



**THE HON PETER DUTTON MP
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR DICKSON**

TRANSCRIPT

**JOINT DOORSTOP INTERVIEW WITH
MR GAVIN PEARCE MP, SHADOW ASSISTANT
MINISTER FOR HEALTH, AGED CARE AND INDIGENOUS
HEALTH SERVICES AND FEDERAL MEMBER FOR
BRADDON**

9 October 2023

Subjects: Visit to North-West Tasmania and the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture Dairy Research Facility; the barbaric attacks on Israel; Labor's cost of living crisis; the Prime Minister's divisive Voice, Treaty, Truth proposal; the Tasmanian Liberal Government.

GAVIN PEARCE:

It's great to be here at Elliott, at our Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture Dairy Research Facility run by James and his team. We've just had the Leader of the Opposition, my great colleague and leader Peter Dutton.

Peter, welcome to the electorate. I'm extremely proud to show you this facility as I think it represents the cutting technology that we have here, and particularly the dairy industry. They produce in excess of 930 million litres of milk. We are the dairy epicentre when it comes to pasture fed, irrigated and rainfall production of milk here and also the vertically integrated processing facilities that we have spread along our coast.

When we talk about cost of living and we've talked about that over many, many months now, but the cost of doing business for a farmer is increasing. It's increasing to the point that they're having trouble returning back to their bottom line. It's facilities like this that aid them, that help them to produce milk at the lowest possible cost returning the maximum amount of profit.

But let me tell you, our farmers along the north west coast here – and I hear them loud and clear every single day – they are struggling with the cost of diesel, of labour, of input costs, of protein, and the list goes on and on. The list of red tape and other governmental implications that are really hurting our farmers, and if we want to get down to the nitty gritty, this is where our food comes from.

So Peter, I'm glad to have you here and I'm glad you understood, and it was an absolute pleasure showing around the facility this morning.

PETER DUTTON:

Thank you mate, very much.

Well, firstly Gav, thanks very much for the invitation to be here with you today.

I want to say thank you to the researchers and the work that they're doing here is making a tangible, positive difference in the lives of farmers. I think the reality is that we need to make sure that it's properly funded and the benefits are continuing to flow to all of our farmers, particularly here in Tasmania and in the dairy industry, which can be a tough industry.

I wanted to start this morning by expressing horror and outrage at the terrible loss of life that we've seen through these barbaric attacks in Israel. To see young people chased into the desert and gunned down, to see women and children dragged into the back of vehicles taken hostage is just completely and utterly abhorrent.

So, I want to say to our friends in Israel, to family members and to others who are feeling this horror in Israel, but in our country and around the world at the moment – there'll be plenty of Jewish communities who were scared to send their kids to school this morning – the anti-Semitism that we've seen on the rise over the last few years obviously manifests itself in these terrible, terrible acts. When you see what is happening and you see what people in Israel are living through, the acts should be condemned, yes; but we should provide very strong words of encouragement to the people of Israel and to the government of Israel that they should be pursuing these people who have perpetrated these acts with every asset available to them.

There's obviously now a number of recovery missions underway to try and bring those hostages home. The rape and the brutality that will be a reality should be spoken about as well, because these are the barbaric attacks that deserve to be condemned.

When people talk about Israel having to show restraint, it's completely and utterly the wrong time for that sort of language. When the attacks took place in New York and across the United States in the 9/11 attacks, John Howard who was the Prime Minister at the time, stood shoulder-to-shoulder with President Bush in the United States. It wasn't a time for restraint, it was a time to make sure that, firstly, people are secure and that further attacks can be prevented, and simultaneously, it's a time to stand with the people of Israel to make sure that these women and children in particular, are recovered from what is a very dire situation.

It's obvious that the death toll will continue to increase, and it's obvious that in our country we need to be very careful of the threat as it is faced by the people of the Jewish community here in Australia. We've seen only in the last 24 hours incidents in other countries where people of Jewish faith have been targeted.

I would implore the Prime Minister to provide an update to the Jewish community here in Australia, providing an assurance around the additional security and safety measures that have been put in place. I've requested a briefing from the Director-General of ASIO, as well as the Police Commissioner – the Australian Federal Police Commissioner – and also the Head of National Security.

I think it's important for us to speak in a bipartisan way, but the Coalition won't be using any language about restraint from the Israeli people at the moment. Their focus is on defeating this scourge and making sure that they can recover their citizens – exactly what the Australian public would expect of the Australian Government if we faced similar circumstances here.

I'm very happy to take any questions.

QUESTION:

Have you had an intelligence briefing about the situation?

PETER DUTTON:

I've requested the briefing and I'm sure it'll be provided by the Prime Minister, but we haven't received it as yet.

