending a lot of money, as you know, we have a big mental health agenda. In fact, one of the things I often refer to is mental health as the 'mental wealth of our nation'. We all have a vested interest –

**EM RUSCIANO:**

What about the mental health of the LGBTIQI youth in this country at the moment, Prime Minister? Are you concerned about that? Because I don't know if you've heard, overnight there's been some fairly horrendous posters put around Melbourne. They say: 'Stop the fags' and they have statistics on there

that are just made up. "92 per cent of children raised by gay parents are abused, 51 per cent have depression and 72 per cent are obese".

**HARLEY BREEN:**

Ridiculous claims.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Are you willing to denounce the people that made these posters? And you know – you spoke of parents earlier – and what do you say to the parents of kids who are gay? And I mean, this plebiscite that you're allowing has emboldened people who are anti-homosexual to come forward in the light and say some pretty awful things and I am a mum and if my child was homosexual and hearing this rhetoric that is now openly available because of your Government – I meant, what do you say to these kids and these parents?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well Em, look, our society, the most successful multicultural society in the world is built on a foundation of mutual respect. So I deplore disrespectful, abusive language whether it is directed at young gay people or people of other religions or other races. So mutual respect and a respectful debate is what we should have in Australia.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

But that's out the window Prime Minister, that's not happening so what are you going to do to protect these vulnerable kids? Because your respectful debate, with all due respect, is in the toilet.

**HARLEY BREEN:**

Yeah, it's already –

**EM RUSCIANO:**

So what are you doing to protect them?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, Em, we're in a democracy, right? Now, you know people will often say, in any democratic debate, they'll often say things that are hurtful and unfair and sometimes cruel but that is part of a debate. Now you cannot, the only way to stop people saying things that you find hurtful, is to shut down free speech.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Do you find it hurtful what they've said? Do you find it hurtful?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Yes I do. What I would say to you Em, is if you have friends who are really

distressed by this sort of language, stand up for them. Put your arms around them.

I want to say to you as your Prime Minister, that Lucy and I will be voting 'yes' in the postal vote. Lucy and I have been long supporters.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Oh, wow.

**HARLEY BREEN:**

That's great to hear Malcolm.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, we have been long supporters of same-sex marriage. I do not think that if a gay couple gets married, who are living together, gets married, that doesn't threaten my marriage to Lucy, which is nearly 38 years of marriage.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Yes.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

And I'll tell you, the threats to marriage are not gay people getting married – threats to traditional marriage if you like – are not gay people getting married. The threats are desertion, cruelty, neglect, abandonment, indifference. Those are the threats.

This is a time when all of us in challenging times, when all of us need to support our friends and if you have friends, whether they are young people or old people, who feel threatened and a bit shook up by any debate like this, this is a time to put your arms around them and give them your love and support.

But just to be very, very clear, I've been a long term supporter of allowing, legalizing same-sex marriage as it is called, marriage equality. I'll be voting 'yes' as will Luce in the postal vote. I encourage everyone to participate and if you don't agree with it, participate. Because you know, this is an exercise in democracy –

**EM RUSCIANO:**

But is it? Because it's a non-binding vote. Like, is it democracy?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Of course it is.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Like, isn't it just you guys not doing what you like?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Of course it is, of course it's democracy. If the postal vote is carried, the legalisation of same-sex marriage will sail through the Parliament, believe me.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Yes. Okay.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

There are many people who are quite conscientiously opposed to same-sex marriage who've said they will vote 'yes'.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Well Malcolm it really, I have to say it's made me, I'm glad you're voting 'yes'. I'm glad you've publically said that, you and Lucy, I know I've seen you at Mardis Gras.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, I've said it many times, that's hardly new.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Yeah. But to hear it on our station, well, it is for us. Also a lot of people won't have heard you say it. Because you're traditionally on AM and it's the first time you've been on our show and we have a huge listening audience.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well I'll come back, I'll come back. I'll get a regular spot.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Please come back. Well the other thing that we just wanted to briefly touch on, the introducing the drug test for welfare.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

The drug trials.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Yeah.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

You know, I talked about love a minute ago – this is being criticised by some people – this is all about love. Look, if you've got a friend who is on drugs, what do you want to do? You desperately want them to get off it. What we're trialing here, first in Canterbury Bankstown, is a trial where people

who are on welfare, who are on, you know, Newstart and Youth Allowance, will be tested for drugs and if they are found to be on drugs, then they will be put onto income management. It doesn't mean they'll get less welfare payments, it's just that they'll only be able to spend it on food and rent and you know, the necessities. They won't have the same freedom to spend it on drugs as they otherwise would have.

