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SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW
WERRIBEE
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SUBJECTS: Government leadership crisis; road speed limits

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: We are in uncharted territory. Never before has a sitting prime minister and deputy prime minister showed such open contempt for each other. Malcolm Turnbull thinks that Barnaby Joyce has shocking judgement. Barnaby thinks Malcolm is inept. It's amazing.

What on earth happens now? No amount of going overseas or taking leave or going into hiding is going to resolve this issue. So long as number one and number two are fighting each other, we are not being governed. Labor knows that. I can tell you that all the other government MPs know it, the Parliament knows it, and the country knows it.

Rising health insurance premiums continue to go unchecked. Record-low wage growth continues to persist. The rising cost of living continues to make life more difficult. Make no mistake: the Coalition, such as it exists, has abandoned everyday Australians.

A real leader would never have allowed this to get out of hand. I cannot imagine that John Howard would ever have allowed it to get to this point. A prime minister with authority would step up, sort out this mess, and move on. That's exactly what Malcolm Turnbull needs to do. So far, that is exactly what Malcolm Turnbull has so patently failed to achieve.

JOURNALIST: So, can the PM and the deputy work together? What has to happen now?

MARLES: Who knows whether the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister can work together. I think for all of us looking in on this appalling display, one of them has to go. What we do know is that so long as they are at each other's throats, we are not being governed. We don't really have a government in this country.

JOURNALIST: And how extraordinary is the public slanging match between them?

MARLES: This is an unprecedented situation, that we have a sitting prime minister and a sitting deputy prime minister showing such contempt for each other, engaging in this kind of war of words, and they are eating themselves. They are totally focussed on themselves, and meanwhile the country is being completely ungoverned.

JOURNALIST: And can the PM go to the US next week?

MARLES: Well, I think the most critical issue which needs to be resolved by this government right now is this crisis, and going overseas isn't going to do that. Taking leave's not going to do that. Going into hiding's not going to do that.

This government needs to resolve this crisis today, because so long as it continues we, as a country, are not being governed.

JOURNALIST: And how embarrassing internationally is this, to have the nation's two top leaders-

MARLES: -Well, I cannot imagine, with this situation continuing at home, how Malcolm Turnbull expects to represent Australia in critical meetings with our most important ally, the United States. That's the situation that he now faces.

Every day thus goes unchecked Australia is experiencing another day of not being governed. This is a government which is completely consumed by itself, unable to resolve the most fundamental crisis that you could imagine: number one and number two going for each other's throats, and in the meantime everyday Australians have been completely abandoned by the Coalition.

JOURNALIST: Perfect. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

And in terms of the potential speed increase? The state opposition is proposing increasing it to 110 on the freeway. What are your thoughts?

MARLES: Obviously this is a matter for the State Government. As it happens I've spent many, many hours of my life on that road and I can remember there was a time when it was the unsafest road in the country. It was really works that have been done by successive Labor governments which have made it a much safer road today than when I first started commuting on it.

Whatever happens in respect of the speed limit, it seems to me obvious it has to be done through the prism of safety.

JOURNALIST: So do you think the extra 10 kilometres will have an effect on getting people-

MARLES: -Well, look, ultimately these are issues that the State Government need to work through, but I think that the most important factor in terms of thinking about how this road works is safety.

This is a road which used to be very unsafe. I personally have driven by a number of fatal accidents. It is a much better road today than it used to be and that is thanks to successive Labor governments and the road works that they've done. What we need to make sure happens is that safety is maintained on that road.

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