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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
DOORSTOP
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SUBJECTS: Australian Labor Party; Liberals' lack of talent; Peter O'Neill

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW DEFENCE MINISTER: Thank you for coming this afternoon. As you are aware, I will be nominating for the deputy leadership of the Australian Labor Party at our caucus on Thursday, and it will be a matter for my colleagues and that meeting to select the occupant of this office.

In doing so, can I acknowledge both Clare O'Neil and Jim Chalmers. Both of these people have indicated an interest in running for the deputy leadership of the Labor Party and both have now indicated that they will not be nominating for it.

I want to say that Clare and Jim are wonderful people. They have made an enormous contribution to the Labor Party already and they have so much to offer for the future of the Labor Party to come. A week ago was a very difficult moment for all of us in the ALP, but with people like Jim and Claire coming through the ranks it's hard not to feel a sense of optimism about the future.

I am fully aware of the responsibilities of this office, and particularly at this moment in time. I feel that the experiences that I've had in the Labor party up until this time mean that I have something to offer.

I'm very grateful for the expressions of support that I've received up until now, but ultimately the judgement on that and the judgement on me is a matter for my colleagues next Thursday and I will leave it to them then.

The Prime Minister has also just announced the new cabinet line-up, and what is completely clear about the Government's new cabinet is that the adults in the room have left. There is no Julie Bishop. There's no Arthur Sinodinos. There's no Kelly O'Dwyer. There's no Christopher Pyne.

What we are left with is the talentless rump of the Liberal Party. If you are in any doubt as to the exodus of talent from the Liberal Party, the fact that Stuart Robert has been given Cabinet responsibility for anything says everything.

Now, over the last six weeks we've seen the Prime Minister campaign around Australia entirely on what Labor's agenda is. He has said nothing about what this Government will do, and when you look at those comments and this line up today it is hard to imagine what this Government will be about.

It has no policies. It has no talent. At the end of the day Scott Morrison is a one-man band without a tune.

Finally, can I just acknowledge that Peter O'Neill, my friend, the now-former Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, announced his resignation as the Prime Minister of PNG today. He has been the Prime Minister of PNG for the last seven years and over a long period now there has only been two prime ministers in PNG, which has afforded that country a level of stability that would make most Australians envious. He has given his country great service. I really want to acknowledge that today as a friend and no doubt he will have a great future to come. I wish him all the best, and of course wish all those in Papua New Guinea the best in taking the next step forward.

Any questions?

JOURNALIST: Ms O'Neil says the reason she pulled out was (inaudible) What would you bring to the table to achieve this?

MARLES: I'm very grateful for the comments that Clare O'Neil made today and I certainly I hope that I can be a force for unity within the Party. Let me also say that over the last six years Bill Shorten has given done a tremendous job in bringing the Party together after what had previously been a very turbulent period of time in our history. He's given us six years of stability. He finishes his role as the leader of the Labor Party as a giant and we offer him an enormous debt of gratitude.

It is so important that we maintain that unity going forward, and there is obviously going to be a job in making sure that we put ourselves in a position where we can contest the next election, and I am really, really confident that we can do that.

I hope that, given the opportunity to do this role, I can be a force which helps to bring people together.

JOURNALIST: And what are some of those divisions after the election last week? (inaudible)

MARLES: We've gone through a very difficult moment in our history. I reiterate I

actually think that we are a very unified group of people and that Bill Shorten has done a tremendous job in that, but it's really important that we understand what happened in the election. It's important that we make sure that we are talking to the widest range of people that we possibly can. It's really important that working people in this country feel that we are the Party for them and that we speak to them. That is critically important and it's really important that we go through a thorough review of the election campaign and we learn the lessons from it.

But it's also essential that in doing that we not engage in any personal blame. At the end of the day politics is a team sport and we were a team which made these decisions in a collective way, and the responsibility for success and failure is borne by all of us and we need to bear that in mind as we work out what the lessons from this election have been.

JOURNALIST: Is it disappointing that it doesn't look like either of the two top positions (inaudible)

MARLES: It is completely appropriate that that question is continually asked. Ultimately, gender is not tied up in just one position and Labor is a Party which has some really talented, hard-working, serious women in the most senior positions: Tanya Plibersek, Penny Wong, Michelle Rowland, Amanda Rishworth, Catherine King, Linda Burney. I could go on. We have women in senior roles who are playing such a critical role in the way Labor is moving forward.

We have almost 50 per cent gender parity in terms of our parliamentary representation, but the road to ensuring that we have women fully participating in our Party and in the parliamentary representation of our Party is a road that isn't finished. We need to continue it and it will always be core business for Labor.

