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**E&EO TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
TODAY SHOW
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SUBJECT/S: Morcombe Foundation; Surveillance legislation; Drought; Marles op-ed in the Australian; Pet dogs.

DEBORAH KNIGHT, HOST: Tax holidays, millions more in spending and incentives to get farmers off the land. These are some of the radical ideas being considered to help communities crippled by drought and the stakes are high. Towns are running out of water and Barnaby Joyce is warning the Coalition will lose the next election if it doesn't deliver a major drought stimulus package. Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton joins us now along with Deputy Opposition Leader Richard Marles, good morning to you both. We'll get to the drought in a moment but Peter you are at the Walk for Daniel Morcombe day and I understand a donation is being made from proceeds of crime funding.

PETER DUTTON: Good morning Deb, good morning Richard.

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: Good morning.

PETER DUTTON: And look it's a big day here on the Sunshine Coast for the Morcombe Foundation, there are about 380,000 schools around the country that are participating and it's just amazing. So the numbers continue to grow each year, the awareness grows, but we're announcing today Deb, that we're going to provide \$1.8 million worth of funding over

three years to the Morcombe Foundation and that will help Bruce and Denise Morcombe get out a message of safety for kids online, the kids in our community about awareness about training people, teachers, parents, community members to deliver the message about how kids can operate safely with their devices online and in the community as well.

KNIGHT: It's a terrific cause and all the help is needed, it's wonderful. Now we've been visiting drought affected areas on the show all week and it is a national emergency. Is an exemption Peter from income tax for farmers and businesses an option?

DUTTON: Well Deb we've put \$7 billion on the table already, we're working closely with the States and we will do whatever it takes to support farmers. The Government has looked at different packages, we've provided additional support there's a report that's just come back from the General who is having a look at the drought situation in many communities. He's made recommendations to the Government as well and the Government's been working with the National Farmers Federation over the course of last week on that issue as well. So the Prime Minister, the Minister for Agriculture, the Deputy Prime Minister all of us are desperate to help farmers in any way we can. I'm sceptical about some of the suggestions to try and get farmers off their land. I think farming families have a real connection to their land, to the community and I think we'd want to think very carefully about how that would operate or what that would mean for the rest of the town because it's not just somebody walking off their property it's what happens then to all of the local small businesses in that community and right across that region as well.

KNIGHT: We know there's talk of tension between the Nationals and the Liberals as a result of how the drought itself is being handled but Richard to you, this is got to be above politics doesn't it?

MARLES: Well it should be above politics and we've been suggesting to the Government to have a War Drought Cabinet to actually get all the politics out of this and have a bipartisan approach, but right now they can't get a bipartisan approach between the Liberals and the Nationals. I mean there is open warfare going on at the moment and let's be clear about one thing Deb; there is not \$7 billion on the table, that is absolute rubbish. The vast bulk of that is sitting in a Government bank account doing nothing and if they were fair dinkum about that then they would be jumping at the \$1.3 billion price tag which the rebel Nationals have put up, but they're not going to do any of that. I mean if you're in Armidale right now and you're facing running out of water by Christmas you would be horrified that all you can see going on from Government right now is a whole lot of

infighting between Government MP's in Canberra.

KNIGHT: Peter would that \$1.3 billion that's being put up as a figure from the National Party be considered by the Government? I mean, I know you want to get the surplus in, but would that figure be realistic?

DUTTON: Deb, I just want to deal with some of the stuff Richard raised then. Frankly I think it's outrageous because the suggestion of this Drought Cabinet is nothing more than a stunt from Mr Albanese and as you said before rightly, this is an issue that is above that sort of silly comment that frankly Richard made, he's normally pretty sensible. But I sit in the leadership group of the Government, we sit around the table with the Nationals we are working together hand in glove to provide support to farmers. Farmers want rain, that's the only thing that's going to provide a long-term solution, to the problem, the very difficult problem that they face at the moment. But we are providing support, financial support into those communities. We will continue to do that and as I said to you before the Government's resolve from the Prime Minister down is to help our farmers to make sure that we can do whatever is humanly possible to help them through the worst years of their life.

