

Response from Ian Gowrie-Smith:

ACA reported that the Islands were going under the hammer, but on The Today Show you said the properties were not on the market. In the ACA story they included a quote in which you said "according to the agent I've enlisted to sell them". Was the ACA story wrong in any way and can you confirm the Islands are not on the market?

In my email to the Foreign Minister, which is not in the public domain, I advise that I am seeking to engage in discussions about the future of the islands before the islands are placed on the market.

I have got an agent, Farhad Vladi of Vladi Private Islands, who has given me directions as to value and possible market interest but he hasn't been authorised at this moment to actively market them.

ACA is accurate in that the "going under the hammer" is an Australian way of saying they are up for sale. The ACA is clear that the islands are "For Sale" and also the price- but not being marketed at the moment.

Have you had discussions with the Chinese or interest from them?

The islands are not yet being marketed but the agent is currently concluding sale(s) of islands to Chinese interests. As I say in the program, I have no idea whether those islands have a strategic value.

Do you believe you were fairly portrayed in the ACA story or are there any concerns you have about the final version of the story that went to air?

I think it's acceptable and generally understood that an ACA program has colour and [is] likely to have an agenda. In this case it's that the government is doing lots of talking and no action. There was a serious failure in communication. If it had been my choice I would have concentrated more on that failure which happened, rather than the somewhat less likelihood of the CCP buying it.

Is it fair to say you participated in the ACA story because no one from the government responded to your messages - not because the Chinese are buying or have expressed any interest in buying the properties?

Yes. I only went to media when repeated attempts over two months did not get acknowledged.

Did you fund the travel for Steve Marshall and the ACA camera operator?

No.

Make no mistake, these islands are tailor made as a strategic base.