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DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY  
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE  
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
TELEVISION INTERVIEW  
TODAY SHOW  
FRIDAY, 6 DECEMBER 2019**

**SUBJECTS: Medevac; Bushfires.**

**TOM STEINFORT:** Parliament is done and dusted for another year, it's been a big year, a pretty big final day yesterday as well. The nation still in the dark to a certain extent over what deal exactly the Government has done with Jacqui Lambie in terms of repealing Medevac. Speculation is certainly growing it could have involved sending refugees to New Zealand, joining me this morning as they do each week is Deputy Opposition Leader Richard Marles in Canberra and Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton. Good morning to you both men.

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

**PETER DUTTON:** Morning.

**STEINFOFT:** Minister, for starters, let's put this out there straight away, what deal has been done with Jacqui Lambie?

**DUTTON:** Tom, we haven't done any deal. We went through pretty methodically and gave Jacqui a classified briefing about exactly what we already had in train, what we were doing. I think when we explained to her, look cut aside all the rhetoric you read in some of the newspapers and the left-wing websites, we don't want anyone on Manus or Nauru, I didn't put them there. We want to get people off as quickly as possible. We've sent 650 or more now to United States, we want to get that number down to zero; we've abolished the regional processing centre on Manus, there are no kids there. We'll slowly reduce the number down to zero, I want to do it overnight, but I need to do it in a way we don't see boats restarting. At the moment in Sri Lanka for example we are seeing a lot of activity, people smugglers trying to get people to pay money to hop on boats.

**STEINFOFT:** Richard, what is your read on what Jacqui Lambie has had to say? Did it sound like

a deal has been done to you?

**MARLES:** A deal has obviously been done and I think the Australian people are entitled to understand exactly what that deal is. The Government is telling us this is very important legislation, this is very important policy, we need to understand exactly what the arrangement they now have with Jacqui Lambie which resulted in her changing her views. This is just a simple matter ultimately of transparency, from the very moment that they came to office transparency has been a real problem for this government when it comes both to Border Protection and actually the way in which they governed generally. This should be a simple matter of coming clean about what exactly has been done here and to hide behind national security in relation to this is ridiculous. The Australian people are entitled to understand exactly what has gone on.

**STEINFORT:** What do you say to the suggestion that you are hiding behind the cloak here, effectively saying it is a national security briefing so we can't talk about what's being said?

**DUTTON:** I just think that it is rhetoric and these lines, with all due respect to Richard, he is speaking to the talking points that comes out of Mr Albanese's office, right, he's a trusted deputy, we get that. We didn't put them here, what Richard should be saying mea culpa, sorry, we lost control of our borders when in government and we were the ones that put people on Manus and Nauru. Kevin Rudd signed the agreements Julia Gillard failed as well. We have stopped deaths at sea, got every child out of detention, closed detention centres we haven't got any new boat arrivals and getting people off. So I think when you look at the contrast now, given the Labor Party voted with the Greens again this week to weaken our borders, Richard should be apologising not giving us a lecturer from the talking points.

**MARLES:** But Tom, that's just talking points tight there; let's be clear, there is essentially bi-partisanship right now in relation to boarder protection policy. Peter supports a system of offshore processing, he will say that right now, and that is ultimately al that Manus and Nauru is. Labor supports turning back boats so the critical ingredients to making sure our borders are safe is supported across the board. The idea that medevac legislation had any impact upon our national security is patently ridiculous; when you consider almost a thousand people came under medical transfers from Manus and Nauru to Australia via Peter prior to medevac coming into place. It is not like the sky fell in with this legislation, but at the end of the day, a deal has been done, that's what Jacqui Lambie herself is saying, it's important to understand the deal, transparency ought to be central to the way governments govern.

**STEINFORT:** NSW is in the grip of another bushfire disaster, we've seen some really apocalyptic pictures this morning, does there come a point where the Federal Government will step in here and declare an emergency so the army can be brought in to help?

**DUTTON:** Well Tom, we've obviously got a great collaboration with all of those firefighters in NSW, Queensland, predominantly at the moment, but problems elsewhere around the country as well. Already when you speak to the emergency management Australian officials, when you hear the advice from the fire Commissioners, there's already a very close collaboration, I don't think this is an issue of politics, the Federal Government will do whatever they have to, to protect people to protect property and life. There's a lot of money, support, agreement, arrangements for aircraft, all sorts of payments to families in distress, I think Australians should be proud of the fact that in the darkest hour for a lot of people, State Governments, councils, volunteers, the Federal Government, everybody is putting in whatever we can, to make sure that we help people and the threat, as you say, is here with us right now. People who think this is

being downgraded or going to be dealt with, or something that's happened last week or the week before it's not, it's here - now. People really need to listen to the warnings.

**STEINFORT:** Just quickly Richard do you see the Government is doing enough on this?

**MARLES:** Well look, I think Peter's answer to that is absolutely right. This is not a moment for politics. There's a well worn arrangement between the states and the Commonwealth about how emergency services are put in place and the arrangements around that and that's what is going on here. The focus has to be on the moment, on making sure we are doing everything to protect life and property. Peter is right when he says the warnings that our agencies put out which are among the very best in the world in dealing with this, people need to be listening to.

**STEINFORT:** Well to see you two agreeing on something it must be some Christmas spirit in the air. Quickly what are you doing for Christmas?

**DUTTON:** We just go to the beach, a bit of sand and water - boardies no DT's, just to reassure the other swimmers on the beach, it's all good. Richard can give the same assurance, no doubt.

**MARLES:** Well the idea that Peter is going to be in boardies, I want to see it -

**DUTTON:** I promise you won't.

**MARLES:** That's as scary as me putting them on, Tom. But no same with me, beach, golf and family, that's my holiday.

**STEINFORT:** Very good routine gents, great to see you both and hopefully a happy Christmas ahead for all.

***ENDS***

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.