



National security statement; Martin Place Siege Report.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

PM, good morning to you.

PRIME MINISTER:

Morning, Karl.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

It's a good a morning for you. According to the polls you have still got a pulse.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, Karl, look I am here and I am getting on with government because that is what the people of Australia expect. As I announced yesterday we do have a very serious terror threat in this country but the Government will appoint a new counter terrorism coordinator, we will strip dual citizens of their Australian citizenship if they are engaging in terrorist activities and we are going to strengthen our prohibition on racial and religious vilification. We will keep this country safe, we will stand up for Australian values because that is what the public expects of us.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

I am going to get on to terrorism measures in just a minute but it must feel good to be alive this morning?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, look, Karl, you know what it's like to be young and vigorous and at the height of your powers. That is exactly how I feel.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

Do you?

PRIME MINISTER:

There are some mornings we don't feel like that but that is certainly how I feel this morning.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

Alright, so you have got a new lease on life. The problem is, the perception is, Prime Minister, that you might have stopped the boats but you can't stop a leak.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, I am focussed on government. I know there are always some people in this business of politics who would rather pursue their own ambitions than the national interest but I am absolutely focussed on getting on with government. Last week I got to ten marginal electorates right around the country. I assured the people in those electorates that we'd put the excitement of the previous week behind us and that we were focussed on the people of Australian and doing the right thing by them and you know, there was spontaneous applause every time I offered that observation.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

Just not from within your own Party, it seems. Every time you try to get out there and do that there are problems. Fairfax reports this morning seven Ministers have agreed to speak to Fairfax on the basis they not be named – that's courageous I am sure you'll agree – are now keeping a watching brief on your leadership with some volunteering they would not vote for you again in the event of another spill. You must have done something really bad to tick these people off so bad.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, Karl, there is a sense in which Prime Ministers are always on probation. There is a sense in which every day you have got to perform. It is true of you, it's true of me, it's true of most of us and that is what I believe this Government is doing. Every day we are performing; just a few days ago we lowered the screening threshold on foreign purchases of agricultural land, we changed the deeming rules last week to put more money in the pockets of part-pensioners, we announced a major new irrigation project in Tasmania, we are getting on with the job of building the new generation of submarines, there was an asset recycling initiative in Canberra because the Labor Government in Canberra is actually privatising some assets and of course yesterday we had our major national security statement. So, every day this Government is getting on with the job and that is my absolute exclusive focus – as you would expect it to be.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

And at every turn someone inside your own Party is bagging the hell out of you.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, sooner or later people will get sick of the internals and I think your listeners Karl, to be honest with you, are probably sick of the internals...

KARL STEFANOVIC:

No, I agree.

PRIME MINISTER:

They want you to be talking to me about what the Government is doing to keep people safe and every day what I am doing is building a stronger economy, a safer Australia. I want people's jobs to be more secure, I want their businesses to be more successful, I want people to find the things they need more affordable. I want young people to be able to look forward to buying a home. I want all of us to be able to leave a better Australia to our children and grandchildren.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

And I agree that I am sure the Australian public want to see the Party they elected into government getting on with government but there are things that pop up this morning. Peta Credlin – is she safe this morning despite the concerns and threats of resignation from your Party's honorary treasurer Philip Higginson? Is she safe?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, I stand by my team, I stand by my Cabinet colleagues, my Parliamentary colleagues, I stand by my staff. I certainly have full confidence in the Party's President, the Party's Federal Director and look I am aware of that particular storm in a tea cup but the Treasurer signed off on the Party accounts so I am not quite sure what the fuss is over.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

Will you accept his resignation then?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, that is his business. If he wants to resign that is a matter for him.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

On national security Peter Hartcher writes this morning if we withdraw the benefit of the doubt we see a failing leader merely posturing on national security in a sad effort to hold his job. Are you putting your own job security before national security?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, that's a pretty rough thing for someone to say about a Government and a Prime Minister which has consistently demonstrated a total concern for the safety of the Australian people. Long before the attacks on the Canadian Parliament, in response to intelligence that we had received we upgraded security here at the national Parliament, obviously the frenzied attack on policemen in Victoria last September, the Martin Place siege just before Christmas, the foiled attack about ten days ago which was imminent all demonstrates that the terror threat in this country is real. We have got well over a hundred Australians fighting with the death cult in the Middle East. The death cult in the Middle East is constantly exhorting those who are susceptible to its evil lure to go out and kill people. I mean this is the modern reality and this idea that government should sit on its hands in the face of this is just contemptible.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

Ok, how would your new national security measures have stopped Man Monis?

PRIME MINISTER:

Obviously, we are going to be much more rigorous in our checking of people who are applying for visas and who are applying for permanent residency and citizenship. This contemptible individual, this person who became a monster, he lied all the way through in his applications to come to Australia and I believe that...

KARL STEFANOVIC:

He was already here though.

PRIME MINISTER:

He lied in his applications to come to Australia and if people engage in that sort of deliberate deception already under rules this Government has previously put in place there is a presumption against giving people like that the access to Australia they want.

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KARL STEFANOVIC:

Hard if they are already here.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes, but it is one thing to have them here, it is another thing to grant them the privileges of permanent residency and citizenship.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

I think this is the problem that I have found difficult to reconcile over the last couple of days and I think that our security organisations do an amazing job. The problem is in relation to Man Monis, the number of people who reached out and made calls to the national security hotline. There were 18 calls in all leading up to the Lindt Café siege – nothing was done. A number of people said, hang on a second, this guy is a nutter, have a look what he is putting on his Facebook page and the images that he is putting on these pages and how he is conducting himself – nothing was done. How then can people in our community then have faith in that system? When they put their hand up, courageously in some cases, and say let's get this guy. Nothing is done.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, I accept that that is of great concern. I accept that, Karl. All of those calls to the national security hotline were taken seriously. All of the information provided was analysed. The conclusion that was come to, erroneously as it turns out, is that he was not a threat to himself or the wider community. Obviously, that was a misjudgement but the point I make is that as far as I am concerned, as far as everyone in this Government is concerned, we will not rest until we have done everything we humanly can to keep our community safe. We have demonstrated on a whole host of issues that we have the will power to do the right thing by the people of Australia.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

One final question before we move on. Why did you specify that Muslim leaders have to speak out against extremism when almost all Imams say they are doing that in their mosques everyday – day in day out? Don't you run the risk of offending and alienating them?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, it is true, Karl, that many of them – many more than before – are speaking out and speaking out strongly. I am thrilled to see what is happening but I am making the point that if you are here in Australia you have got to be part of our team, you have got to take the pledges that you make in those citizenship ceremonies seriously. It is not enough to say the right thing, you have got to mean the right thing and sometimes government has got to enforce doing the

right thing.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

What you are saying is that part of the Muslim community are not doing that?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, when we see organisations saying death to those who insult the prophet. When we see the kind of anti-Jewish statements that we get from time to time I think it is important that we indicate; as a government, as a community, as a legal system that there is no place for inciting racial and religious vilification in our society.

KARL STEFANOVIC:

Prime Minister, national security is of the utmost importance and I know you take it very seriously. We appreciate your time today. Thank you.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thank you, Karl.

