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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
TODAY SHOW
FRIDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 2019**

SUBJECT/S: Drought; ALP Election Review; Keeping fit.

DEBORAH KNIGHT: Buy now, pay later. That is what is on offer, part of it at least, to drought stricken farmers as part of the Morrison Government's \$2 billion rescue plan. It centres on zero interest loans for two years for farmers and small businesses. While there is no rain on the horizon, there is extra water on the way, with 100 gigalitres being released into the Murray River. The Minister for Home Affairs, Peter Dutton joins us now, along with Deputy Opposition Leader, Richard Marles. Good morning to you both, gentleman.

PETER DUTTON: Good morning, Deb.

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

KNIGHT: This drought it is a national emergency; that is recognised. Many farmers are already drowning in debt though. Is putting more farmers, potentially into debt in another two years the right approach here?

DUTTON: Deb, there's a lot of work that's been done already, so we are building on the investment that we have already made. We have helped farmers and we want to do more. So the idea is to look at the farmers, accounts, look at their books, work through the situation with them- so it needs to be a viable business. And I think each case is an

individual one that needs to be looked at. I think that is a human response that is required. But it does have the potential to help some farmers either restock, to make sure that they can get through the next stage of drought or to redefine their business. And I think it gives that flexibility. Now, that is on top of money that we're also putting in to try and help stimulate- as we've spoken before, it's not just the farms, it's in the local towns as well- to try and stimulate that local economy. To help the local produce store, the suppliers within the local town, obviously they're doing it tough because the farmers aren't buying it from them.

KNIGHT: Will the cheque book stay open? Because obviously, the drought, there is no guarantee it is going to break and there is no rain on the long range forecast. If that help is not extended, will you go beyond the two years?

DUTTON: Yes, I think the Prime Minister has been very clear that we will respond as we need to and in a way that is meaningful to the farmers. I think we have done that. It's obviously a very difficult situation. There are some areas now where there's been some rain but that of course is not going to break the drought. And for some farmers it will be a prolonged period. I mean, years of recovery, of restocking and making sure that they're back on track. So we will be there and I think we should.

KNIGHT: And Richard, there is obviously nothing that the Government can do to bring rain, which is what they all want. But you have to give credit where it is due, to the Government - they're offering some help here.

MARLES: Not much help. I mean, I don't see how farmers are going to be able to borrow their way out of even more debt. That is what is being put on the table here. As Peter said, there's a viability threshold which is put in place which is going to mean a whole lot of farmers actually don't get this. What puts food on the table for farmers is the Farm Household Allowance and that is something this Government is kicking people off. This is not another plan, this is just another excuse and all we got from this Government is another repackaged dog's breakfast.

KNIGHT: So not good enough?

MALRES: It is absolutely not good enough. Indeed, farming groups around the country are making that point. These people; the Government are sitting on their hands in terms of actually doing something for the farmers of our country.

KNIGHT: Pete?

DUTTON: I just don't agree. If you look at the facts of what we have done so far in providing that support to the farmers - the water package that's been arrived at, will get more water into areas where they're going to irrigate, grow more forage and make sure that they can get that out to farmers to keep them going. I think that is an incredibly important part of this package as well. But it's the latest part. And we need to continue to work with the farming groups, to work with the farmers. The Labor Party will play politics with it. The Labor Party will always say you're never spending enough money but I think we're doing it in a targeted way that is helping families and Australians would support that.

MARLES: It's not just the Labor Party. The NFF, all the farming groups are saying you are not doing enough-

DUTTON: I think the NFF is actually being critical of the State Governments who haven't been doing enough, particularly in Queensland where the support has been wound back. I think that is where the criticism is.

MARLES: They're making it clear this Government doesn't have a drought plan and that there is not leadership from this Government.

DUTTON: That is not what they're saying.

MARLES: And the Farm Household Allowance- which is not a loan- that is the way in which you give people food and put it on their table, you are kicking people off that.

KNIGHT: The farmers don't want politics they want help, so we will see how this is responded to from the community. Now as the Government does get on with business, Labor is still picking over what went so horribly wrong in the recent election in May. The unlosable election was lost. Many in the party themselves said they didn't think they would lose it at all. A warts and all review has been delivered with a blame centred on unpopular reader, also, in Bill Shorten. A cluttered policy agenda and a very weak strategy; this is grim reading, Richard. And in terms of a report card you can't get much more brutal than this?

