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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
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SUBJECT/S: Aged Care on the Central Coast.

SCOTT LEVI: With the Royal Commission into Aged Care not holding hearings on the Central Coast, which is mind boggling, really outside of Northern Sydney and the Central Coast is aged care central. We have more aged care facilities than any other region in the state. Anyway, people scratching their heads and asking, why not? Maybe we have too much to contribute perhaps, too many horror stories to tell either. I don't know. A chance today- and look there are wonderful people in aged care too, we must say we do get calls from them when we do this and you know there are great facilities and great people and many relatives call up as well and say, look you know it's not all sectors of aged care but we've seen some of the horrible things that have happened with Bupa- the British multinational- who 80 per cent of the money they get comes out of federal government coffers, so you want them to be doing a good job. Anyway, a chance today to have your say without having to travel outside of the region, a public forum on aged care is being held at Mingara. It's open to anyone who has a story they'd like the Aged Care Royal Commission to hear so that's great news. And joining us we do have the Deputy Labor Leader, Richard Marles. Good to have you with us. Thanks for having a chat.

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: Scott, it's great to be with you this morning.

LEVI: Yeah. Look just before we get into what's happening today, should we have had a Royal Commission hearing here on the coast.

MARLES: Absolutely. I think it's really important for a place like the Central Coast which has such a high per cent of aged care centres- as you pointed out- but it will also have a significant number of people who are on aged care packages which is part of the system as well. It should be hearing what people on the Central Coast have got to say and we hope that during this time today, we give some opportunities for people to be able to tell their stories. And first and foremost what Emma McBride and I want to do is make sure that we are there listening.

LEVI: Now, a Royal Commission- now, I am not a lawyer but it's like a court, isn't it? You know,

evidence is gathered there and then legal things can spring from that. Will this have any weight, this this hearing at Mingara?

MARLES: Well what it does is certainly inform our attitudes and the policies that we take into the Parliament. And that's significant because ultimately that's what a Royal Commission is- from the point of view of the governments. I mean the Royal Commission is actually an instrument of Government. You're right that it has the ability to take evidence and listen to people under oath. Ultimately what it does though is make recommendations to governments and the interim report of the Royal Commission has done that. And what we want is to go through a process where we can also listen to what people have to say and that will help inform the positions that we take into the Parliament as well. But this is a critical issue. What the Royal Commission has found already makes it clear that we've got a systemic problem in Australia in relation to our aged care system. And let me also say you're you are so right in your introduction; there are many wonderful people who are working in aged care and often working on not particularly good wages and conditions but doing a fantastic job and often doing a fantastic job in their own time and actually- is the experience that I personally have had in relation to this. But there are systemic issues here and we need to figure out how we deal with them and how we can make the system better.

LEVI: You talk about taking knowledge and experience into Parliament. You've got Emma McBride, there who was the head of the pharmacy department at Wyong Hospital. Very aware of what's come out in the interim report in regards to chemical restraint. I mean surely all sides of the House should be listening to her on chemical restraint?

MARLES: Well absolutely. I mean, Emma is somebody of enormous experience in this sector. And so she is a fantastic representative for her community in the Parliament. But one of the recommendations in the interim recommendations of the Royal Commission which you rightly pointed out was the excessive dependence on the use of chemical restraints. And there's got to be another way, and we need to be understanding exactly why this is happening but come up with solutions to this. And, ultimately it is about making sure that people who are in aged care are able to experience that period of their life which is a critically important period of their life with dignity, and the use of chemical or Australians it's not about that at all.

LEVI: Is everybody welcome regardless of their political persuasion?

MARLES: Oh of course. This is completely open to the public and it's not- this isn't a chance for Emma and I to spruik, this is principally a chance for Emma and I to listen. And that's what we want to do. And we want to be able to hear the experiences that people have had and be able to take those experiences back into the Parliament knowing that this is an area of critical importance and one where we do have a problem in this country. And when the Royal Commission itself describes the system as one that is sad and shocking; that's the quote they used; 'diminishes Australia as a nation' than this is an issue which needs to be front and centre in what we're doing at the moment. And it's not just people who are in aged care but it's their families and their loved ones and that covers a significant proportion of our nation.

LEVI: All right. Deputy Leader of the Labor Party, Richard Marles thanks for joining us on the program.

MARLES: It's a pleasure, Scott. Thanks.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.