

**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, 22 MAY 2020**

***SUBJECTS: State Borders; Jobseeker; China***

**KARL STEFANOVIC, HOST:** Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton and Deputy Opposition Leader Richard Marles join us now. Good morning guys.

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

**PETER DUTTON, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS:** Good morning.

**STEFANOVIC:** Peter, to you first of all, how dare that nasty dictator Annastacia Palaszczuk not listen to you.

**DUTTON:** Well, Karl, when she starts listening to me, we'll know she is talking a bit of common-sense, I'd say.

**MARLES:** We're all in trouble.

**DUTTON:** Look, I just don't understand where she's coming from. There was a document produced, and Steven Wardill actually has a good article in the 'Courier Mail' this morning, a document that said July 10 was the opening date. So tourism operators in

Cairns, for example, planning to open from July 10. And then out of nowhere comes this September date and I think it caught the Chief Medical Officer in Queensland by surprise as well. And, I just think she has painted herself into a corner and with no logic to the position.

**STEFANOVIC:** OK.

**DUTTON:** Just come out and explain where the September date comes from and we can, you know, have a reasonable discussion.

**STEFANOVIC:** I think she said that first on our show. So, we won't question it too much. Richard, to you, we've got Premiers fighting with each other right now. Small businesses are going under. It's terrible for them. The tourism sector is being pummelled. A Chief Medical Officer says there are no reasons for the states to have the borders closed. Why aren't you pushing for those borders to be opened?

**MARLES:** Well, where's the Prime Minister in all this, Karl?

**STEFANOVIC:** Why aren't you pushing for the borders to be opened?

**MARLES:** Well, ultimately - I mean, the borders being closed is a function of social distancing. It's one of a series of measures....

**STEFANOVIC:** But the Chief Medical Officer says it's okay. Why aren't you pushing for the states to be opened?

**MARLES:** Because at the end of the day, this is a matter for the Federal Government to show leadership in terms of cooperation with the states around this measure. If we've got a situation in Australia where borders are being closed between our states and that can't be sorted — when that measure is being eased - that can't be sorted out through cooperation, that represents a complete failure of leadership on the part of our Prime Minister.

**STEFANOVIC:** So do you think the borders should be opened?

**MARLES:** I'm not about to make that judgment. What I do think is that this ought to be worked out cooperatively between the states and the Commonwealth and if it can't be, and if we're at a point now where people are talking about constitutional challenges, that is

a failure of Scott Morrison. He was the one who set up the National Cabinet. He's been touting how fantastic that is in terms of, you know, acts of cooperative federalism. He's the one saying he's the champion in all this. Well, where is he in this moment?

**STEFANOVIC:** Peter in an exclusive Today poll; 60 per cent of Queenslanders say they want the borders to remain closed. There have been a number of these polls and they are all pretty similar. Why would Anastacia Palaszczuk go ahead and open the borders when her people don't want her to?

**DUTTON:** Because the medical advice is that it's safe to do so. All along the Premiers who have got responsibility for this issue, they've got responsibility for the State Schools, they've made decisions based on the medical advice and that's been a safe ground for all of us to operate on and this is why it is so perplexing as to why the borders can't open now. In a 'Courier Mail' poll, it's exactly the opposite, 60 per cent of Queenslanders are saying that they want the borders open. I would say, Karl, if you are taking a survey on the Sunshine Coast, if you are taking a survey on the Whitsundays, Port Douglas where many, many families at the moment are struggling to keep, you know, the bank away from their mortgage, struggling to put food on the table, I would suspect it would be 80 or 90 per cent of those people actually want the tourism industry to be back on its feet.

**STEFANOVIC:** Okay, I thought - you know, against my better judgment, I thought you were a very smart man. Queenslanders, Pete, do not like being told what to do. The more you push and try and bully Anastacia Palaszczuk, the greater the margin she's going to win by. You know that.

**DUTTON:** I don't think so, Karl. I mean, as you walk around the streets, and I'm a proud Queensland, I'm not taking advice from people south of the border at all, but I believe it's in Queensland's best interests, given that we are a mining state, we're a tourism state, and we want to get people back to work. And, I wouldn't be advocating this position if the Chief Medical Officer wasn't happy with us to reopen the borders. The Chief Medical Officers are happy for the borders to reopen. The borders were never closed at the direction of the National Cabinet. It was a decision taken by the state premiers. Premier Palaszczuk had this July date in mind and as I say for some reason she's plucked out of the air in a press conference September and dug herself a hole.

**STEFANOVIC:** Is it unconstitutional?

**DUTTON:** I don't know. People are right to test that if they think it's not.

**STEFANOVIC:** Okay.

**DUTTON:** Because it is impacting on people's lives.

**STEFANOVIC:** Don't hold your breath. I want to move on, JobKeeper and JobSeeker are a great support in the current crisis, but have a listen to this from a motel owner who is trying to get back up and running;

**MOTEL OWNER:** *It makes it hard with people that are on JobSeeker that are working from home, watching Netflix on \$550 a week and it is hard to get them back.*

**STEFANOVIC:** There's no doubt, Richard, some people are taking advantage of this, some people are bludging. How are you going to- how would you solve it and would you keep JobSeeker at the current amount beyond when it is supposed to stop?

**MARLES:** I think this is a real question about - we've said all along that NewStart is too low and that the government needs to be increasing NewStart. So that's the answer to that question. But how the government rolls back this relief is going to be a real question. The idea that you're going to do it all on one day in September makes no sense at all. If the government is seriously saying that all the relief it's been putting in place now, which I think has actually been very important in terms of getting us through this crisis, but if it's all going to come off on one day, then the economy is going to experience a second economic shock and that's not going to be good for the country.

**STEFANOVIC:** Okay. Let's move on. Peter, tensions between Australia and China are going from bad to worse. It seems first beef, then barley, now they're saying coal is next. Any thoughts on that?

**DUTTON:** Well, Karl, I mean, we've pointed out that we've got beliefs, values; we're going to stand by those. We don't believe that there's a reasonable case in relation to the taxes that have been imposed, the tariffs that have been imposed by China and obviously Simon Birmingham is working through all that at the moment. We don't want Australian farmers to suffer and obviously people in China require this product as well. So we hope that the Chinese can reassess their position.

**STEFANOVIC:** He hasn't even been called, he hasn't got a call. He hasn't had a call returned. He's being ignored.

**DUTTON:** And that's obviously part of China's tactics and we don't think they've got a legal basis for imposing these tariffs. We want them to change their position.

**STEFANOVIC:** Richard, in relation to Dan Andrews, is he hiding anything in relation to the deal he has done with China's roads initiative?

**MARLES:** I think it is obviously better that there is transparency when we're talking about all those agreements. But I mean I think the Federal Government has a case to answer here as well. They signed their own BRI agreement with the Chinese back in September 2017 with then Minister Ciobo. We still don't know what the text of that agreement is. So, you know, what's good for the goose is good for the Gander.

**STEFANOVIC:** So what is Dan Andrews hiding then?

**MARLES:** I think it is important that there is transparency in Government. So that's a question that you need to ask him. But I do agree that we should be having transparency. But we also have to have transparency from the Federal Government around the BRI agreement that it has signed with the PRC.

**STEFANOVIC:** That is as close as you get to giving your own team member a slap.

**MARLES:** Well, I want to know what the Federal Government has done in the agreement it signed with China back in September 2017.

**STEFANOVIC:** Good on you, guys, have a great weekend. Appreciate your time today.

**MARLES:** Thank you.

**DUTTON:** Thanks, Karl.

**ENDS**

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.