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TOM CONNELL, HOST: Welcome back. Well of course we've had a sitting week but more importantly to some of the MPs here, we are about to have a Grand Final. Deputy Labor Leader Richard Marles joins me now in the studio. You've given me a bit of PTSD, I was at the GABBA on Saturday-

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: Oh, I am sorry Tom. Not really.

CONNELL: And your mob thrashed my Lions. I can't complain about anything other than how well you played. Let's just start on this though, I know sometimes there's some foe modesty before elections, you'd have to be confident, wouldn't you? The way Geelong are playing. Your coach called Richmond 'just another okay team' at the start of the year. You'll roll through pretty easily.

MARLES: Well, a coach I think has qualified those statements pretty significantly and said they're the team to beat. And they certainly are the team to beat. Look, I think part of being a footy fan is that you submit yourself to a destiny over which you have no control, and you ride with it. So, the most I'll give you as I'm feeling very hopeful tomorrow night. But that's about it. I kind of know one way or another, I'm probably going to end up in tears. So, it's, it's, it's an emotional day. I've been here before- I've had both experiences win and loss. And so, it's a week to be enjoyed. But it is really- I mean for any footy fan-

CONNELL: Yeah.

MARLES: When your team makes the Grand Final. It's a very special week.

CONNELL: It is anyway, maybe one day soon. Let's also talk though, the interesting story out of Melbourne was police drones watching for Grand Final parties. I guess we know the importance of you know, not spreading COVID. Does this feel like- are you comfortable with this?

MARLES: Look, obviously it is important to make sure that none of the parts of life that we engage in and enjoy do anything to flare the disease up again. So, I understand it. Obviously, we all feel sad. I mean, the - you know, I've been spending quite a lot of time on the phone to people in Geelong this week and you know, there are no official gatherings on the weekend, the club hasn't organised anything because it's impossible to do that. That feels sad. I know that everyone is just as excited. And there's a lot of streamers and decorations that have been put in people's windows. So, I think the way I feel is that it's kind of- it's a week where we've got to make our own excitement. It is a bit different. But I think the way to think about it is you know, this is a really unique year, and the ratings on football have been through the roof. That makes sense to me. I don't think I've ever needed footy more this year than I have because you know, we've been obviously in our houses a lot and you want some form of live sport. And I look back at some of our great figures in sports history, you know, Phar Lap, Bradman- people who did their achievements during really difficult times during the Depression. And so, there's been this kind of suggestion that maybe 2020 has an asterisk next to it. I think it does, but because it's more important, not less.

CONNELL: Yeah, look, it's gonna be well deserved. Of course, the Cats have been out of their comfort zone, and it's a sort of whole town team, isn't it? It will be a big boost if they can get up. It's taken me a few days, but I can say 'go Cats', now.

MARLES: Well done, Tom.

CONNELL: What about Victorians who are hoping for a positive announcement on Sunday? We've got this cluster maybe threatening that. We find out yesterday, the family at the centre of it was confused. Each family member had a different case manager. I mean, this just feels like Victorians are being let down still by the teams in charge of this pandemic. This many months in such a bizarre approach, which they've admitted was the wrong one.

MARLES: Well, you know, the details of these things matter. And obviously, it's really important that all of that is gotten right going forward. But I make the observation that whilst there were mistakes made early on and no one's shying away from that. I mean, that the state government initiated a judicial inquiry almost immediately, and they've been fully cooperating-

CONNELL: But this isn't early on.

MARLES: No I get it. But-

CONNELL: This is still happening.

MARLES: Sure, but since then, if you look at how this has been managed in Victoria, it's actually a globally remarkable story, like it is in terms of how much the outbreak, how far it went, and from there being-

CONNELL: With a very harsh lockdown that people obeyed.

MARLES: Sure. And so the credit absolutely lies with the Victorian people. But I make this point; back in the end of July, there was 700 plus cases in Victoria. On the same day, there was just over 800 cases in Great Britain. Today, we're down to a handful. I think there might be one case today. But it is certainly only a handful. In Britain, it's more than 15,000. You know that - it is a dramatic difference. There has been very significant measures put in place, but they have worked and Victoria is getting out of this.

CONNELL: The question is though about confidence in authority. So the other aspect is Brett Sutton, he decided not to give hotel quarantine inquiry a crucial email showing he was told about private security being used months before he said he was on the basis he apparently didn't read the email properly.

MARLES: Yep. Okay, again, we can get into the weeds of this.

CONNELL: But this goes, well, I guess I'm not saying weeds. Do you really think it's weeds when it's something that goes to a crucial element of this whole response? And again, it's about Victorians having confidence in the people running this thing?

MARLES: Well, I think I think the crucial element of what saw the initial outbreak and how it was managed, is ultimately going to be determined by the findings of the judicial inquiry, and we should let it run its course. You know, when I say weeds, it's not to say that these details aren't important, they're deeply important. But what I really mean is that the - as we look at it from our position now, what matters is that the judicial inquiry is happening, and that those who are engaging with it are fully cooperating and Brett Sutton is, as is the Premier-

CONNELL: Well was he? When he told his department not to hand over these emails, that contradicted his evidence. Is that fully cooperating?

MARLES: All of that material is now before-

CONNELL: Now it is.

MARLES: All of that material is before the judicial inquiry-

CONNELL: But that's only because of a leak, otherwise, it wouldn't have been.

MARLES: All of these officials are cooperating with the inquiry. No one has been, you know, given a free pass here, the Premier himself has given evidence before the inquiry, three senior Ministers. It's obviously a very difficult process, one of those Ministers is now gone. It's going to land where it lands, but the Government deserves courage - deserves credit for the courage of setting it up in the first place. But I think from where we sit, what's important is to let this process run out.

CONNELL: Okay.

MARLES: And we'll look at the findings when the inquiry hands down it's report.

CONNELL: And just finally and briefly, Christine Holgate standing down has the Government acted the right way since these revelations came to light.

MARLES: Well, it's important that the Prime Minister did what he did, it would have been extraordinary if he'd done anything less. But let's also be clear, this is a board which is packed full of Liberal Party mates. I think the other point to make here though -

CONNELL: So what, the whole board should go?

MARLES: Well, I think let's see how this plays out, it is very important, though, that the board is held to account.

CONNELL: Do you have confidence in the board at the moment?

MARLES: Well, I think given that this decision went through the board, there's a real question mark there and we want to see that the Government acts appropriately in relation to the board. But the policy point to be made here, Tom is this. It's not just Australia Post, it's the land deal around Badgerys Creek. It's the Sports Rorts programme. All of it points to the need for an Independent Commission Against Corruption at a federal level and this government has been sitting on its hands.

CONNELL: Good luck for the Pivotonians

MARLES: Thanks Tom.

CONNELL: Talk to you on the other side, Richard Marles thank you.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.