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DOORSTOP

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SUBJECTS: National Cabinet

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: Today we have the National Cabinet and high on the agenda is going to be state borders. The truth of the matter is that the Prime Minister lost his way on this issue months ago. The lion's share of the responsibility of the internal borders within Australia has to lie with the Commonwealth Government. There should be a sensible set of protocols around the terms on which borders close and the basis upon which they reopen. But obtaining agreement around that has to be the responsibility of the Prime Minister of Australia. And in that he has absolutely failed. And in the absence of that I don't blame Annastacia Palaszczuk or Mark McGowan for taking the positions that they are in doing what anybody in their circumstances would do. But what we've seen on the part of the Federal Government is a complete failure to have leadership in this space. And as a result the National Cabinet is that in name only. I mean really, we see the Prime Minister claiming this is a great step forward in the Federation but all it actually means is that when Premiers agree, the Prime Minister tries to take credit and when they don't he seeks to blame them. And as a result the only contribution that we've seen in this space today is the unedifying spectacle

of Morrison Government Ministers doing nothing but complaining about state Premiers. We don't need Government by whingeing. We need government by leadership. And Scott Morrison is failing that. A cabinet of - by any name should be led by its leader, who should then bring people along with them. But on both counts Scott Morrison has failed when it comes to the National Cabinet. So I certainly hope that in today's National Cabinet we see a change to that and we do see some leadership from our Federal Government but I'm certainly not holding my breath.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.