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E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
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SUBJECTS: Appalling situation with the intervention on Auspost Executive; Victoria.

TOM CONNELL, HOST: Deputy Labor leader, Richard Marles, thanks for your time. We'll get to the Melbourne situation in a moment what did you make of this story first of all?

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: I think this is astounding. And the double standard that we've got here is absolutely palpable. I mean you've got a Government which is working with Christine Holgate and Pauline Hanson to put in place regulations which exist now which effectively doubled the delivery time in capital cities. You've got Australia Post saying to people that they can't expect their mail to be delivered on time on Father's Day. But if you are Pauline Hanson, you can contact the CEO of Australia Post and make sure that your stubby holders get delivered to the council towers in Victoria. That is an appalling situation. And it says everything about how this Government goes about its business but how there is a complete double standard out there. Pauline Hanson can get delivery straight away, via personally the CEO, everything else has to wait for their mail.

CONNELL: Well is there any evidence Pauline Hanson was the one? Wasn't it Australia Post that were told the deliveries wouldn't happen and then insisted this is a basic right, that you can't edit someone's mail for want of a better word?

MARLES: Of course, and it is a basic right. And we should be getting our mail delivered on time and people should have got their mail on Father's Day. And I think a regulation that the Government has put in place which sees the delivery times of mail almost doubled in capital cities is appalling. Mail should be delivered on time. I'm just not sure why Pauline Hanson gets personal exception in circumstances where the CEO of Australia Post personally intervenes to make sure that her mail actually gets delivered in the way that she wants. I mean, the Government from the outset of corona have been using this crisis, the coronavirus crisis, to cut services to Australia Post, to cut delivery times. That's what's going on here and that's what the regulation which has gone through has done-

CONNELL: Alright, well-

MARLES: It's gone through with the support of Pauline Hanson; Christine Holgate is right there in the middle of it. I think this is scandalous.

CONNELL: And obviously the issue the Government and Australia Post say was that it wanted to prioritise packages, a lot of them being sent at the moment. But let me just clarify this; you're saying the Australia Post boss here, Christine Holgate has done anything wrong.

MARLES: Well, what we're seeing here is personal intervention at the level of the CEO of Australia Post when it comes to Pauline Hanson's mail. That's what we're seeing. But when it comes to everybody else's mail-

CONNELL: Is that wrongdoing?

MARLES: Well Tom, I will tell you what is wrong; what is wrong here is that every other Australian has to receive a message from Australia Post that their mail on Father's Day, is going to be delayed. That we've got a regulation which has now gone through which sees delivery times almost doubled. That's what applies to everybody in Australia but if you are Pauline Hanson you manage somehow to see the CEO of Australia Post act in your interests to make sure your mail is delivered on time. I don't think that any of those-

CONNELL: Are you drawing the direct link between legislation that One Nation supported and the CEO weighing in, in this circumstance?

MARLES: Have a look at the timing. Have a look at the timing, Tom. And I think all of this is absolutely outrageous. At the end of the day, the Australia Post CEO has to explain why she in respect of one individual has gone to such lengths to ensure that her mail is delivered on time whereas the rest of Australia has to wait and not see their mail delivered on time for Father's Day.

CONNELL: We've invited her onto the program, so still welcome in case anyone at Auspost is watching, still welcome to come on and explain the issue. Let's move on to the situation in Melbourne. Just interested, what did you make of Bill Shorten's comments? He said that he would have liked restrictions to come off earlier. His indication here is this is a bit of a conservative path out by Daniel Andrews. Do you agree?

MARLES: Look, the Roadmap that's been put in place has been developed on the basis of all of the best medical advice. This is a difficult situation that we're in. But I think we need to take a step back and just remember two things; firstly, Victorians are doing a magnificent job in abiding by a really difficult set of regulations towards an end and that end is being achieved. You know the numbers are coming down. I'm not sure what choices the Victorian Government have here. At the end of the day we've got a Prime Minister who is saying we need to see borders be opened around the country. I mean, I think it would be good if we could have borders open around the country. But if you are sitting in Gladys Berejiklian's chair, what do you need to see happen in Victoria in order for you to open up Victoria-New South Wales border and let's work our way back from here. When you think about it through that lens, I'm not sure that Victoria has any choice but to go down the path that Daniel Andrews is taking us.

CONNELL: Well let's talk through the choice then. What's being asked here including by epidemiologists and even some that were asked to contribute to the modelling, is why not have different parameters? You can have- this might be termed plan A the most conservative route, but why not have a plan B that talks about improved contact tracing and possible earlier dates and indeed higher numbers to open at. Because if you have better contact tracing you don't need the cases to get as low. Wouldn't that have provided some more hope for Melburnians?