**HARLEY BREEN:**

It does sound like you're targetting the poor there, though.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Yeah, doesn't, isn't it insinuating everyone on welfare is also on drugs?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

No it doesn't, but the evidence shows that people on those welfare payments are about 2.4 times more likely to be on drugs than people in the general community.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

So Prime Minister, what about –

**PRIME MINISTER:**

It is a trial, Em, just hear me out. It is a trial. You've got to be prepared to experiment. I mean people, there's a lot of negativity around and people say governments aren't getting things done. Then when you try something new, all of the knockers emerge. You've got to have a go. You've got to have some experiments.

We'll see how it goes. I mean we've had great success with the cashless debit card which has been trialed in Ceduna and the east Kimberley. We'll be taking that to some further sites. If we want to get people off welfare and into a job, if we want to get people off drugs and into a healthier lifestyle, we've got to be prepared to experiment. This is about love, it's not about picking on people or you know, making assumptions about people on welfare. It is a practical way to help people.

I'd just say this to you; if you had a brother, or a partner or a child who was on drugs, what would you do? You would do everything in your power to get them off drugs. You would try and if something didn't work, you'd try something else. So that's what we're doing. This is about love, this is about looking after our fellow Australians because we've all got a vested interest in every other Australian's health and particularly their mental health.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Well –

**HARLEY BREEN:**

Decriminalising drugs would be a step in the right direction. Because if you take the criminality out of it, you're going to, you know, help out people's lives in that fashion, that they're not facing criminal charges for what is a mental illness issue.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Yeah, but you're not seriously suggesting that we'd be better off if more people were on ice are you?

**HARLEY BREEN:**

No, of course I'm not.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

No, no.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well alright, why are we making ice – I just want to challenge this – why would making ice legal, be of benefit, would benefit anyone? Surely that would mean more people would use it? That would make the problem worse.

**HARLEY BREEN:**

I didn't say make it legal I said take the criminality of it out of it and focus on the mental illness side of it.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

You take the criminality out of it, if you take the criminality out of it, you are in effect legalising it.

Look, I just want to say to you, we tackle this ice problem – and the drug problem generally, but ice is you know, the newest most rapidly growing threat – we tackle it at every level. I was just yesterday down at the Federal Police Headquarters in Sydney, congratulating the teams that busted those big international drug-smuggling cartels and of course the counter-terrorism teams.

**HARLEY BREEN:**

But that's not the individual.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Pardon?

**HARLEY BREEN:**

That's not the individual who has an issue with mental illness, that's the issue there. Whatever substance they're choosing to use, is to do with their mental illness, their mental health.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, look there is no question; if you can get people who are on drugs, off drugs, their mental health will improve. Now, I understand the argument. You're saying they've got a mental health problem and you know, they're unhappy or depressed and so they turn to drugs.

The reality is these drugs are extraordinarily dangerous. They're a massive threat to our community. They destroy families, they destroy people's futures, they particularly destroy them at a young age. If we love these people then we must do everything we can – and we are – and we are prepared to trial new ideas and new approaches to get them off drugs. That is love, that's love and compassion.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Prime Minister you're speaking of love, you're speaking of love and compassion.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Yes.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

So I'm giving you a platform to any young members of the LGBTQI community – in fact, we're talking to Magda Szubanski later and the CEO of beyondblue to help these young kids – as their Prime Minister, what do you want to say to the young kids listening now, who are feeling ostracised and feeling attacked by what's happening with the plebiscite?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Believe in yourself, believe in yourself. Be proud, be proud of yourself –

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Do you believe in them Prime Minister?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Of course I do. Look, seriously, those people who seek to denigrate other Australians –

