



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

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
SKY NEWS AM AGENDA
THURSDAY, 9 JULY 2020**

SUBJECTS: Victorian lockdowns; Hong Kong.

ANNELISE NIELSEN, HOST: We're going to go live now to Victoria as well, Deputy Labor Leader Richard Marles joins us live. Richard Marles, thank you for your time. Now you've escaped the lockdown measures being in Geelong but this is pretty serious stuff in Victoria. What's gone wrong?

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: Good morning Annelise. And I guess it is a nice day to be in Geelong but it's obviously a very difficult day for Victoria and in truth, the nation. I think it is clear that something's gone wrong and we need to get to the bottom of that. What the Victorian Government has done is right in initiating a judicial inquiry to get on top of those questions as quickly as possible. I mean, I actually think from the outset of the pandemic, the Victorian Government's done a great job in terms of managing this and there were points along the way where really I think Victoria helped lead the nation to an appropriate response to COVID-19. But we need to understand what has gone wrong in the last few weeks and the situation we've got now in Victoria, and in particular, in Melbourne is very serious. And it's really important that people are abiding by the rules that have been laid down by the Victorian Government so that we can get on top of this.

NIELSEN: People are pointing the finger at a number of different aspects of the management in Victoria, including the structure of the health system there that there are health bureaucrats making decisions that should be left in the hands of doctors. Do you agree?

MARLES: Oh look, I'm not really close enough to make a judgment about that but I've read that commentary. And I suppose the one observation I would make is; I think it's important that we don't pre-empt the judicial inquiry which is underway around this. I think it is important that we have a thorough investigation as to what's happened, so we understand what's going wrong and we rectify that as quickly as we can. In the meantime what matters is that really serious steps have been taken which are appropriate in terms of putting in place physical distancing and Victorians

really need to abide by that. I mean, one of the concerning aspects of where we're at now is that those cases that have been reported in Victoria of course all domestic, they're all community transmission, whereas compared to the situation a couple of months ago a lot of those cases were coming from overseas. So this disease is present within the community and it really matters that people are abiding by the physical distancing measures which have now been put in place if we're going to get over this. But I guess, if we're to look at this in a slightly optimistic way, we have been able to walk down this path once before and get to a point of really reducing the numbers. So we know the path that needs to be walked, it is really important that Victorians abide with what is being said now, so that we can do it again.

NIELSEN: One of the measures being considered is requiring Victorians, when they do go out for those four allowed reasons, to wear a face mask, that doesn't necessarily have to be a surgical mask like you might wear in an operating theatre. But we've seen overseas- the United States as well- people would just pull up the sweater, wear a handkerchief over their mouth. Do you think you would support that measure?

MARLES: Well I think that the comment that we just heard from Greg Hunt is the right approach, which is that we need to take the advice from our medical experts. Now I'm aware that around the world face masks are being used and are the subject of medical advice about how to curtail the spread of this. And it's being reported that the Premier of Victoria is going to have more to say on this topic. So I think we've got to listen to what the authorities are saying, what the government ultimately decides here but on a question such as that, we really need to be listening to our experts and taking their advice. And if that is where it goes, then so be it.

NIELSEN: So what Greg Hunt said was, that the advice is if you can't maintain that physical distancing necessarily then you should be wearing face coverings, things like public transport if you're going to find yourself in close space with people, when you are out for an essential reason. So would you support, if you were going out in Melbourne right now, wearing a face mask if you're going to be taking public transport?

MARLES: Well again, I think we need to get the medical advice in and there needs to be a definitive statement from the government about what to do here and in this context that's the Victorian Government. I note that around the world face masks form part of the suite of measures which are put in place to deal with this. But I think this is a topic that the Victorian Government is going to look at and I think what really matters is whatever they ultimately decide in relation to this, the community abides with. It is a community wide decision that seems to me, face masks and so we need to be hearing from the Victorian Government about what should happen there and then following that advice.

NIELSEN: And if I can ask about this move to be giving humanitarian visas to people from Hong Kong, to try and be bringing them back now that these security laws have been ramped up there and our relationship with China is becoming ever more tenuous. Do you think we should be taking in Hong Kong citizens?

MARLES: Well we've been saying for some time now that it's important that Hong Kongers who are in Australia during this moment are not put in a position of having to return to Hong Kong, that whatever visa they're on, the terms of that be extended so they are not required to go back to Hong Kong right now. I think the precise

mechanism by which there is an opportunity for Hong Kongers to stay in Australia is a matter for the Government and we can talk through exactly what that mechanism is. But what really matters, and the principle that we've been articulating for some time now is Hong Kongers should not be put in a position of having to go back to Hong Kong in the midst of this crisis. So, if the government is about to take steps in relation to this, we look forward to them. That's the direction that we have been pointing in and exactly the detail of how that achieve this is a matter we'll go through with them. But the fundamental principle is that Hong Kongers shouldn't be put in a position of having to return.

NIELSEN: Deputy Labor Leader Richard Marles, thank you for your time.

MARLES: Pleasure, Annelise.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.