



**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW
PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA
TUESDAY, 3 DECEMBER 2019**

SUBJECTS: Labor's support for a Royal Commission into Veterans' suicide; George Christensen

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: I am really pleased that Labor today has been able to add its voice to the calls for a Royal Commission into veterans' suicide. This is a really complex issue. The rate of suicide in Australia amongst our veterans is about twice the national average. Last week, Anthony Albanese and I met with Julie-Ann Finney to hear, really, the tragic story of her son, David who took his life after serving in our Defence Forces. It is impossible not to be moved when you listen to the likes of Julie-Ann and the experiences which she has faced and the impact this is having on her. Those who serve in our Defence Forces are making a very special commitment to support our nation and it is really important to get to the bottom of what is going on here so that we as a community can support our veterans.

JOURNALIST: There is an argument that has been made in the past that the money is better spent on the frontline in terms of helping people with mental health and post-traumatic stress and so on. What is the counter to that?

MARLES: It is a very complex issue as to why we see such a significant suicide rate amongst our veterans. Partly it is to do with the types of service our people have been engaged in and partly it is to do with the transition from military life to civilian life. But, precisely because it is not clear there does need to be a forensic inquiry into what is going on here. Which is why I think it is a situation which perfectly lends itself to a Royal Commission and at the end of the day, the rate of suicide amongst our veterans is unacceptable and we need to be doing everything we can to support a part of our community who have made such a big decision to support us.

JOURNALIST: On another issue; we have traced some of George Christensen's travel to the red light districts, north of Manila in Angeles City. Do you think we should have more information on what that travel is? About 300 days over the course of four years. Is the public entitled to know

what an MP was doing overseas for such a long time?

MARLES: Look, I don't want to comment on the specifics of this case. Ultimately it is a matter for the Government to explain but the public absolutely has a right to know where those who they elect to serve in this place, is spending their time.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.