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E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
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SUBJECT/S: Protests; Victoria's roadmap; Aged Care

REBECCA MADDERN, HOST: For more on this, we're joined by Federal Deputy Opposition Leader Richard Marles. Richard, are these people stupid, crazy or have Victorians just had enough?

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: I think everyone in Victoria is doing it tough but these people are stupid. No question about it, Bec. They're selfish. Deeply selfish. I mean, everyone is feeling the frustration of what we're experiencing in Victoria at the moment but just imagine if you're someone who works in an aged care centre. Every day you're risking your life to go in and help elderly Victorians and you're watching these turkeys go out and do what they're doing. It's completely ridiculous. Imagine being a resident in aged care. Those of us who have loved ones in aged care. You look at this stuff, the way in which it distracts police resources, but the complete selfishness of it. I find it breath-taking to be honest. We can all understand the difficulty of it but we are doing our best in this state to get past this terrible virus and no-one who went out and protested yesterday is going to save a single life from coronavirus.

MADDERN: Richard I was on my one-hour exercise walk yesterday around the botanical gardens and I came across this protest. There was- and I have been to many protests in my time as a reporter for the last 20 years in this town- there was an unprecedented amount of police. Was it over the top?

MARLES: Well, I mean, I think it would have been better if the protests hadn't happened and police weren't required to be there for this protest. I mean, exactly what numbers were put in place in relation to a protest is an operational decision obviously that the police make. But I think everyone would agree, it would have been better if there had been no protests and the police were able to do the normal jobs that they're paid to do. But at the end of the day everyone gets what's going on in Victoria at the moment. It is tough, it is really tough. And people are going to be hanging out for what Daniel Andrews has to say but yesterday doesn't help. It doesn't make the virus go away. It is still there and ultimately we've got to get past the virus and get to a position where we are able to reopen Victoria again, where we are able to reintegrate it with the rest of the country but no-one who made the decision to go out yesterday has helped us one step down that path.

MADDERN: Yeah, I agree with you on that. I want to move on to Victoria's road map out of this due to be released in a couple of hours from now. Your constituents in regional Victoria may actually be the only ones that are semi somewhat happy out of this announcement today. Are you expecting regional Victoria restrictions to be eased a lot more than inner-city Melbourne? I mean they're in stage three at the moment, do you expect them to go straight to stage two or indeed more freedom than that because cases have dramatically reduced in Geelong, Corio, your seat.

MARLES: Let's see what Daniel Andrews has to say at lunchtime. You're right, it is a lot better in Geelong now than it is in Melbourne and I have lots of friends and family in Melbourne so I have some sense of what people are experiencing there and it is certainly a lot more difficult than we've got here now, even under

stage three in Geelong and the rest of regional Victoria. I think we all want to see the state open up. We all want to get to a point where businesses are able to open and we can get the economy going again and importantly we can reintegrate Victoria with the rest of the country. We can't do that until we get past the virus and I think the point that we just need to remember is cases have been around 70, I think yesterday was 76, something of that number. That is a great achievement relative to a few weeks ago where we had a day past 700 but we also need to remember in New South Wales yesterday, there was less than seven. So there's still a way to go and I think we've just all got to buckle up and wait and see what Daniel Andrews has to say and do what we can to get past this.

MADDERN: Richard, we can't do that until the problem is fixed in aged care. Are you confident that this situation is being rectified? Because that is the main source of outbreaks at the moment. It is no point everybody around Victoria doing their bit until that problem is solved.

MARLES: I completely agree with that, Bec. The answer to your question is, no, I'm not confident. Partly why I'm not confident is because you don't solve a problem unless someone takes responsibility for it. And I think there have been things that have gone wrong in Victoria and whatever you say about Daniel Andrews he's fronted the media every day for the last 65 days and he's certainly accepted responsibility and he has acknowledged where problems have occurred but aged care is the responsibility of the Federal Government, fair and square. That's not in question, it is the responsibility of the Federal Government. Each and every day what we see from them is a complete avoidance of responsibility. I mean, it is almost as if they say that Victoria's got its own problems so what happens in aged care in Victoria doesn't really count in terms of federal responsibility. That's completely wrong. We need the Federal Government to step up here.

MADDERN: Richard, sorry to interrupt but it is happening in Victoria so the State Government can't say, "not our problem."

MARLES: The point here is that the Federal Government has responsibility for functions of government in Victoria as well. Turns out we are part of Australia. And aged care is one of those areas where they have responsibility. And it's really important that they actually step up and accept that. Whatever Victorians say or don't say, those who regulate aged care is the Federal Government. Those who fund aged care are the Federal Government. Those who are responsible for infection control in aged care is the Federal Government. That's where the power lies. They've actually got to step up and say what's been going wrong in aged care in Victoria, cause that's their job. Right now we're not seeing them do that.

MADDERN: Okay, it certainly has turned into a political hot potato I dare say. We have to leave it there this morning. Thank you for your time this morning, Richard Marles.

MARLES: Thanks, Bec.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.