

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

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
TODAY SHOW
FRIDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2020**

SUBJECTS: Coronavirus; Angus Taylor; Weather conditions today; message to our volunteers, firefighters and ADF personnel

ALLISON LANGDON, HOST: Joining us is Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton and Deputy Opposition Leader Richard Marles. Good morning, gentleman. Peter, if I go to you first; has the government made any plans for an emergency evacuation for Australians on board the Diamond Princess?

PETER DUTTON, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS: Good morning, guys. No, obviously the Japanese authorities, they have an advanced health system they are dealing with what's a very difficult situation. We are worried about whether other cruise ships and tour groups elsewhere might be affected as well. There are about 25 or 26 countries now that have been affected where there has been presentations of people with coronavirus. So it's a very serious situation and it's why the government has taken the measures we have.

KARL STEFANOVIC, HOST: Can you be a little bit more specific about the areas of concern for you?

DUTTON: Obviously still out of Wuhan province is the biggest concern for us at the moment. And on all of the medical advice, Karl, that's where most of the cases are presented. And obviously that city now has been cordoned off for a period now. And there are now 565 deaths, over 25,000 cases around the world. But the big concentration is within that province. Now, the question is whether or not other provinces within China will also close flights and shut down perimeter borders but it is obviously a very serious situation for people in those areas. And for us we are working with Australian citizens who have registered with DFAT to make sure that we can provide whatever assistance is possible. But I do reiterate this call; there are people travelling from Australia to China now, even though we had in place travel advice, do not travel to China, and those people frankly are putting themselves in a difficult situation. They would find it very hard to get back to Australia in certain circumstances. You can't guarantee their return, particularly if China shuts its borders. So we need to deal with the reality of what's a very serious situation.

STEFANOVIC: So, basically what you are saying is, and you are open to nationals coming back from certain parts of China, what you are saying now is- and maybe you should be declaring it-

you are not going to be allowed back if you go those provinces, it has to go for Australian nationals as well?

DUTTON: Well, Karl, I think the Prime Minister has been very clear, we just have to be realistic about the numbers involved here. We have to be realistic about the spread of this virus which is by all projections going to continue at a significant rate. When you have already got 25,000 people who have been infected with this virus, putting yourself into that zone makes for a very difficult situation.

LANGDON: Something else I wanted to talk to you both about this morning; there will be no federal investigation into Energy Minister Angus Taylor's alleged forgery of documents which were referenced in a political attack against Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore last year. Of course he said she spent \$15 million on domestic and international travel when she had not. Now, the AFP said there is no evidence the minister was involved in falsifying any information. They are not going to investigate further. Richard, are you satisfied with that?

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: This is hardly a clean bill of health. I mean, there still needs to be an explanation from Minister Taylor and from the Government about where this document came from. And how the Minister found himself trying to peddle this document around in terms of getting a story up against a Mayor in relation to their travel expenses, which in turn says everything about what this minister is not doing. For all the challenges that are facing this country he's completely focused on a kind of low rent, student politics fight with a local council about their travel expenses. Rather than dealing with his Commonwealth portfolio. That's the fundamental issue here.

STEFANOVIC: It is still nonetheless, you are right, there are a lot more bigger issues going on but it is still nonetheless important to hold account. The figures Minister Taylor relied on, Peter from the council's annual report were wrong. Shouldn't there be a responsibility on him to ensure those records are correct?

DUTTON: Well, Karl, it's a bit rich of the Labor Party to be complaining about the fact that this has been referred to the Federal Police, when they referred it to the Federal Police without any evidence. So there have now been 10 referrals in total presided over by Mark Dreyfus the Shadow Attorney-General. And he uses it as a political stunts so there is a dark cloud hanging over someone. Out of the ten he's got none. Nobody has been found to have a case to answer. The Federal Police have issued their statement to say that Minister Taylor doesn't have any case, and the matter has been finalised. And honestly, there is a presumption of innocence in this country and to use these referrals to the Federal Police as a political point scoring tactic, not only wastes the time of the Australian Federal Police, but I think frankly undermines the credibility of people like Mark Dreyfus and I think it should be called out. I think they should apologise and they haven't done that yet.

LANGDON: But hang on, is the AFP saying he is cleared? They are saying there was a low level of harm caused. He has apologised for it and the resources that would be required to investigate just mean it's not worth factoring or processing or going ahead with.

DUTTON: But, read the rest of the letter though, Ali. It says that there is no evidence and that the matter is finalised. That's the advice from the Federal Police. They have looked at it, there is no evidence to indicate that Minister Taylor is guilty of any crime. And the presumption that he is until he's proven innocent is ridiculous. The police have investigated. As I say, the referral to the police in the first instance was made by Mark Dreyfus, it wasn't initiated by the Federal Police, it was sent to the Federal Police because Mr Dreyfus wanted to try to taint Angus Taylor. It's backfired on Mark Dreyfus and it has backfired on Labor.

STEFANOVIC: Okay, can I point something out behind you, Pete. And on a much lighter note, how good is it to see the rain around, there will be lots of rain across Queensland. Unfortunately there will be a fair bit of flooding. Is the government getting ready for all that?

DUTTON: Firstly, mate it is great to see the rain. Coming in this morning, it is just pretty widespread and the great thing is it's gone west as well. It's not drought-breaking in a lot of places but hopefully in places like Warwick there is water going into the dams and those towns were on the dams and those towns were on the cusp of running out of drinking water. So exciting. But yes, localised flooding which as you know always happened in South-East Queensland, and in northern NSW, is a concern and we have had briefings and worked through what response we can provide if there is that flooding and Emergency Management Australia has been doing that planning over the course of last week or so.

LANGDON: Well I mean, we are seeing plenty of rain about but we still have bushfires burning across the country. We have fires out and about. Do both of you, considering we are here on Kangaroo Island, we are going to Batemans Bay next week. Do both of you have a message to our firefighters who are still out there and our SES workers who are now cleaning up after floods?

DUTTON: Richard, you go first.

MARLES: Yes. I think the simple message is thank you. For all the work and the service and very sadly the sacrifice that has been made over the last few weeks. There is a nation that is enormously grateful to all of you. And this has been one of the most trying summers that our nation has seen. And the volunteers, the paid firefighters, the emergency service workers, members of the Australian Defence Force and their Reserves, have really stood out as the heroes of our nation. And I'm in Batemans Bay right now, you can see the devastation that's come through here. But as Peter said, the rain which is happening here right now as well is such a relief.

STEFANOVIC: Well we are going to be in that neck of the woods in the next couple of- sorry mate, go.

DUTTON: Sorry, mate. Obviously endorse all of the words, thank you so much. But all of these volunteers live in communities like Kangaroo Island, Batemans Bay, plenty of other areas including across Victoria. They live in the communities and work in communities. What we need to do, please is to support those local communities. If you are thinking about going away somewhere at Easter, do a driving trip through some of the local communities, spend money, at the local hotel or local motel, help support them and help them to rebuild. If we can keep those economies going, because the last thing you want to do is see the volunteers lose hours in their full-time job or be put off because there has been a big down turn in that local community. That's a really good way to help as well.

STEFANOVIC: Agree. Good on you and that's why we are here as well to get people travelling to the communities. Great to see you guys. Thank you so much. Well done.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.