MARLES: It is brutal and difficult reading but it's a process we need to go through. May 18

was a very bad day for Labor, that is to state the obvious. I think the Australian people would want to know the difficult message that they give us on that day is a message that we have heard. This review makes it clear to everybody that we are listening, that we are going to do the difficult work here and I think it also provides a basis now for taking forward the lessons that we need to learn from May 18. But rule a line under this and move forward.

KNIGHT: Was Bill Shorten unelectable?

MARLES: Look, I think Bill could have won the election but ultimately in terms of the lessons that we learn going forward, obviously the findings around Bill are in a sense the least relevant. I think the point about having a cluttered policy agenda, making our story going forward clear and simple, it can be bold and it can be ambitious but it needs to be clear and simple and the economy has to be at the heart of it. That is the critical lesson for us going forward and that is the lesson we have taken to heart.

KNIGHT: The review said though, that Bill Shorten was not popular and you need a popular leader to sell the policies. Is Anthony Albanese the right person as Leader? Because he has not exactly been setting the world on fire.

MARLES: Anthony Albanese is a fantastic Leader and we are going through what is a difficult period. You said it yourself, in the aftermath of this election loss, there is a lot of soul searching to do. Anthony has led us through this process, got us to this moment, he will be making a very important speech today at the National Press Club. Anthony Albanese will lead us to an election win in 2022, make no bones about that- and we are determined to see that happen because this is a hopeless Government which needs to be seen the back of.

KNIGHT: Any lessons from the Government?

DUTTON: Were those words familiar? It was like listening to Julia Gillard talking about Kevin Rudd. Everybody is behind you, it is nothing to see here. Richard actually is the confidante of Bill Shorten, one of his best mates, was an adviser before the election, they have thrown Bill under the bus. The fact is, Albo is struggling big time and it is not just in the cities but in the regions. Labor doesn't know what they stand for. They want to spend money, that is always a feature of the Labor Government. The fact is they are tearing each other internally apart at the moment and what you are seeing on the surface is only

a glimpse into the mad panic that is under the water. I think they've got a long process to go through but the fundamentals where you want to tax people beyond any reasonable expectation, Australians won't cop it.

KNIGHT: Alright, we will see how the regrouping actually carries on. Now, we have got a bit of a fitness focus on the show today. We are speaking shortly, to an Aussie who has been running- can you believe it- every single day for the past 2,000 days to get fit. And we're revealing the results of our downsizing Dubbo campaign shortly, many doing a lot to get fit and lose weight. And Richard, I understand you are being put through your paces for a new challenge you have coming up?

MARLES: Yes, so this Sunday week, 17 November, is Run4Geelong.

KNIGHT: Here you are, being trained. Who are you being trained by there?

MARLES: I am being trained by Mel Hickey, who is the captain of the Geelong AFLW team.

DUTTON: There is no sweat in that photo there.

MARLES: There is plenty of sweat, I assure you and she is a very intimidating figure.

DUTTON: That looks perfectly ironed that shirt.

MARLES: You're a mean man!

KNIGHT: A photo opportunity. You're making an effort though!

MARLES: Definitely making an effort. I will be running 12km on Sunday week and the beneficiary of that is Barwon Health- the Geelong Hospital and I will be running for the Emergency Department.

KNIGHT: Alright, it is a great cause. And Pete, what do you do to get fit?

DUTTON: I try and either go to the gym or go for a walk most mornings. And you have got to make it a discipline, so if I'm on the road, then always pack my gear and go to the gym at the hotel. It's harder at home because you're home in this job so infrequently you want to

have breakfast with the kids or run them to school. So it is harder I find at home. But I have an exercise bike at home. Despite the fact that we exercise each day you can tell that Richard and I eat well in between.

KNIGHT: Well yes.

DUTTON: ...Each of those sessions.

KNIGHT: I understand you also do a bit of mental health with meditation. So we're going to get into a bit of a zone here, now. We can dim the lights maybe and zen out a little bit.

MARLES: Is this true?

KNIGHT: A bit of meditation for you. Does it work?

DUTTON: I think it does because I think physical health is important but I think mental health is as well. If you're going from day light to 11 o'clock at night, I think clearing the mind is a good thing.

KNIGHT: Should we take a moment to do it?

DUTTON: Do we have 20 minutes?

KNIGHT: No. We have about 10 seconds.

DUTTON: This is the thing you can't do it justice.

MARLES: You look mindful.

DUTTON: Close your eyes, a quiet space and clear out all the thoughts, images that come into my mind of Richard exercising.

KNIGHT: In his ironed shirt.

MARLES: Do you hum?

DUTTON: There is no hum.

KNIGHT: We're Zen now. Good on you. You're good sports. Thank you so much.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.