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**DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY**  
**SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE**  
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT**  
**RADIO INTERVIEW**  
**2SM MARCUS PAUL IN THE MORNING**  
**WEDNESDAY, 9 SEPTEMBER 2020**

***SUBJECTS: Anthony Albanese's vision statement on the regions.***

**MARCUS PAUL, HOST:** Coffs Harbour Federal Labor will deliver their seventh vision statement which will be importantly focusing on regional Australia, we're in Sydney obviously, but this program also going out to regional New South Wales. Anthony Albanese and also the Deputy Leader of the Opposition Richard Marles will be addressing the nation in which they will hopefully outline a plan that will ensure that Australia comes out of COVID 19 and let's hope fingers crossed a little unlike what's been going on in aged care. There's been no real recognition of the work Labor have done in their suggestions on that but I hope they'll take some of this on board. It's a very good speech I've read it, all the information that Albo is going to present today but I'm very happy to say that Richard Marles is on the program. Thank you for your time Richard.

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

**PAUL:** Yeah I'm really, well just, you'll be there electronically, you're stuck in Victoria aren't you?

**MARLES:** I am, well I'm stuck in regional Australia, I live in Geelong-

**PAUL:** Yes of course, yeah-

**MARLES:** And yes sadly with what's going on in Victoria at the moment, the way in which we make our presence felt around the country is via video link these days-

**PAUL:** Yeah that's alright that still works.

**MARLES:** It's a brave new world but we're getting used to it.

**PAUL:** No it works. And of course a big announcement today by your party. The seventh vision statement and I mentioned importantly there will be discussions on, you know, regional Australia creating jobs in areas that let's face it have been decimated by the current pandemic, Richard.

**MARLES:** I mean that's right, but I think what's happened with COVID-19 is it has opened our eyes to a whole lot of opportunities that exist for regional Australia which I think and Anthony thinks, when we look into the recovery from COVID and what will be a period where I think there'll be probably the biggest reimagining of Australia in our lifetime. I think, there is a real opportunity for us to see a much bigger future for regional Australia and what we're talking about before is an example of it. So many more people now are working remotely they're not having to commute in and out of the capitals they're able to do, well they're being forced to do their work from home but that in turn opens the prospect that in fact a whole lot of work that we used to associate with only being able to be done in CBDs can actually be done from regional Australia and people can do that work whilst enjoying all the benefits of living in regional Australia which are considerable. And so I think that this is a critical moment or juncture really in Australia's history to try and come up with a vision for how coming out of COVID we can have a much grander view of the role that regional Australia can play in the nation.

**PAUL:** Well I mean we've had 30 odd years, three decades of continuous economic growth and sadly that's, well not all been wiped out, but look we are facing some challenging times we are officially as we know now in a recession. So the suggestion from Labor is that the regions can help in a big way.

**MARLES:** Definitely, and I think you know if you take a bigger view you know that since Federation we've built some fantastic cities in this country. But in fact we've become much more urbanised country; a high proportion of our population live in those cities. And I think

that if Australia's going to reach its full potential this century needs to be about the development of regional Australia and the coronavirus has put into sharp focus the opportunities that can come from that but also the need really from the point of view of the country that we do actually invest in our regions if we're going to reach our full potential as a nation. So I said earlier there is the opportunity to be working more remotely from home which opens up a whole lot of opportunities in regional Australia. But one of the preconditions to making this work and it's a point that Anthony is going to make in his speech today is that some of the critical pieces of infrastructure which enable regional Australia need to be built upon and invested in. Things like roads and rail and links to city but also things like regional universities.

**PAUL:** Yes

**MARLES:** I mean regional universities are at the heart of great regional cities. You look at Newcastle Uni, Wollongong Uni, James Cook Uni in Townsville. You know behind great regional cities in this country now you will find really significant regional universities and right now they're being cut back. Right now, we're seeing significant job losses in those universities, they are being underfunded dramatically so you know investing in in those universities, which if you look around the world, you know regions are built on you know lots of university towns. We need to be thinking about that here as well. So being mindful of what are the building blocks for regional Australia and making sure that we're properly investing in them is critical if we're going to realise this future.

**PAUL:** And when you look at, you mentioned the stats. I mean a million already unemployed a further one and a half a million Australians are underemployed, if you like and we unfortunately expect at least another 400,000 to join them on dole queues by Christmas with the scaling back of JobKeeper and JobSeeker. But this stat really struck me. There are currently 28 people living in regional areas relying on unemployment payments for every vacancy.

**MARLES:** Yeah and that stat is astounding. I mean, there's two sides to it; it speaks to the pain that's being experienced in regional Australia right now in terms of the level of unemployment. But what it also speaks to, if we're looking optimistically is the opportunity for businesses in regional Australia because there is a huge human resource that is there ready and willing to work-

**PAUL:** Yes.

**MARLES:** But it does require businesses to be thinking outside of the box a bit and to see regional Australia as an opportunity for them. But that's only going to happen if governments are properly investing in that infrastructure which enables business to be done from regional Australia. So roads, rail but then the you mention universities-

**PAUL:** Yes

**MARLES:** But then something like you know the NBN. I mean, the NBN is fundamental to enabling-

**PAUL:** It's got to work first, Richard.

**MARLES:** It has got to work. And you know, it hasn't been working.

**PAUL:** Not everywhere, no.

**MARLES:** But NBN, when it was first was rolled out under the Rudd and Gillard Governments, it was first conceived in that time, was really seen as one of the great keys that unlock the potential of regional Australia because it would enable people to do a whole lot of businesses from regional Australia which previously couldn't be done. Well that vision, that hope really has not been fulfilled. And again Anthony speaks about that in his speech today, that that is a central piece of the infrastructure to allowing business to flourish in regional Australia.

**PAUL:** All right well, it's a good place to be doing it today, launching the seventh vision statement. Importantly as we say focusing on regional Australia in particular. It will happen in Coffs Harbour. Anthony will be there. You'll be dialling in via some sort of wonder of technology- if the NBN works!

**MARLES:** Hopefully.

**PAUL:** All right mate. Thank you so much for your time, we'll catch up soon.

**MARLES:** Thanks Marcus.

**-ENDS-**