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E&OE TRANSCRIPT

TELEVISION INTERVIEW

SKY NEWS

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SUBJECTS: Donald Trump and the World Health Organisation; IMF report; Tacking app.

ANNELISE NIELSEN, HOST: We are joined now by Deputy Labor Leader Richard Marles. Richard Marles, thank you for your time. We've had a big announcement from the President of the United States today saying that they're going to defund the World Health Organisation. Should Australia be following suit?

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: Well I think there's a legitimate conversation to be had around the World Health Organisation but this is not a time to be abandoning it. And the world needs a strong World Health Organisation. I think a decision to suspend America's participation in it would be very regrettable. So, we need a strong World Health Organisation. We can have a conversation about issues inside it, but this is not a time to abandon it.

NIELSEN: But if there are questions about the operation of the World Health

Organisation, if there are concerns that they are kowtowing to Chinese interests and peddling this information, should we be continuing to participate in it or should this be the time that we look at forming a different world health body that could be more open, more accurate in how they respond to this pandemic?

MARLES: No, we should be participating in it. And we should be raising whatever issues we have from inside the organisation. We should not be abandoning the World Health Organisation. That I think is pretty clear. With everything that's going on at the moment, the idea that we would be walking away from the globe's multilateral response to health issues, I think makes no sense at all. But I really hope that the Government, you know, is not going back to politics as normal here. I mean, there is a lot of issues which are facing Australians right now which are far more significant than Australia's contribution to the World Health Organisation. You know, we have got issues around the Ruby Princess, we have got issues around a million casuals who are not getting access to JobKeeper; that's really where the Government needs to be focused- and not looking at matters which frankly end up being distractions from the main game here.

NIELSEN: Dave Sharma said that perhaps we could make our funding to the World Health Organisation conditional on certain reforms. Would you support that kind of initiative?

MARLES: Well there's a conversation that can be had about how the World Health Organisation can be reformed but at the end of the day, we should not be walking away from it. The world needs a strong organisation and that means our participation in it.

NIELSEN: What do you make of the International Monetary Fund's outlook saying we're going to have a worse depression than even the Great Depression? This is really historic times for the economy. But they did seem to have some positive things to say about Australia's outlook after the coronavirus pandemic; that we are in a better place than a lot of other countries.

MARLES: Well it speaks to the significance of the economic shock which has come as a result of the coronavirus and it is a huge global economic shock. There's no doubt about that. We get to the other side of this through strong leadership and it's really important that the Government keeps ahead of this situation and is not playing catch up footy. We've been working very closely with the Government and we have been- we want the Government to succeed and we have tried to be as constructive as we possibly can around how it puts in place a range of economic measures in terms of its relief package. The JobKeeper allowance for example is a really important measure, that's something that we were calling for from day one that the Government was not there to start with but it's a really good thing that the Government came round to that measure because it turns out to be really important in terms of getting us through this, in an economic sense. But what's required here is leadership on the part of the Government. And I think what I would feel more comfortable about is what we were getting from the Government was an articulated strategy about its way forward- its way on the other side of this, if you like, with an end point in mind. At this point in time I'm not clearly hearing that strategy and I think the Government needs to articulate it.

NIELSEN: And one of the things that the Government's reportedly considering is implementing an App, like we've seen in Singapore where it traces people's movements so that they can highlight who has been in contact with someone with coronavirus. This comes at a really high cost to personal freedoms, to civil liberties to be tracked every moment of the day and night, to be able to go out, even in a country as compliant as Singapore; they've only had 20 per cent uptake on this App. Do you think this is something the Government should be considering?

MARLES: Well it would be a big decision. It's not surprising that the Government is thinking about this, if they are because these Apps have been used- and used to be frank, with some success in other parts of the world where this virus is being managed well. But as you said, it comes at a very

significant cost in terms of the people's individual liberties. And so, this is a conversation that needs to be had with the Australian people. Obviously the Opposition- the Government have not spoken to us about this. If this kind of measure is going to be put in place. But again, it comes back to this question of articulating a strategy with an endpoint in mind. Taking the Australian people into the Government's confidence about what its plans are- and making a case. So if it is going to walk down a path as significant as this, and you know, it can't be a simple matter of giving a kind of half dropped to a couple of newspapers and having it reported in that way. The Government's actually got to do things a bit differently and be upfront with what it's thinking about, and how it intends to use it, and what its plans are- and bring the Australian people into its confidence and make a case. As I say, we haven't been approached by the Government about this. It is very difficult to articulate a formed view on it in the absence of that. That speaks again to the fact that the Government needs to be on the front foot in terms of its strategies and in bringing the Australian people into its confidence about those strategies.

NIELSEN: I think we're all keen to know about when this is all going to end. I think you are right there, Richard Marles. Thank you for your time.

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