

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

E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
SKY NEWS FIRST EDITION
TUESDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2020

SUBJECT: Budget.

PETER STEFANOVIC, HOST: We go to Canberra now and joining me live is the Deputy Labor Leader Richard Marles. Richard, good to see you. Thanks for joining us this morning.

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

STEFANOVIC: So firstly, we want to just want to get your view on this back to work wage subsidy for businesses. It's all encouraged to employ young Australians to get back to work, to get off welfare. What do you make of that announcement this morning or that leak, however you want to call it?

MARLES: Well, it's right that young people need to be a focus of this budget, in terms of employment and getting people back to work. I think we need to see what detail actually is announced tonight and exactly what this does. I mean, it goes to one of the points here, though, which is that in looking for a budget tonight, which actually provides a genuine, thoughtful plan around getting the country working together, not just in terms of a recovery, but actually plotting a path to a prosperous future, there's got to be more than a set of piecemeal announcements. And so on the one hand, you know, we've got Jobkeeper being removed at a rate which in our view doesn't reflect the reality of what's happening out

there. There are a whole swathes of the economy, a lot of which relate to young people where people are not able to go back to the work that they've been doing just yet. And then on the other, you know, we're hearing this announcement. So, we need more than piecemeal announcements here, we actually need a proper plan to get the country working again.

STEFANVOIC: Well, the government says that this back to work subsidy offsets the need for Jobkeeper to be extended beyond March. Is that something that you that you could agree with?

MARLES: Well, again, it depends on what's actually announced tonight. And it depends on, you know, how much we're talking about- what the subsidy is. But again, I come back to the point that so much of what has been announced by the Government, in the lead up to the budget over really the last month or so seems to be at odds with what the Government has been, up until this moment, since it was elected back in 2013. They seem to be piecemeal announcements, which are full of contradictions. And what we actually need is a comprehensive plan, where the whole budget is pulling in the one direction, to get Australia working again. And not just in the recovery but plotting a pathway to prosperity.

STEFANVOIC: But it makes sense- makes sense- do you like the idea of it? That young Australians under the age of 35, who are on welfare at the moment, to be able to incentivize them to get back to work, to encourage businesses to take them on again, that's got some merit, right?

MARLES: Sure, we'll have a good look at it, Pete. It's absolutely right, that young people have borne the brunt of this economic downturn. And you know, it's really important that we don't lose a generation here. And there does need to be a focus when we're thinking about how we get Australia working again. There needs to be a focus specifically on young people.

STEFANVOIC: Yeah. Well, I mean, what would that be an issue? Would you take issue for someone who's over the age of 35? Say, 37 or 38?

MARLES: No, it's it- no, it's not about that. But it is about acknowledging the fact that this is an economic downturn which has been particularly difficult on young people. It's been particularly difficult on women. The way in which it has impacted the community has not been even. And that's normal, I mean, downturns tend to have results, which impact some more than others, young people, women have been affected more in terms of this, this

recession. So, I mean, we'll have a look at the detail of what is being announced tonight. But you know, as I say, what we actually need, though, is a comprehensive plan about how we get the country working again. And it's got to be a plan, which is, you know, not piecemeal, and not full of the contradictions that we've seen up until now.

STEFANVOIC: Will Labor wave through the stage two tax cuts as they are brought forward?

MARLES: Well, again, we'll look at exactly what is announced tonight. But I'd say this, Pete; we've been calling for- more than a year now- for the stage two tax cuts to be brought forward. So you know, whatever our reaction is tonight, I can assure you, it won't be a surprise.

STEFANVOIC: So you will wave them through?

MARLES: Well, I'm reluctant to respond to something that we haven't seen announced yet. And we're in this sort of awkward moment where they're dripping out bits of the budget and then saying well wait and see tonight and we're trying to respond in like vain. I think we'll respond to the hard information tonight. But if it is, stage two being brought forward, I just made the point that that's something we've been calling for now for more than a year.

STEFANVOIC: Okay. And you'd support the backdated cuts?

MARLES: Well, as I say, we've been calling for stage two to be brought forward for more than a year. So we'll have a look at what exactly is announced tonight, and we'll make our calls then. But nothing we're going to do tonight will be a surprise based on what we've said up until now.

STEFANVOIC: Okay, it looks as though from the reporting anyway, that stage three tax cuts won't be brought forward. This is something that Labor, I can't say really supported anyway. Do you feel some relief on that front?

MARLES: Well, we've made it clear that we're not comfortable with stage three, it's not a set of tax cuts that we would do if we were in office. We made that point last year, when this was all legislated. And so, you know, the idea of stage three being brought forward is not something that was going to excite us, given that we were not supportive of stage three, in the first place. But again, you know, I think we need to see what is announced tonight. But like what we really need to see from the Government tonight, is that comprehensive plan for jobs. They have been talking about making manufacturing the

centrepiece of what they're going to do in terms of getting Australia working again. I mean, if that's right, it speaks a whole lot about the Government's own judgement on its performance over the last seven years, where they've been responsible for a bigger reduction in manufacturing in this country than we've ever seen. They've been responsible for turning off more lights than any Government ever has. And so that's why we really want to see a coherent, thoughtful plan, which isn't full of the contradictions that we've seen over the last month.

STEFANVOIC: Just Finally, Richard, do you have any, do you have any sympathy in a situation like this, that the weight that's on the Treasurer's shoulders this time around, given that nobody could have foreseen the pandemic and it's size and destruction?

MARLES: Well I certainly- this is a very significant Budget. You know, given that we are in the first recession in 30 years, the biggest economic downturn since the Great Depression, there's no doubt that delivering a budget, in this context, is a massive challenge. And it's also right that when you think about what the recovery looks like, and how we get out of this, the role of the Commonwealth Government has to be central to it. But having said all of that, you know, this is a moment where people stand up, if they're able to, and that's what we're obviously looking for the Government to do tonight. We want the Treasurer to succeed. Of course, we want to see our country recover and head towards prosperity. But the challenge for Josh Frydenberg and Scott Morrison tonight, is to actually have a plan for jobs which is not piecemeal but is coherent. And which doesn't reflect a series of contradictions about the way in which this Government has governed our country over the last seven years.

STEFANVOIC: Okay, Deputy Labor Leader Richard Marles. As always, appreciate your time this morning. Thanks so much for joining us here on what is a very big historic day out of Canberra.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.