QUESTION:

What support do you think Australia should provide Israel?

PETER DUTTON:

Well, I welcome the advice of President Biden that they're moving assets into the region, which I think is prudent, and I hope it sends a very strong message to countries including Iran, who clearly have sanctioned and supported potentially these actions.

The Australian Government should stand ready to provide munitions or equipment or defence materiel otherwise if it's requested by Israel. We should make it known to Israel that the Australian Government is prepared to provide such support if it's requested. We should be one of the allied nations. As we've seen through our activities in Ukraine, where we stand up for peace, we stand up for democracy, we stand up for the human life that is sacrosanct to us and we stand up for the rule of law. These are all important principles for Australia to rededicate ourselves to at what is a very, very precarious period.

QUESTION:

In Sydney last night, hundreds of people gathered in support of Palestine. One man addressed the crowd, saying he was 'happy' and described the attacks on Israel as a 'day of victory'. What do you make of that?

PETER DUTTON:

I condemn those comments, absolutely. I have no doubt that the Australian Federal Police and ASIO will take an interest in relation to these matters.

If people are inciting any violence towards the Jewish community here in Australia, they should face the full force of the Australian law. It's completely and utterly unacceptable that the loss of life, or the barbaric attacks that we've seen in Israel should be sanctioned, condoned or somehow applauded. They're acts of terrorists and they should be treated as such, and for people to somehow provide moral support here in Australia to those actions, is an absolutely appalling act.

QUESTION:

You've said before that you'd like to see Parliament lit up in blue and white. Have you made calls to make that happen?

PETER DUTTON:

Well, we've put that call out publicly and I think it's happened for the Opera House – again, we made that call yesterday – so we welcome that. I hope the Prime Minister's – I'm not sure whether he's given that commitment or not – but I'm sure it's something that he would consider, and I hope that he can make an announcement in that regard soon.

Germany and other countries obviously have expressed similar concern and Australia should be at the forefront. Australia is one of Israel's greatest friends. We have an incredibly dynamic Jewish community here in Australia. Every Australian should be treated equally, and because of somebody's religious belief, or because of somebody's heritage that they should be discriminated against in our country, is not something we tolerate and we never should, and we should never weaken our position in supporting people of Israel and of Jewish faith here in our country.

QUESTION:

You mentioned the threat to the Jewish community, but will there be any other impacts we might see on the ground here in Australia? Like we saw with the Ukraine conflict?

PETER DUTTON:

Well, I'm concerned about, and I've spoken to some friends in the Jewish community in the last 24 hours, they're concerned about sending their kids to school. Some of the schools are telling their kids not to wear the uniform in public. Now, that's unacceptable in our country in any year, let alone in the year 2023.

So, I would say to the Prime Minister; those messages of reassurance are necessary at the moment. We need to condemn without reservation the actions of any people here in Australia, or globally who would seek to incite violence in our society. The intelligence agencies, the policing agencies, I'm sure will be doubling down in their efforts, but it's important for the Jewish community to hear from their Prime Minister and from me as the Leader of the Opposition that we stand against acts of violence or incitement of such acts. The comments that I've seen over the course of the last 24 hours, particularly at that rally, don't have any place in Australian society.

QUESTION:

I just have a couple of questions on the Voice. If the Referendum is not successful, what should the next step be?

PETER DUTTON:

Well, I think the focus for now is on Saturday. There are millions of Australians who have already voted and millions of Australians, including now almost one in two Labor voters who have decided that they're not voting for the biggest change to our Constitution because it's permanent, it's divisive and it's not properly understood.

I find it inconceivable that the Prime Minister is just not across the detail. He's spent the last 18 months completely obsessed about the Voice, and Australians are now paying the price for that because he's taken his eye off the ball in two budgets now – where there could have been decisions made to try and support families. Instead, decisions have been taken that now are hurting families and Australian families know that their petrol prices are up, they know that they're getting less for their groceries when they go to the supermarket, they know that every input into their family business, into their household budget, is going up under Labor, and I think the Prime Minister after Saturday, has got to start to concentrate on the needs of the Australian public, instead of his obsession that he's had with the Voice over the last 16 months.

QUESTION:

Do you agree with Anthony Albanese that there should not be moves to legislate a Voice to Parliament if the Referendum is not successful?

PETER DUTTON:

Well, I think again, I mean part of the reason that the Prime Minister's got himself into the trouble that he's in at the moment, and the resulting division within our country, is because the Prime Minister is not across the detail. If the Prime Minister doesn't understand the detail of the Voice, how can the Australian public understand the detail of the Voice?