**EM RUSCIANO:**

But, isn't that your Party?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

No, no, Em, really, don't. You've got to be very fair about this –

**EM RUSCIANO:**



I don't think you're being fair. Do you think we should be debating equality, do you think equality is a debate? Is that something to be debated?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Em, you cannot, simply because you don't like the argument, simply because you believe in something –

**EM RUSCIANO:**

But is it an argument?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Now Em, you've got to let me finish a sentence. Simply because you believe in marriage equality – and you believe in it and I support it too – doesn't mean that people are not entitled to disagree with you. We have a democracy, this is a legitimate debate. Believe me, you know –

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Is it legitimate though? Prime Minister I don't believe you believe it's legitimate. I don't believe in your heart you do. I don't think saying someone isn't equal to me because of who they love is a debate, or is a legitimate argument. I think it's denying someone their rights.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Em look, can I, let me give a tip. What you're saying there is undermining the case for marriage equality. A key thing is, you cannot ask for respect from the 'no' case, from the 'no' case, if you're not prepared to give respect to the 'no' case.

Now, the vast majority of people who do not agree with same-sex marriage, who have, you know, what you would regard perhaps as very conservative views, they are not homophobic. They don't denigrate gay people. They have a view about marriage and they believe it should remain between a man and a woman. You know social change takes time. It takes debate and discussion.

**HARLEY BREEN:**

Why don't you just let a free vote in Parliament then?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

What you should do and I urge you to do this, is don't be distracted by a handful of extreme and unpleasant posters or, you know, flyers. Focus on the substance of the debate. If you give the people who are saying: "Vote no", if you give them respect for their conservative view of marriage, then they will give respect to your view. I think the key to this is respect.

I mean, I know many people who take a conservative view of marriage and say: "It should be between a man and a woman," who do not have a, you know, a

homophobic bone in their body, full stop. One of the problems in debates like this is the tendency to, you know, caricature each side. The vast majority of people involved in this debate – and of course the vast majority of Australians, like 99.999 per cent or whatever – are very respectful of each other, understand there are differences of opinion and we resolved them amicably and respectfully.

Now there's a postal vote, there will be a postal vote. Every Australian will get their say –

**HARLEY BREEN:**

But we elected you guys to debate this in Parliament. We elected our representatives to debate this in Parliament –

**PRIME MINISTER:**

You did –

**HARLEY BREEN:**

So I don't know why you guys don't just have a free vote, save this sort of hatemongering –

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Save \$122 million.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Harley, I can explain.

**HARLEY BREEN:**

Yep.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

The reason we're having a postal vote, is because we went to the last election and our policy was that we would hold a national plebiscite on this issue.

**HARLEY BREEN:**

You've had a lot of policies you didn't come through on though.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Do you want to name a few others? No one's accused me of breaking any promises. And give me credit for this, the Labor Party was in power for six years and did nothing on marriage equality.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Yes but they've also come forward and admitted they were wrong and said they'll vote for it, which you know governments do. You're allowed to say we were wrong and we changed our mind.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well –

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Shorten has said if he gets in, it's the first thing that gets done.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, the fact is the postal vote will be going out shortly. There's obviously a challenge in the High Court but we're confident it will be upheld there. When it's held, when the postal vote is held I encourage everybody to vote. Whether you're voting 'yes' or 'no', it's important to participate. Lucy and I will be voting 'yes' and if a majority comes back and says 'yes,' consistent with our election promise, then we will facilitate a private members bill on same-sex marriage. And as I said, with, you know, protections for, you know, religious organisations and so forth, with all of those protections, it will sail through the Parliament.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Well Prime Minister Turnbull thank you so much for coming on and having a robust debate with Harley and I. We appreciate your time-

**PRIME MINISTER:**

A respectful debate.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

It was! And you are welcome, as is Lucy – I'm a big fan of your wife – any time, any place-

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Good, well that makes two of us.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

[Laughter]

Thanks Mr Turnbull and let's hope this marriage equality gets through and the right thing happens and yeah, we'll talk soon hopefully.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Terrific, thanks very much Em. Thanks Harley. Bye.

**EM RUSCIANO:**

Thanks Prime Minister.

**[ENDS]**