KNIGHT: On the issue -

MARLES: Right now, Deb, right now that's absolutely nothing and if they were fair dinkum about it, they would jump at the \$1.3 billion but it didn't sound like from Peter's answer they're going to do anything like that. Right now the only thing they're talking about is getting people off the land and getting people off the farm household allowance which is an absolute disgrace and it's no surprise that right now-

DUTTON: It's just ridiculous -

MARLES: In drought effected Australia there is white hot anger at the Government's complete inaction on the drought.

KNIGHT: All right well we'll see what is delivered when the Government does meet and discuss the drought issue. We did have Labor Leader Anthony Albanese on the show yesterday. You might be doing too good a job on this Richard, Albo said he misses our weekly politics chat, he's keen to get back on the show, but you this week jumped to Albo's defence declaring Labor's leadership team is united. Why did you need to talk about unity,

is there disunity in the ranks, is Albo not delivering?

MARLES: Albo is doing a fantastic job and it is certainly true that he misses being on the Today Show, he says that to me a lot. But you know, look we had a really difficult result obviously in the election earlier this year and we all hope that we would be doing something very different right now. But we've picked ourselves up with dusted ourselves off we are doing what we need to do to come to terms with our reality and Albo is do a great job in leading that. The side of politics which is doing nothing to come to terms with their reality is the Government, I mean they are the most surprised people to find themselves sitting on the side of the Parliament that they are. We've got a stagnant economy, we've got drought ravaged country and they're doing absolutely nothing. I mean there is hunting season going on within the Nationals right now and all we see from the Government is a kind of smug indolence about what they do in their job.

KNIGHT: Peter just quickly the plans for the controversial facial recognition technology to be used by Government agencies, banks and telcos; that's been sent back to the drawing board. Critics say it could lead to mass surveillance, members of your own party want stronger safeguards. Will you still push for this law?

DUTTON: Of course we will Deb, it's nothing about mass surveillance and the Labor Party made that point this week, there are really five States that have introduced the complementary legislation at a State level so it's about making sure that we can protect Australians who have their identities stolen, that's a huge problem in our community. We want to make sure that our law enforcement agencies can work very closely together, that's what the Bill is about. So the Committee that you point out said that they had some problems with the drafting; the department will sort that out with them and it'll become legislation and it's a really good piece of legislation, it's necessary. It just reflects the reality now of people having their digital identity stolen online as well, this is a big business for organised crime groups, and we'll do whatever we can to support them and we miss Albo too, we miss him a lot. Richard is sounding a lot like Julia Gillard, Albo's on life support -

MARLES: Oh please.

DUTTON: I mean Richard, all I see is the loyal Deputy-

MARLES: You wish.

DUTTON: We'll see what happens in a few month's time.

KNIGHT: All right, before I let you go, let's get a bit warm and cuddly here, we're crossing shortly to Australia's crankiest cat who's looking for a new home, a bit of love. Pets from both of you, we've got some photos I think to share. This is your dog Richard, what's your dog's name?

MARLES: Ablett and as you would appreciate Deb, most dogs in Geelong are called Ablett.

KNIGHT: Yes, AFL mad you are and Peter I've got to say I was surprised by your choice as well. There's the dog of Peter's, goodness me, did you dress this one up?

DUTTON: This is Ralph Dutton who has completely overtaken our household. The youngest child was 13 for some reason we thought it smart last Christmas to get a new baby, so he's taken over. He was just washed I think in that photo and dressed up in his Halloween costume for some reason and Boris the cat is fighting for attention at home as well. So when we run out of food at home I'll be the last to be fed that dog will be fed first, I promise you.

MARLES: Can I ask Peter, where does the dog see you in the family pecking order?

DUTTON: He sees me at the top of the tree mate, he knows.

MARLES: That's not me, I'm just above the guinea pigs.

KNIGHT: Fantastic fellas, thank you so much for joining us and terrific to see you at the day for Daniel Morcombe as well Peter, it's a terrific cause. Have a wonderful day.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.