MARLES: Well first, I think there is hope. The numbers are coming down. The measures that have been put in place already by Daniel Andrews are working. But what will be required for the New South Wales Government to make a decision to open the border with Victoria? And I don't say that with any criticisms of the New South Wales Government, I can well understand the situation they're in. I think when you see it through that prism it becomes clear that the problem that the Victorian Government's trying to solve here is pretty difficult. And the other point is that we absolutely cannot under any circumstances see a third wave hit this state- that would be appalling. This is difficult and difficult decisions are being made and I get here's a bit of a pile on going on in relation to the Andrews Government at the moment. You can make criticisms and pick holes here and there; at the end of the day no one denies the fact that it's a really a situation, a significant intervention has been put in place by the government and it is working. But what we're seeing from our Prime Minister, and bear in mind Victoria is part of Australia and the federal government has a whole lot of responsibility here, is a guy who is basically leading the cheer squad for the pile on in respect of Daniel Andrews. I mean we don't have a Prime Minister here who's rolling up his sleeves standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the Victorian Government in order to get us through this crisis, he has gone to the sidelines and is doing nothing but heckling.

CONNELL: What he wants to do, and is pushing for is to see the in-depth modelling and see if there is a possible earlier way out. That would be helpful wouldn't it? And not just government-to-government level, but why not get all the information out there, we don't have the full modelling released. Don't we need all the information on the table here. This is a huge decision. There's not just health advice, they go, right, here's what to do. There's modelling, there's parameters, there's decision, there's risk appetite. Don't we deserve to know all that information when we're told that the decision that's been made based on it?

MARLES: Of course, the more information that you can put into the, or governments can put in the public domain the better, there's no doubt about that. But why does Scott Morrison choose to make (*inaudible*)? Why isn't Scott Morrison making the basis of his activity standing shoulder-to--shoulder with the Victorian Government in dealing with what is obviously a difficult situation? Instead what we've got is a Prime Minister who is using this moment to point the finger at Daniel Andrews and try and have the whole world blame him for everything that's going wrong in relation to the coronavirus, that is one of the most low rent acts that I've seen a Prime Minister engage in. This is not a man who is getting into the mix here and was actually making a difference. This is a guy who has relegated himself to the sidelines as doing nothing other than being the cheerleader for those who want to pile on in relation to Daniel Andrews, in the hope that he escapes any blame. Let's be clear, the most lethal part of everything that has occurred in Victoria has happened in relation to aged care, wholly and solely the responsibility of the federal government, and where is Scott Morrison in relation to that? I mean we are not seeing a Prime Minister here. We're just seeing a guy –

CONNELL: That continues to be Federal Labor's emphasis, not the handling by the

Andrews Government, not the hotel quarantine issue, 99 per cent of the second wave stemming from that, not the fact that contact tracing by Daniel Andrews, his own concessions this week was just not up to scratch. Shouldn't you be commenting about that as well?

MARLES: But Labor is doing that, Tom. Were there problems with hotel quarantining? Yes. Daniel Andrews has acknowledged that. Is there problems with contact tracing? Yes. And Daniel Andrews has acknowledged that. Daniel Andrews has stood up for something like 70 days in a row and taken absolute responsibility for failings that have occurred in this pandemic—

CONNELL: But what is responsibility if we can't find out the basic things such as who made the decision on quarantine and if it was a decision somewhere that ultimately goes back to a minister, that minister would lose their job, that's responsibility isn't it?

MARLES: And in the very first days in relation to this, Daniel Andrews sets up a Judicial Inquiry which is looking at all of those questions without fear or favour, and we're going to get to the bottom of all of that. But put that in contrast to what we see from Scott Morrison. Scott Morrison isn't doing anything remotely like this when it comes to aged care, he's not standing up and taking responsibility day in and day out in relation to those issues, I mean there is a vast gulf between the way those two people are leading.

CONNELL: Whomever has made that decision, whoever's ultimately responsible for that hotel quarantine decision in this inquiry, I mean they should lose their job, right?

MARLES: Well let's see what the Inquiry says I'm not about to prejudge that, but let's see how that rolls out. But the important point-

CONNELL: Alright.

MARLES: The important point to understand now, Tom, in terms of those question is that wherever that leads it was initiated by Daniel Andrews at the get go. No hesitation at all, acceptance of responsibility, putting in place a process where they get to the bottom of the issues of things that have gone wrong. We do not see anything remotely like that from Scott Morrison

CONNELL: Right out of time, Richard Marles. We'll talk again soon, Thank you.

MARLES: Thanks, Tom.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.