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SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE  
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
TELEVISION INTERVIEW  
TODAY SHOW  
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***SUBJECTS: Bushfires, ACCC Digital Inquiry, Christmas***

**TOM STEINFORT:** Well fires, air quality and climate change is once again dominating the headlines this week only yesterday in fact the Prime Minister acknowledged that climate change was actually one of the many contributing factors to those devastating fires we're seeing around the country. Joining us now to discuss, Finance Minister Mathias Cormann and Deputy Opposition Leader Richard Marles. Good morning to you both gents.

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

**MATHIAS CORMANN:** Good morning.

**STEINFORT:** Mathias, I might start with you. The Government, look it's been heavily criticised by some parts about inaction on the bushfire situation. A lot of the focus this week has been on whether or not there should be some sort of financial support for these volunteer firefighters that are getting worked to the bone. Now what's your take on that?

**CORMANN:** Well I mean obviously we work with state and territory governments and we believe that the national response to the fires has been very strong. We've obviously also provided additional support for aerial firefighting and we will continue to work with the state and territories as appropriate and we will continue to provide additional support as appropriate.

**STEINFORT:** What's your take here Richard, I mean is there a point now that we have to say look we know that volunteer, yes it is goodwill, but this is beyond a normal situation now.

**MARLES:** Well I suppose what we all hope is that this is not the new normal but we've got a situation where we've had volunteer firefighters who have been in the field since August, the fire season is now extending way beyond how we've previously understood it and people

obviously are giving an enormous amount of their time. We've been suggesting that there needs to be actually a COAG meeting on fires and emergency response so that we can have a look at how we do this in a world where there are new normals now and it's very important that this coordination takes place and issues such as such as this have a proper area.

**STEINFORT:** The other and unavoidable aspects when we talk about the fires and the political links is the focus on climate change and policy to do with that. Mathias, a new global index has ranked Australia now as the worst performing country on climate change policy, I mean it's not exactly a feather in the cap.

**CORMANN:** We're one of a handful of countries only which is comprehensively beating our emissions reduction targets agreed to in Kyoto and indeed we will be beating our emissions reduction target agreed to in Kyoto by more than 400 million tonnes and indeed we are on track to meet and beat our emissions reduction target agreed to in Paris. So, and when you look at the level of investment in renewable energy mean, we're investing more than double on a per capita basis here in Australia compared to the UK, Germany or France, so I mean we are absolutely making a significant effort but we're doing it in a way that is economically responsible.

**STEINFORT:** Does that stack up? Are we beating Kyoto and is that good enough?

**MARLES:** Look at the end of the day these are junk stats that Mathias is quoting. I think if you are living in Sydney and you've seen smoke engulf the city for the better part of a month, if your kids aren't able to go to school because of that, if you're at work and fire alarms are going off because there's smoke in the air; I think you realise that something is going on and people in this country don't think this government is doing anything about climate change because they're not.

**STEINFORT:** Do they though, because they went to the election with a very similar policy on climate change and got endorsed there. I mean how much of this do you think the public is actually buying into?

**MARLES:** At the end of the day, I think people in the street absolutely know that something is going on with our climate because something is going on with our climate -

**CORMANN:** And we're doing something about it.

**MARLES:** But you are not Mathias, I mean the Climate Change Performance Index rated Australia down at the very bottom group of nations in the world who are acting on this and fundamentally your heart's not in it. There's a group of people -

**CORMANN:** That's just wrong.

**MARLES:** But it's absolutely right. I mean there's a group of people within your caucus as you know who don't even think it's real, but everyone in this city knows it's real.

**STEINFORT:** You guys could argue about that for years to come and I'm sure you will. We'll move on for now though. The Government has announced changes to the regulation of tech giants. Ross was just explaining this one to us it's in response to the ACCC's landmark

Digital Platforms Inquiry. Mathias, the Government has given the ACCC new powers to crack down on the likes of Google and Facebook. As far as you're concerned, look a voluntary code of conduct, but why not make it mandatory?

**CORMANN:** Well you know obviously our preference always is for reasonable people to sit down and sort these things out voluntary, but on a voluntary basis. But if that is not successful, I mean we've been very clear a mandatory code would follow. I mean in the end digital technology will become ever more important in our economy; we want the right protections for consumers for competition. Fundamentally we want to ensure that to the extent possible the protections available to consumers and competition in the real economy should also be available in the digital economy and that is that is what we are pursuing.

**STEINFORT:** Could we be coming down harder here?

**MARLES:** Absolutely, I mean firstly it's taken the Government forever to even have this inquiry, that's the first point. The ultimate outcome Tom, is a whole lot of measures which are essentially voluntary and right now we've got a situation where the question of how do you fund journalism is really alive when, if you're looking at a local paper like the Geelong Advertiser in Geelong and I know how hard it is for them to keep their newsroom going. But, they're watching advertising bleed from them into these new platforms like Google and Facebook and which are not paying for the content that is being generated by papers like that and at the end of the day that was the original impetus for this inquiry and the government are not even accepting the recommendations in respect of public interest journalism.

**STEINFORT:** Well it's been nice to see a bit of sparring between you two today obviously your normal sparring partner here is away, he's on assignment in Ethiopia today, Peter Dutton. This is actually our final Friday political segment for the year. Mathias, we appreciate you stepping into that seat that's normally occupied by Peter Dutton, he actually sent us a bit of a message.

**PETER DUTTON:** Morning guys I'm sorry I can't be with you on The Today Show today. My spies on the program told me that Mathias was just a little too eager to accept the invitation to be there in my place whilst I'm here in Ethiopia. Well Mathias, it might have been easy for Richard Marles to knock off Anthony Albanese to be on the Today show, but to you my friend I just say it's not going to be that easy. So thank you very much to all the crew, to the whole Today show family, we've had lots of fun during the year. Thank you very much to Richard Marles. I wish everybody including all the viewers at home a wonderful happy and safe Christmas and I really look forward to 2020. And to you Mathias Cormann, I'll be back.

**CORMANN:** You can have it. I had to get up at three in the morning. So you can have it.

**STEINFORT:** One job you're not gunning for. What do you make of his accent there?

**CORMANN:** I think he'll have to work on that a bit.

**STEINFORT:** Can you give us an 'I'll be back?'

**CORMANN:** I'll be back.

**STEINFORT:** Thank you Mathias, what do you do for Christmas anything special on the agenda?

**CORMANN:** Time with family - can't wait. I mean I think we all need it, 2019 has been a big year.

**MARLES:** It has been a big year.

**STEINFORT:** Absolutely, Richard yourself?

**MARLES:** Yes definitely time with family down at the beach, a part of the world that you know, so on the Bellarine and the Surf Coast, really looking forward to it.

**STEINFORT:** Yes, I'll be down on the Great Ocean Road myself, looking forward to a nice little break. Gents, safe and happy Christmas to you both with your families.

**MARLES:** Same to you, Tom.

***ENDS***

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.