JOURNALIST: You're saying you've spoken (inaudible). After the election result, does Labor need to (inaudible)

MARLES: I'm not going to pre-empt the process of a review. All of us have had our reactions to what occurred a week ago, but those reactions by definition are a week old and we're unlikely to understand fully what occurred without a proper thorough review. All of us have had the experience that sometimes your initial reactions aren't necessarily right, that you actually do need to go through a review to work this out. It's really important we do that. It's really important that it is thorough. It's really important that it doesn't focus on individual blame, and that's how we're going to get the results of exactly what are the lessons that we learned from the very difficult election result that we saw a week ago.

JOURNALIST: (inaudible) Melissa Price has been moved from Environment to Defence Industry. (inaudible)

MARLES: I think that exactly what the various cabinet ministers are going to do,

including Melissa Price, is a question open to all of us. There is an enormously difficult job for the Prime Minister to fill seriously responsible positions with the lack of talent that he currently has. That is a question which is very well asked and should be asked of the Prime Minister.

JOURNALIST: Mr Morrison's factional ally Stuart Robert has been promoted to Cabinet. How (inaudible) that Mr Morrison's close friend (inaudible)

MARLES: The idea that Stuart Robert is being given Cabinet responsibility for anything says everything about the exodus of talent that has occurred from the Liberal Party. We've seen a whole lot of supporters of Peter Dutton's failed coup last year rewarded in the lineup that has been announced today. There's a whole lot of factional divisions which are going on within the Liberal Party and you can see them being played out in these announcements. That is going to be the hallmark of this government going forward.

JOURNALIST: What attributes to do you have to become the ALP deputy leader over Ms O'Neil?

MARLES: Well, firstly, Claire O'Neil is a really fantastic person who, as I said, who has given great service already and she has a really important future to play within the Labor Party.

I've had experience since 2007 in the parliamentary Party and experience in the labour movement prior to that both at the ACTU and the TWU. I think making sure that I can play a role as a deputy helping to bring people together, helping to make sure that Labor is speaking to and connecting with the broader spectrum of the Australian community is a contribution that I can make in this role.

I feel I have something to offer at this moment and it is a difficult moment in the context of the devastating result that we all feel a week ago. Ultimately I'm very mindful that the judgement of what I have to offer and of me is a matter for my colleagues, and obviously I'll leave it to them.

JOURNALIST: Ms O'Neil said she wasn't ready to be (inaudible). What do you think she meant by that?

MARLES: You would need to ask Clare that. I think being the deputy leader of the Labor Party is a very responsible position which involves the balancing of a whole lot of interests across the Party and I hope my experience up until this point in time equips me to do that.

I certainly feel that I have something to offer in that regard, but at the end of the day the judgement on that and me will be a matter for my colleagues next Thursday.

JOURNALIST: Just a couple more, Mr Morrison has a record number of women in

Cabinet and the ALP won't have a woman in its leadership duo. Is that embarrassing?

MARLES: When you look at the women that Labor has at the most senior levels of its ranks there is a stark contrast between what we have to offer and the roles that women are playing in our Party compared to what we see in the Liberal Party and Mr Morrison's Government. There is no matcher on the Liberal Party side in the Government's cabinet to people like Tanya Plibersek and Penny Wong. We have women absolutely driving the agenda at the highest level, serious players in the Labor Party.

What we've got with the Government right now is a one man band and a Prime Minister who was basically doing it all on his own.

JOURNALIST: Will the Labor Party pass the Government's key tax cuts (inaudible)

MARLES: Look, I'm not going to comment on all of those policy matters. We need to be getting back together, which we will be doing next Thursday; having a full review of what has occurred during the election campaign, the policies that we took to the election; and what emerged from the election campaign in terms of policy, or the lack of them, that has come from the Government. We'll do that review in good time and what matters is that we're thorough about it and we take our time to do it and the answers to those questions will come in the fullness of time.

JOURNALIST: Just finally, what do you see as the major challenge in the re-build coming from the election loss?

MARLES: I think it's really important that Labor is speaking to and connecting with the broadest range of the Australian community that we possibly can. It matters that working Australians around the nation identify us as their Party because that is the basis of the Labor Party and we need to be making sure that we rebuild that.

We need to come back from what has been a very devastating moment in our history and regroup as quickly as we can so that we are as competitive as possible three years from now when the Australian people go to an election again, because I can tell you there are millions of Australians who want to see Labor put its best foot forward and provide a choice for them at the next election. I'm really confident that we will be able to do that and that's what we must make sure that we do going forward.

Thank you.

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