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DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
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**E&EO TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
TODAY SHOW
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SUBJECTS: *PM's US visit; Fuel Security; US & China, Economy; Family Court Inquiry.*

DEBORAH KNIGHT: Peter Dutton joins us now along with Deputy Opposition Leader Richard Marles. Good morning to you both, didn't get an invite, but you're here with us so that's good. Now President Trump is laying out the red carpet but how important is this visit Peter? Will it actually see concrete results?

PETER DUTTON: Yes it will, obviously we've got a very significant trading relationship with the United States, people to people relationships. But, most importantly I think in this age and for the foreseeable future the military alliance we have with the United States is absolutely essential and the conversations about what's happening in the Middle East, what's happening with Iran, what's happening in our own region will be the centrepiece of the discussions the Prime Minister has with the Secretary of Defence and State as well as obviously the President.

KNIGHT: Fuel price is a big issue obviously are we likely to see some sort of

deal where Australia can tap in on those giant oil reserves in the US to protect our own supply?

DUTTON: No I think the debate will concentrate about what's happening in, you know, in the Iran situation at the moment. I think it's obviously a very crucial period to watch what is going on. The United States has taken a strong position and Australia similarly has taken ...

KNIGHT: Could we be involved in military action?

DUTTON: Well we've said that we will provide assistance so that we can see safe passage of oil tankers, because if we see a disruption there that we'll see a spike in prices at the bowser here so it's in our national interest to make sure that there is free trade, free movement of those oil tankers.

KNIGHT: Now in terms of the big issues China will be the big elephant in the room really. Richard is it going to put Australia in an increasingly difficult position where we've got a very close relationship obviously with the US, but how do we walk both sides that diplomatic dance of being friends with the US while Trump's got a trade war with China?

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR

PARTY: Well, I think we've had an alliance with the United States since 1942, so that's a decision that's very much central to our national security and our world view. But I think what's really important for the Prime Minister when he speaks to the President is to make clear that it's in Australia's interest to have an open trading America and a trade war and trade tension between America and China is not in Australia's interests. So it's really important, the Prime Minister will go there or get his happy snaps, he'll do all that with his mate. But he's got to come back here with more than just the baseball cap and an ill-fitting one at that. He actually has to come here with some results and that's in relation to trade.

KNIGHT: All right we'll see what it delivers. Now we've had big economic news delivered here at home as well the Treasurer all smiles with the budget in its best position in more than a decade. That announcement yesterday, but it's really not cause for celebration is it Peter? The jobless rate is on the way up; the economy is so sluggish that it looks like the Reserve Bank might have to cut interest rates again possibly as early as next month.

DUTTON: Deb, we've had a sliding doors moment in Australia here. If the Labor Party had won the last election the debate now would be about abolition of the negative gearing regime, there would be a doubling of capital gains tax, the housing market would be in a slump -

KNIGHT: Okay they didn't though, but you did and the economy is not doing as well as it is –

DUTTON: Now the outcome is that we're back into surplus so we can start to pay down Labor's debt which is incredibly important ...

MARLES: You haven't yet.

DUTTON: We can put more money into the services that we need to. We have got a relatively low unemployment rate. We have got you know I think, some sluggishness in parts of the economy which everybody recognises but we need to make sure that we're boosting the economy and we're doing that through the program that we've got and getting back to budget instead of spending money on pink batts and all these crazy ideas ...

MARLES: That's a long time ago, Peter, pink batts ...

DUTTON: We're still paying for it, Richard.

MARLES: If you're going there you're really scraping the bottom of the barrel. You've doubled the debt, in the last six years. That's actually your record. Six

debts is what you've produced for all the talk and household debt is going through the roof. Wages are low, like anyone who goes to the supermarket knows how tough it is, knows the decisions they have to make about what they can't afford and I tell you what. No Liberal talking points are going to make it easier for them when they're making their decisions at the checkout.

KNIGHT: And it's a point though the average Australian, they aren't feeling flush with cash. They've got big bills to pay, they're seeing power prices and fuel prices going up as well. It seems to be this disconnect between the economy and family budget.

DUTTON: Deb, I will put our record against Labor's any day of the week, the debt that we incurred the recurrent expenditure ...

MARLES: You've doubled it

DUTTON: That was what it locked in by legislation introduced by the Labor Party that meant that we had to expend money on programs you wouldn't support those cuts ...

MARLES: You had to double it? Is that the line?

DUTTON: You wouldn't support cuts in the Senate to try and bring the budget back to balance ...

MARLES: We supported the tax cuts ...

DUTTON: Labor has been a disaster. Back in the Keating years where they racked up debt high interest rates, they were a disaster over Rudd and Gillard. You can only imagine how bad it'll be if Shorten was Prime Minister now.

MARLES: So let's be clear 28 years of uninterrupted economic growth and you've just had to go to Keating who created it.

DUTTON: What you think is just good luck? You always say it's good luck that somehow we return the budget to balance and start paying your debt down ...

MARLES: It's good luck and you've been the beneficiary of Labor Government.

KNIGHT: All right I want to ask you about this, I want to ask you at this, One Nation later Pauline Hanson has been appointed co-chair of this inquiry into the family's court ...

DUTTON: She's been appointed Deputy Chair.

KNIGHT: Deputy Chair sorry, so she has very publicly cited that she thinks women are lying about domestic violence to get custody of their children because of her own son's bitter marriage breakdown. Is it wise to appoint someone in that position when you want an unbiased result from this inquiry, because clearly she's got an agenda?

DUTTON: Deb, I would say most Members of Parliament and I don't think this is a partisan thing. I think Richard and I will agree on this, I mean one of the most trying conversations, most difficult conversations you have with constituents, mums and dads who come in who love their kids but the relationships separating. Grandparents you see in tears because they can't see their grandchildren, and the system you know is difficult because there are so many diversities in the cases that you see, so I think it is right that we have a new look at the way in which the family law system works.

KNIGHT: Is Pauline Hanson the right person to be in that role?

DUTTON: Pauline Hanson is passionate about a lot of issues. Now she was wrong in relation to some of the comments she made during the course of the week. But her view is worth no more, no less in relation to matters that she's compassionate about and she can contribute like any other Member of

Parliament to the committee and I hope that we can find a better system for families into the future.

MARLES: So I do agree with Peter that this is an area which is really fraught and I've talked to those constituents as well and that's a familiar and consistent experience that every MP has had. I'm just not sure how you move forward with a Deputy Chair of this committee whose starting proposition is that women lie. I mean this is a difficult issue which she is going to make worsen and so it's hard to see how this inquiry is going to make anything better.

KNIGHT: Well we've got 12 months to see what this inquiry comes up with and we'll see if the recommendations are actually taken on board. But gentlemen we thank you for your time this morning, thanks everybody.

DUTTON: Thanks Deb.

MARLES: Thanks Deb.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.