Now, the Prime Minister's made deliberate decisions to move away from the Calma-Langton Report, which actually recommended local and regional bodies. They didn't recommend

going to a Referendum, in fact quite the opposite. So, if you have a look at the decisions the Prime Minister's made over the course of the last 12 months, I think he's been desperately trying to be all things to all people, but in the end he's presided over a process which has divided our country. It's cost \$400 million – that could be about 800 homes that you could build in Indigenous communities – and it's obvious that in increasing numbers Australians are going to vote 'no' on Saturday, and I would encourage them to do exactly that.

QUESTION:

The Guardian Poll is out showing that majority of Australians will oppose, how much weight do you give to those with polling out today?

PETER DUTTON:

Well look, I think the polling has been consistent, but there's only one poll that counts and that's why Australians need to get out on Saturday and vote 'no', or if they're pre-polling this week.

Many people I think have held off casting their vote because they thought the Prime Minister was going to give the detail of what it is they're being asked to vote on, but as it turns out, the detail is not coming. The design of the Voice, ironically, incredibly, starts next Monday, a week today – after the vote has taken place – and there's a six month design process that's proposed. It's no wonder Australians are looking at what's before them, understanding that it is divisive, that it is permanent, it can't be changed by a law of the Parliament, and I think the Prime Minister has made a very, very significant mistake here and he needs to take responsibility for that.

QUESTION:

The latest Resolve Poll published in Nine newspapers, has found Tasmania is the only state likely to end up with a majority support for the Voice. Why do you think that the No campaign has apparently been less successful in Tasmania in comparison to other states?

PETER DUTTON:

Well, I'd wait to see the results out of Tasmania after Saturday. I'd be very surprised if Tassie has a different view than most of the other states. We'll wait to see what the results have to say, but I think as the pollsters have pointed out, they're fairly small sample sizes in Tasmania and I think Tasmanians are right to ask: 'is this thing going to provide the practical outcomes that we want for Indigenous communities?'. The answer to that is 'no'.

They don't want a great big new bureaucracy in Canberra, which is exactly what you get under the Canberra based Voice. It's divisive, it's dividing Australians when we really should be trying to pull together as a country.

We live in a very uncertain time at the moment, a lot of families are going through a lot of pressure and stresses in their own budgets, and that's why this \$400 million that's being spent – and the Prime Minister turns around and says, 'well, you know, it doesn't matter whether the Voice gets up or not, at least people now understand that there's disadvantage in Indigenous communities – well, if the Prime Minister didn't understand there was disadvantage in Indigenous communities before spending \$400 million, then I mean I just don't know what he's been doing.

QUESTION:

Considering there is obviously two sides to this, do you think the Voice has been politicised? Why or why not?

PETER DUTTON:

Well, I think Australians are concentrating now on whether this is going to provide practical

outcomes to Indigenous Australians. There's no evidence of that. It is a very broad set of words open to interpretation by the High Court. There's no limiting around the words to have it only applied to Indigenous health or Indigenous education or jobs, etc. It means that the Voice has a say on every aspect of government consideration and I think Australians aren't silly, they're not going to vote for something on the vibe as significant as what's being proposed here. This is the biggest change to our Constitution.

Our Party wants practical outcomes, improvements for Indigenous people on the ground, but we don't want to put at risk what is a system the envy of the world. When the founding fathers put the Constitution together, they had the double majority test in place because they were saying to a subsequent generations, to our generation, 'don't change the Constitution, our nation's rulebook, which has been the underpinning of success in our community and in our country, don't change it without good reason'. And the Prime Minister just hasn't made that case out.

QUESTION:

And I've just got one about our state Parliament. I guess, how much faith do you have in Jeremy Rockliff and the only Liberal Government that's left?

PETER DUTTON:

I have total faith. I've been visiting Tassie for probably about 50 years – 40 years – I'm 52 this year. So I first came Tassie when I was about 12 or 14 and I've seen Tasmania go through some pretty dark days under Labor Governments because they can't manage the economy and the economy under the Liberal Government here in Tasmania at the moment is as strong as it's ever been, and if you're going through an uncertain economic period, you don't want Labor in charge because they can't make the decisions that will keep people in jobs, they can't make the decisions that will help families and small businesses, they can't make the decisions that will allow businesses to invest and grow and be a multiplier in the economy.

Labor's always out to please the union bosses and that's why I've been very clear to Australians, and I think Australians understand this. If you're living in a regional area, or if you're living in an outer metropolitan area, the new Labor Party is not for you, it's for inner city trendies and supporters of the Green movement.

The Liberal Party, the Coalition, is today's Party for the worker, for young families, for older Australians who have worked hard and just want to provide a good retirement for themselves. That's the modern Liberal Party that I lead and I'm very proud to be here with Gavin Pearce today and I always enjoy coming back to Tasmania. So, thank you very much to our hosts here today.

Thank you.

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