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E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
TODAY SHOW
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SUBJECTS: Police officers killed in Melbourne; banks; confusion over schools.

KARL STEFANOVIC, HOST: We are joined now by Minister for Home Affairs, Peter Dutton and Deputy Labor Leader, Richard Marles. Richard to you first of all this morning, your state is in mourning today with such a difficult 24 hours and difficult time ahead.

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: It is absolute tragedy. And, to join the police force, to put on that uniform every day is an act of service but one, I think, we have all taken a lot for granted, I know I have. What comes with it is also an enormous act of sacrifice. We saw the tragedy of that two days ago. But the truth is, that within the Victorian police, but police forces around Australia, this sacrifice has been a part of their history. I don't mind also acknowledging that my sparring partner, and my friend on this show is a person who has made exactly that decision, and participated in exactly that service. And I think right now, we need to be thinking about all that police do for us around the country every single day, and I thank Peter for the service he's given in his life.

ALLISON LANGDON, HOST: I mean, Richard, how do we honour them? We know that funerals of more than ten people can't be held. What do we do here in the current climate?

MARLES: I mean, it is one of the real tragedies of the moment that we are in, you know,

people are not able to say goodbye to their loved ones in the way they would want to. But this carries a particular significance, because I think the whole state and the whole nation want to say thank you to the families of these police officers for the service that they've given, but thank you to everybody who serves in our police forces. And I just think it's so important that we are acknowledging the work that our police force do around the country each and every day. And that that - you know, the biggest thing we can do, I think, is to not take that for granted. To just remember what service and sacrifice means when people wear that uniform, and that they are doing it for us.

STEFANOVIC: You look at these photos and every one of them has a family, the grief that those families will be feeling, yesterday, today and in the coming days and weeks, it's so difficult.

MARLES: And 48 hours ago, Karl, all of those families said goodbye to those four police officers, imagining they were going to spend a normal day at work and would come home that night for dinner. And they didn't. And the grief is unimaginable.

STEFANOVIC: Pete, you worked as a cop. You did that, and you went to work and you never knew what was going to happen. Can you sum it up for us?

PETER DUTTON, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS: Good morning, guys. Thank you, Richard, for your kind comments. Look, it's a hurtful time, because the policing family is, just by definition a very tight one, and all of the Victorian Police Service will feel this deeply-police around the country. And this will be a massive funeral to commemorate the lives of these four officers when it takes place. A police funeral is always a big event, but this will be a very significant event, and rightly so. But as Richard points out, in the interim, I just think we need to pay homage to those police officers that turned up for work the next day or the next shift, knowing that four of their colleagues had just been killed, and I also think we need to really pay respect and a special thought and prayer, frankly, for the officers who were first on the scene, the Good Samaritans as well. There was an AFP officer who turned up as one of the first on the scene to render first aid, and those people will be scarred by the event forever. And it's just a terrible time. And mums and dads - I remember, you know, back a long time ago, my mum and dad always were very anxious about my decision when I decided to become a police officer, and there'd be mums and dads and spouses and grandparents and loved ones around the country, as Richard points out, that would have had a cold shiver when they heard that news, because they face the same prospect of their loved one going to work and not coming back. So it's a very dark

day.

LANGDON: Yeah. Well said. But just talk about something else this morning, too. Peter, the big banks have been delaying and denying small businesses bridging loans for wages, and your leader, Scott Morrison, has read them the riot act.

DUTTON: Well, rightly so. The banks have got a lot of stepping up to do. There's been a lot of activity already, where you can point to cases where they have provided significant assistance, but it needs to be more widespread. We want people to remain connected with their businesses. We hope that, over the next few weeks, we can start to see the economy take its first steps back to normality, and that will require the banks to be involved, for credit to be extended, wages need to be paid, and businesses need to be able to put themselves in a position where they can reopen and refunction.

STEFANOVIC: Pete, sorry to interrupt. We have to get through a bit. This is beyond to me. I mean, you've reached out- the Federal Government has done everything they can- you've gone out on a limb. You've given the banks access to that credit, cheap credit, cheap money. Now they're denying small businesses access to loans, loans that will keep people employed, and the banks are denying these people. I mean, what are you going to do about it?

DUTTON: Well, as the Prime Minister said, we've put in place, and as you point out Karl, we've put in place a regime where they can offer that finance, and they should. And we need to look at the cases where they're not. And frankly, I think the banks should be publicly shamed. I think this is an opportunity - and I thought this at the time, when we made this announcement- it was an opportunity for the banks to remake their own image in the community - and I've got to say, there are businesses in my own electorate that are really grateful for the support that they've got from their bank, and we've dealt with those businesses. But clearly, there are a lot of case where that is not happening and we need to understand why. And the banks need to step up.

STEFANOVIC: Agree.

LANGDON: Let's talk about education, because it's an absolute mess. You have a Victorian school now defying state authorities. How can we not, Peter, just get everyone on board here and have, you know one initiative, one plan, because parents have had enough?

DUTTON: Okay, so I don't want to speak on behalf of all families or all parents at the moment, but our 13 and 14-year-old sons are at home online, and you've got to make sure they're not doing YouTube, they're not playing Fortnite, they're not texting their mates, not on Snapchat and at the same time, work. And it just doesn't happen. The medical advice has been clear that kids can go back to school. At the moment, in my home state of Queensland, the Teachers Union has their hands firmly around the throat of the Government here, and the decision is being made for the wrong reasons. Kids can go back to school. Let's take out the sick children, let's take out the teachers who are over the age of 60, let's have an environment where kids can learn again, because otherwise, they're going to miss out on a year of their life, and it's unnecessary for that to happen.

LANGDON: Richard, your state is one which is saying it's not safe for kids to go back. Where do you stand on this?

MARLES: Well, I think what we have to have is consistent messaging. I think we've been lacking that in many ways from the start of the Coronavirus crisis. But the schools have been the area where there's been the greatest inconsistency in relation to messaging. I think part of that is because the Government is not taking the Australian people into its confidence in terms of what the crisis is, and what is safe and what's not, but also what the strategy is and where they're trying to get to. And, certainly, there needs to be one message that makes it clear to parents, as to what's safe and what's not, and what's expected of them, and what's not. And you know, for parents around Australia who are hearing different messages from Prime Minister to Premier to school principals, you know, it's an extremely confusing time.

STEFANOVIC: Gentlemen, thank you so much for your time today. Appreciate it. And hope you get to soak up the atmosphere tomorrow with Anzac Day, special significance. Thank you.

DUTTON: Thanks, Karl.

MARLES: Thanks.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.