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TELEVISION INTERVIEW
TODAY SHOW
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SUBJECTS: Protests; Pulling down of statues; Borders; Australia's relationship with China.

KARL STEFANOVIC, HOST: Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton and Deputy Leader of the Opposition Richard Marles join us now in Canberra. Morning guys.

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: Morning.

PETER DUTTON, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS: Morning guys.

STEFANOVIC: Nice to see you. Pete, this has the potential to get very ugly today. Should these protestors be charged?

DUTTON: Well, obviously the police have got a very tough job because if you are talking about thousands of people that are coming out, then it becomes very difficult to manage that. So look, they will do the best they can but the message should be heeded. It is very clear from the Chief Medical Officers saying that people shouldn't go out to these rallies at this point. At some stage in the future, people can go back to those sort of activities but it's pretty hard to say to somebody who is burying their loved one that you can only have 20 or 50 people at the funeral, but that sacrifice is not worth anything because you know, you look across the street and there's a huge protest going on where

nobody's observing the rules and I think really, people need to heed the medical advice.

ALLISON LANGDON, HOST: Richard, where do you stand on this one? Do you support the protestors cause or them getting charged?

MARLES: Well, I certainly think that the cause is a noble one and I think we all agree with that. People need to be standing against racism. But like Peter said, it is really important that people take medical advice here. As we were saying last weekend in the lead-up to last weekend's protest, mass gatherings at this time is not a good idea. The advice has been very clear; people shouldn't be going out and protesting at this time. The pandemic has been affecting our lives in lots of different ways. It affects this aspect of our lives as well. And as we said last week, I think you can show support for this cause in lots of other ways. But I think going out this weekend is a bad idea.

STEFANOVIC: There's a bit of anger around at the moment. You can feel it in the air. And some of it is racially charged. There's also a few other issues that we need to get to. Wayne Swan was on our show about half an hour ago saying Pete, Captain Cook statues and the like may be better placed in museums, what do you think?

DUTTON: Well, I think a museum would be a great place for Wayne Swan. I can't think of anyone more in the past than Wayne Swan. Really, is he serious? Look, I don't think ripping pages out of history books and brushing over parts of history that you don't agree with or that you don't like is really something that the Australian public is going to embrace. There are good and bad parts of our history. You learn from that. And sit down- and you see what Netflix has done and the ABC now is trying to do. I just think it is such an absurdity. You sit down with your kids, looking at some of these videos, explaining that slavery was a horrible period in the United States. There was a civil war that took place. Kids learn from all of that. But removing that sort of content from online or from our television sets, I just don't think makes any sense. People need to learn from history. Need to appreciate those periods. And people will reflect back on us in 100 years and no doubt form their own judgments as well. But I just really think air brushing history or pretending that something didn't happen is such an obscure sort of left wing cause. I don't think the main stream public agree with it.

LANGDON: Richard, you're left wing, have things gone too far?

DUTTON: He has got two left wings.

MARLES: I don't think it's a left wing cause. I think history matters. People need to be judged in the context of their history. And as Peter said, future generations are going to judge us. They are actually going to judge us on what we do or do not do in terms of dealing with the question of Indigenous disadvantage in this country. That's what we have got to be focusing on. I'm not sure that we're going to be given a lot of credit for going on a statue rampage. We actually have to be doing something about improving the lives of Indigenous Australians right now and I think that's what should be our focus.

STEFANOVIC: I think it is fair to say you are right of left, you know what I mean.

MARLES: You are talking to me?

LANGDON: Not talking to Peter.

STEFANOVIC: He's right of the right.

MARLES: You know, when you have a long conversation with Pete, surprising things come out. I can tell you.

STEFANOVIC: There are no labels here.

DUTTON: Don't start.

STEFANOVIC: Pete, the PM has demanded, demanded the borders open in July. He can't really do much about it though, can he?

DUTTON: Under the constitution, Karl, it's an issue for the States. I think the Prime Minister behind closed doors has tried to really get to the States to a position where there's a common approach where the borders can open-

STEFANOVIC: It's not working.

DUTTON: Well, and now obviously publicly he's declared his position. I think that's right to do. I think on this is show we've pressured Premier Palaszczuk where she nominated the September date. I'm told that that was just made up. That none of her colleagues realised that that was coming out and she has backtracked on it since. But Karl,

people's businesses are going broke-

STEFANOVIC: I know.

DUTTON: People's houses are being sold from under them. This is going to get worse before it gets better at the back end of this year. And there are some tourist operators who are going to miss a whole year, if they don't get the season now, these people are in real strife. There's no logic to what is being argued. There is no medical advice underpinning their decision to keep the borders closed. It's more about politics. I think that's why people are becoming really angry with Daniel Andrews or Annastacia Palaszczuk.

LANGDON: I mean, what are your thoughts on this one Richard? Obviously the Premiers are making the decision based on the advice that they're getting and they've chosen for the moment to keep them shut.

MARLES: That's absolutely right, Ally. I'm surprised that Daniel Andrews got a whack on the way through there, I am not sure which border he has got closed. But Scott Morrison is saying he is the great healer of the nation that he's got the National Cabinet together, that this is the biggest step forward in corporate federalism that we have seen, yet we have got something as fundamental as our internal borders are closed and there can't be a resolution to this. There's a disagreement about it between the States and the Commonwealth. When did that last happen? And I don't understand how at the end of the day that buck doesn't stop at the Prime Minister's door. He's the one who's meant to be bringing people together and getting an answer here. You're right Ally, the borders were closed to begin with as an act of physical distancing. We need to be taking medical advice and Governments need to about when this particular measure should come off, but you would have thought that this man, who is the great co-operator, would be bringing consensus here and trying to get a resolution based on the best medical advice.

STEFANOVIC: Look, we have got a story from my cousin Kat in Cairns, Far North Queensland, they have been wiped out because of this. That story is coming up in the next hour. Wait until you see that. In the meantime, Pete, former Treasurer Joe Hockey says on China don't cower to the bullies. Why are we?

DUTTON: Well, we're not cowering to anyone, Karl. We have been very clear. I think the Prime Minister has been very strong in his stance publicly and certainly privately as well. We will always stand up for our national interests. We aren't going to be bullied by

anyone. We're not going to cower to anyone. And again, we can advance our national interests. We expect from our partners whether they are trading partners or anybody else a level of mutual respect and adherence to the rule of law. We can continue to be friends on that basis. But we're not going to be pressured into walking away from our values or what we believe is in Australia's best interests. I think that's a perfectly reasonable position.

LANGDON: It's not very friendly at the moment. Just very quickly, Richard, do you think that our stance on China is- the Government's stance on China is the right one?

MARLES: I actually think Peter's answer there was a really reasoned answer. One point that Joe Hockey is making is that there needs to be bipartisanship around this and we certainly are for that. We actually do need to get the adults in the room in Australian politics and work out how to manage this relationship because it is critically important. There are adults on the Government's side but right now, they are largely hiding under the doona and what's going on here is that the space is being filled by the fringe dwellers of the Government and I actually don't think that is helping the relationship. And it hasn't been for the last few years.

LANGDON: Some people have been asking, where is the Foreign Minister?

MARLES: Where is the Foreign Minister?

LANGDON: Thanks for joining us this Friday morning. You have a good weekend.

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