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**MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE:
THE GOVERNMENT'S CUTS TO SCHOOLS, HEALTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
CANBERRA**

*****CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*****

Can I start by congratulating Daniel Andrews, the Premier of Victoria, on the most remarkable victory on an incredible night on Saturday. He leads a serious, progressive, practical team, which in 2014 promised Victorians greater investment in schools, infrastructure and hospitals, and he delivered. In a no-nonsense way, he went to this election promising to do more, and that was rewarded in spades.

It was an incredible win for Daniel Andrews. It was perhaps best put on the night by this commentator who was quoted as saying:

"This Premier, Daniel Andrews, has embarked on the biggest infrastructure spend Australia has ever seen."

"He's promised schools, hospitals and he's building a big underground train network .

"In an era of no wage growth, no real wage growth, he's offered free TAFE, free dental for schools, free three-year-old kinder, ... and people love public expenditure on roads, hospitals, trains and schools."

"This is the genesis of the Andrews government's success. The guy took a huge risk in putting this agenda out, and he's been rewarded for it."

It shows that at least one member of the Liberal Party had his eyes open about what actually happened on Saturday, because those were the words of Michael Kroger, the President of the Victorian Liberal Party. When the question was being asked as to whether or not there were any federal implications of what occurred on the weekend, some other Liberals also understood what was going on. Denis Napthine, the former Liberal Premier of Victoria said:

“If the federal Liberal Party doesn’t understand and learn from this, then they’re doomed to have similar results, and not just in Victoria but across Australia.”

Perhaps it was most succinctly put by Andrew Katos, the Liberal member who lost his seat in South Barwon who said very simply, *“The Feds killed us”*. Then we heard from none other than the member for Higgins who made the point that hers was a party that was *“homophobic, antiwomen and climate change deniers”*.

But when this was all then put to the Prime Minister, in a sense we waited with bated breath to hear how he interpreted the events which occurred over the weekend in Victoria. The Prime Minister said this yesterday in respect of a question in just those terms, he said:

“In Victoria an incumbent premier who has been presiding over a strong economy, which has enabled him to deliver services and infrastructure which the people of Victoria have clearly respected has been re-elected. What does that sound like? Our government is running a strong economy. Our government is delivering infrastructure and services that the Australian people respect and want more of.”

That is what we hear from the Prime Minister. Can you imagine being more out of touch than that? 'It's all tickety-boo. Everything is going completely fine.'

It was added to by his deputy, who simply said, *“This was a state election fought on state issues”* — basically, 'There's nothing to see here.'

When the Victorian Liberals, two of whom are sitting there, think about what happened on the weekend, has it got anything to do with what's gone on in this building in the last few months on their side of politics? 'Nothing to worry about. We've got no issues here at all.'

In fact, more than that, bizarrely, the Prime Minister yesterday seemed to think that in fact what occurred on the weekend in Victoria was somehow an endorsement of the way he has been governing. That's what he was saying. It was like he was the national version of Daniel Andrews.

It is worth checking whether or not actually this is a government which looks like the Andrews government.

In the area of education, the Andrews government was promising free TAFE, universal access for three-year-old kinder and 100 new schools over the last eight years. But I tell you what the Prime Minister's government has been about: cutting \$14 billion from schools across the country and cutting \$570 million from universities in Victoria. That doesn't sound very much like Daniel Andrews to me.

By contrast, I'll tell you what a future Shorten Labor government will do: it will put \$804 million into Victorian schools over the next three years, uncapping tertiary places, which will see 50,000 Australians getting access to tertiary education.

In the area of health, the Andrews government promised 10 new hospitals across Victoria, including—indeed, in the electorate of Geelong, in my electorate, the federal electorate of Corio—a women's and children's maternal hospital.

By contrast, what the Morrison government has been doing is cutting \$183 million from hospitals from 2017 through to 2020. That is the equivalent of cutting 250 doctors and 500 nurses. Again, that doesn't sound a lot like what Daniel Andrews is doing in Victoria. There's not a great equivalence between Morrison and Andrews in those facts.

I'll tell you what a Shorten Labor government will do: we'll invest \$2.8 billion into health over the next five years and we will end the Morrison government's freeze on Medicare.

In infrastructure, the Andrews Government famously has now got rid of 29 level crossings across Victoria in a much larger program; has promised to invest \$16.5 billion in the North East Link, the process of which began yesterday; and has promised the visionary Suburban Rail Loop, which will literally transform public transport in Melbourne. By contrast, this is what the Morrison government has done in relation to infrastructure: cut a billion dollars from road projects in Victoria, from blackspots, from repairing bridges; and pushed off a range of new projects, such as the airport rail link and the Monash rail project. There's nothing like Daniel Andrews in those actions.

But I tell you what: Federal Labor, when we were last in government, doubled the infrastructure spend in Victoria. We invested in a range of projects, from the Regional Rail Link to upgrading the Geelong to Colac highway.

The truth is, Scott Morrison, this Prime Minister, looks nothing like Daniel Andrews. He is the polar opposite. The idea that the Prime Minister sees something positive for him in what occurred on the weekend simply shows how completely out of touch he and the team that he leads are.

The truth of the matter is this - and everyone on that side of the parliament knows it: on the night of the Longman by-election, when they watched the collapse in the Liberal vote in that particular electorate sitting in the northern suburbs of Brisbane, they got spooked. To the extent that there was any thinking at all going on during coup week—but I'm not sure there was a lot of thinking going on during coup week on that side of parliament—when they ripped themselves apart and made this place an utter shambles for the whole nation to see, it was perhaps due to the idea that they could get rid of a Prime Minister who actually resonated in Victoria, as they well know, in the hope that they might get a Prime Minister who could, in some little way, project into Queensland.

I really don't know whether the hope to get that projection into Queensland worked, but I'll tell you one thing: I absolutely know that in coup week what this mob over here did was open up a massive flank in Victoria across the entirety of the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, where we were seeing 10 per cent swings across a range of seats like Aston, like Chisholm, like Deakin and like La Trobe. You all know it, and that's what you were all saying to your Prime Minister when you met with him at 9

o'clock yesterday. Of course, in Corangamite, on the southern part of Geelong, the Liberal vote completely and totally collapsed.

The reality is simply this: since coup week, the federal Liberals have been unable to speak Victorian. They have absolutely no hope of projecting into our state.

By contrast, the Shorten Labor opposition is being policy big. We also seek to be a serious group of people who want to meet the challenges that are facing this country today, unlike the populist rabble that we sit opposite. We will be, if given the opportunity, a government which invests in health, education and infrastructure. We will do that in Victoria and we will do that across the entire country. If there was one lesson that we learnt on Saturday night, it's that that's exactly what Victorians want.

[ENDS]

Authorised by Noah Carroll, ALP, Canberra.