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**DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY**  
**SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE**  
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT**  
**RADIO INTERVIEW**  
**3AW – NEIL MITCHELL**  
**WEDNESDAY, 18 MARCH 2020**

***SUBJECT: Coronavirus.***

**NEIL MITCHELL, HOST:** Opposition Leader, Richard Marles has called in. He's got specific ideas on this, and also Shadow Defence Minister on what's being planned here. I really think this has to be a purely apolitical. It doesn't mean ideas can't be raised for heaven's sake, by anybody of either side. Richard Marles, good morning.

**RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY:** Good morning, Neil. How are you?

**MITCHELL:** What's your idea?

**MARLES:** Well I think fundamentally listening to the ideas that people have put up- and some of them might work- we need to get the retailers together surely and work out a plan. I think it can't be beyond our wit to have a situation, for example where you have essential goods behind the counter and if you are somebody who's vulnerable, a pensioner, elderly, showing some identification- there is something reserved for you. But whatever the proposal is- and your listeners have just come up with a whole lot right then- we need the Prime Minister, I think and the Government to get the retailers together, get them to step up- they're actually doing okay in this moment commercially- and to come up with a plan which allows the most vulnerable, and the most in need to get the necessities that are required. I think the Prime Minister's message this morning was an important message; I

think you know, stop-

**MITCHELL:** Stop. Stop.

**MARLES:** Clearly we do need to stop hoarding. And I am glad he said what he said. But it needs to be accompanied by some action and I think that has to be getting the retailers together to work out a plan, whatever that is.

**MITCHELL:** Do you have any ideas?

**MARLES:** Well as I say, that that idea I think of having specific provisions, necessities which pensioners and the most vulnerable need behind the counter, you present a form of I.D. and that enables you to purchase that would be an idea. Your listeners have come up with some ideas as well. The main thing, though is that we've actually got to get together a plan. I think Woolworths showed some really admirable community leadership by having that hour for pensioners yesterday-

**MITCHELL:** Yeah, I'll be talking to Woolies later and I'll put some of the specifics to him.

**MARLES:** So that's good.

**MITCHELL:** And see if he is willing to sit down with government and or whoever necessary to try and get some plan in place.

**MARLES:** But isn't that what needs to be done? Exactly what you just then, that is-

**MITCHELL:** Well, not the Prime Minister but surely the Minister.

**MARLES:** Well Government is really what I'm saying. Government needs to lead this and I think, I mean what Woolworths demonstrated is that I think there is an intent on their behalf to try and do the right thing. They want to help. There needs to be some coordination and you know the stories that your listeners just told then about people going from one supermarket to the next, makes it clear that it can't be just one chain of supermarkets which engages it has got to be everyone.

**MITCHELL:** And just finally as Shadow Defence Minister, what's the idea? What do you want the Defence Force doing?

**MARLES:** This is a matter of national emergency. The Defence Force is a national asset and I think it is time that we think about how we get them engaged. And I think the Government again, needs to come up with a comprehensive plan in relation to that. I mean supply chains are a critical issue right now. Logistics-

**MITCHELL:** Oh yes, so you could get Defence Forces shipping toilet paper or something?

**MARLES:** One thing the Australian Defence Force is very good at is logistics. I mean in large measure it is a massive logistics organisation- it can help there. I think it can help in terms of establishing you know, makeshift fever clinics and the Government is talking about putting them in place. We need to get them in place quicker. I think the ADF could help there. I actually think as this goes on, and people- you know all of us are perhaps more confined- I think the ADF probably can have a role in relation to welfare checks for the elderly and those most in need. But there's a whole lot of roles they could play. Again, what I think we need though is to get a plan from the Government about how this great national asset of ours is being put into play.

**MITCHELL:** Okay, thank you very much. Richard Marles the Deputy Leader of the Federal Opposition.

***ENDS***

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.