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DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
TODAY SHOW
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SUBJECT/S: Aged Care Royal Commission; Protesters; Movember.

DEBORAH KNIGHT, HOST: Sad and shocking. And diminishing Australia as a nation. That is the damning assessment of our aged care system with urgent calls for change detailed in the preliminary finding from the Royal Commission. Joining me now is the Minister for Home Affairs, Peter Dutton along with the Deputy Opposition Leader, Richard Marles. Good morning you to both.

PETER DUTTON: Morning Deb.

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: Morning Deb.

KNIGHT: Now, a society is measured by the way it treats its most vulnerable, the elderly. And this Royal Commission, Peter, shows that we are failing in the most appalling way.

DUTTON: Well, Deb, it says that we were right to call a Royal Commission in the first place. I think this is well and truly above politics. I think both sides recognise for a long time under many governments we haven't got it right in relation to aged care. It's the reason the Prime Minister called this Royal Commission. And we want to make sure that we can treat people with dignity and respect to invest into aged care and to make sure that we can get a better system for older Australians. I think everybody is signed up to that cause.

KNIGHT: And what are you going to do about that then? Because the report is calling for urgent action and keeping elderly Australians in their own homes. It wants to keep young disabled people out of aged care and stop the use of chemical restraints for those in care. 'Urgent action' is what they say. Will you commit to any extra funding or increase in home care packages?

DUTTON: As the, I think the Minister pointed out yesterday and as the Prime Minister has said as well; absolutely we want to address the issues that are brought up by the Royal Commission. So the money that goes into aged care is doubled over the last 10 years. So over \$20 billion a year we will put into aged care. But obviously more is needed. We also want to make sure that we're investing into the right model. So people do want to live at home longer. It means that people with higher care needs are going into aged care. So we need to work with the providers to have a look at the best system. And that's what we will act on. It's the whole reason the Prime Minister called the Royal Commission; so that we could find what we can do differently, the way in which we can invest more sensibly into the future to get the best possible outcomes.

KNIGHT: Richard, would you think twice about putting your parents into care or your grandparents into the aged care system?

MARLES: Well, a shocking tale of neglect. That's what the Royal Commission said. I think everyone in this country today is wondering how Scott Morrison has let this happen. I mean, let's be clear; Peter talks about the Royal Commission. This Government was dragged kicking and screaming to doing a Royal Commission. At the outset, their responsible Minister thought it would make things worse. This is a Government which has cut \$1.2 billion out of the aged care system. I think everyone, as you just said, Deb, would be asking; 'is my mother safe?' That is the real question that people today are asking about how they feel in relation to the aged care system. 16,000 Australians die each year waiting to get into the aged care system. I mean, this is an absolute national scandal. The government has a whole lot of questions that it needs to answer here.

KNIGHT: These, however, are systemic failures and there have been dozens of reports and recommendations for change. Many of them coming down while Labor was in power. Why was this Royal Commission even needed in the first place? Why didn't you fix the problems? We've known about them for years.

MARLES: Deb, there's nothing systemic about a Government making a decision to cut \$1.2 billion-

KNIGHT: But there are systemic problems with the aged care system.

MARLES: There is nothing systemic about a Government making a decision to cut \$1.2 billion out of the aged care system. And that is the decision that this Prime Minister made when he was the Treasurer of this nation. That's what this Government has presided over since they were elected in 2013. They had been in Government for the last six years. What's going on?

KNIGHT: All right. Now, another issue I want to address with you today. The Prime Minister says he's had enough with protestors causing dramas around the country. We've seen the ugly scenes in Melbourne this week- and Sydney of course hit by that Halloween strike last night. Peter, Scott Morrison is today set to announce a plan to crack down on activists. He calls them indulgent, selfish, apocalyptic. What exactly is this plan going to involve?

DUTTON: Deb, this is one area where there is a divide between politics. So I think on aged care we should be above the sort of arguments that Richard just put forward. But in relation to these protestors, these are people who are associated with the Greens, with the Labor Party, with GetUp, and-

MARLES: Oh please.

DUTTON: For many of them, they don't believe in democracy. This is not about free speech. It is not about the ability to protest. These people are completely against our way of life. So I think the Prime Minister is dead right in saying that these people can protest peacefully as many people do. But the disruption that they seek to cause, the disharmony that they seek to sow within our society is unacceptable.

KNIGHT: So what does the plan involve? You've said in the past that benefits could be taken from protestors who are actually disrupting society. Is that an option on the table? What are you going to do?

DUTTON: The Prime Minister's looking at the ways in which we can firm the laws up now. I think one of the ways that the State Governments need to look at is to charge people the cost of the police response. We don't have 150 police just sitting around in Melbourne or Brisbane or Sydney waiting to respond to these people who spontaneously pull these stunts together. These police are being diverted away from other activities. There should be a price to pay for that. I think unless they're being dealt with adequately before the Magistrates Courts at a state level, then it is very hard to understand why they are being deterred from what they're doing. Obviously they're not. If you're going to the courts eight times and getting a slap on the wrist, why wouldn't you do it a ninth time? So, I think the firmness of the laws is one thing that we can look

at from a federal level and I think the Prime Minister is right to call this out.

KNIGHT: Richard, is that something that Labor would support?

MARLES: Firstly, the protestors are absolutely indulgent- completely agree with the Prime Minister's assessment of that. The idea that Peter's trying to create a political divide on that, you know, is low rent to be frank. These are people who are not actually about a cause. They're about engaging in a personal experience at the expense of Australians, in this case Victorians trying to get on with their lives. There are extensive laws around interfering with contractual relations which exist at a federal level right now. So Peter, and his Government could think about implementing those laws. We will have a look at whatever the Government is putting forward. But I think the starting point is to see whether or not this Government can actually act on the laws that it had also in place.

KNIGHT: Alright, gentleman we thank you so much. I know that Richard, you are signing up for Movember. We did have a bit of a picture, just quickly show-

MARLES: I'm not sure that's true.

KNIGHT: This is what we imagine you two might look like.

MARLES: No, I have to- I have to report to higher authority, Deb, and I'm not sure she is going to agree.

DUTTON: Richard, I'm a big fan but the Ron Burgandy look is just not working for you.

KNIGHT: We will see how we go at the end of this month. It is a great cause regardless. Gentlemen, thank you so much for joining us.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.