The Hon. Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Sport

TRANSCRIPT

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DOORSTOP
SEAFORD, VICTORIA

E&OE...

Topics: Launch of Surf Life Saving Australia’s 2017 National Coastal Safety Report; Bennelong; Kristina Keneally; NSW hospital funding; Sam Dastyari;

GREG HUNT:
Life savers save lives. Over 10,000 drownings were potentially prevented last year by the actions of our life savers, but we can do more.

The National Coastal Safety Report tells us that we lost 116 people around these beautiful coasts across Australia last year. Most of those were not actually just swimming or wading. Most of them were out on the water.

They were on jet skis, boats, they were kayaking, they were involved in rock fishing. What that means is wear a life jacket, secondly, swim between the flags, and thirdly, watch your children and teach them to swim.

They’re the key messages, wear a life jacket, swim between the flags, watch your children and teach them to swim.

Having said that, we want to do something more. We want to put Life Saving Australia on long-term contracts, going from one and two years to five years.

We want to ensure that our work with Royal Life Saving is longer term, and our $15 million is something that I want to build on and invest upon.

At the end of the day, the fact that we have saved 10,000 people who could otherwise have been lost, the fact that drownings are down this year, that’s fantastic news, but 116 lives is 116 too many.

Alright. So, happy to take any questions on the report and then other matters.

JOURNALIST:
It was down on last year, but it’s still the third worst year in the last few years. I mean, what’s that down to and what can be done? I mean, is it just a matter of more money?

GREG HUNT:
I think there are a number of things. One is education. Getting people to swim between the flags and wear the life jackets is absolutely critical.
Two, we are going to be investing more, and as we respond to the National Water Safety Review, which we asked for the very specific reason that we want to do better. The only possible, acceptable outcome is zero preventable deaths.

That’s the only target. There are no acceptable outcomes for road safety deaths and there are no acceptable outcomes for preventable drownings. So, they’re our actions. Graham, are there particular reasons that you describe for the reduction in drownings?

**GRAHAM FORD:**
Yes, Minister. I think one of the things that we have done is our preventative actions have increased, and they’re those interventions that we’re doing on the front line.

We’re actually stopping people from going into the water in dangerous situations, and we’re doing that, and our focus has been not only on education, but to get directly onto frontline services and actually intervene and stop people from getting themselves into difficulties.

**GREG HUNT:**
And Chris, did you want to say something about Seaford?

**CHRIS CREWThER:**
I think that Seaford Life Saving Club is an example of 44 patrolling, but also I think it’s over 180 members, who are actively involved in our community to prevent drownings at sea. They go out on a daily basis, they volunteer.

They do so well here in Seaford to help people, particularly over the summer period, in terms of teaching water safety, ensuring that we’re not having drownings at sea and so forth.

So, it’s a terrific job that the Life Saving Club do, and all the little young Nippers as well who are coming up through the system to protect people into the future. So, thank you to the Seaford Life Saving Club.

**GREG HUNT:**
Alright, happy to answer questions on anything else.

**JOURNALIST:**
Minister, the Australian Medical Association says the low kidney transplant rates for Indigenous Australians are likely to be driven by racism. Has the Federal Government failed in this area?

**GREG HUNT:**
Well, every Australian must have equal access to medical services, whether it’s kidney transplants, whether it’s other forms of organ transplants, whether it’s access to hospital or other elements.

We know that our Indigenous health outcomes are not as good as the rest of the country. On my watch, in my time, I’m committed to making that change.

**JOURNALIST:**
What will you do though? Because, I mean, the statistics show that they’re not getting the equal access.

**GREG HUNT:**
These processes are carried out through the state hospitals and the state systems and the state registers, but I will be writing to each and every state and territory minister, urging them to take steps to ensure that the number one thing that can occur and must occur is that all Indigenous patients who are likely to require transplants are included on the register.
Getting them on the register is the absolutely critical thing, and if they’re on the register, then they get equal treatment, but at the moment, too many Indigenous Australians are not being registered for the transplant process.

I will be writing to each state and territory health minister, and to the chief ministers, urging them to take immediate actions. But on my watch, in my time, I’m committed to making this change.

**JOURNALIST:**
We’re a few days out from a result in Bennelong. Are you worried that you might lose the seat to Kristina Keneally?

**GREG HUNT:**
What we are focused on, on Bennelong, and that’s for a very simple reason, John Alexander is an Australian champion and he has fought for the people of Bennelong, and he’s fought for Australia.

Kristina Keneally is part of a very unhappy family, Obeid, Tripodi, Keneally, Shorten, Dastyari. These people make the Addams Family look like the Waltons.

**JOURNALIST:**
Kristina Keneally says New South Wales hospitals are facing a $630 million cut over the next four years. How do you justify that?

**GREG HUNT:**
Well, it’s false. It’s utterly false. New South Wales hospital funding has gone from $4.4 billion when we came in, to $6 billion now, to $7 billion by the end of the current budget period.

She has been caught flat, red-handed lying in just the same way as she did about her own alleged Medicare wait.

The figures showed not one person, not one person, waited for the hour she claimed she had to wait. She was caught red-handed there, and now we see $4.4 billion to $6 billion up to $7 billion hospital funding in New South Wales from the Commonwealth going up each and every year.

**JOURNALIST:**
Do you think it was a bit embarrassing, Malcolm Turnbull getting caught out saying her first pick for Cabinet was Eddie Obeid, even though he wasn’t even close, it was six years before that?

**GREG HUNT:**
Obeid selected Keneally, Keneally selected Macdonald. Obeid was utterly linked to that Cabinet, and as I say, look at the names: Obeid, Tripodi, Keneally, Shorten, Dastyari.

They’re all linked, and everything the Labor Party’s trying to do at the moment is hide from the fact that Senator Dastyari is still in the Labor Party and he’s still in the Senate, despite acknowledging that his behaviour in interfering with a security operation, to the benefit of somebody who was not supporting Australian actions, was utterly reprehensible, indefensible and has caused him to tender his resignation, but just not yet.

**JOURNALIST:**
It seems like there’s been quite a backlash from China to the Sam Dastyari situation, and our ambassador got called in to meet with officials to discuss this anti-China rhetoric that people are upset about.

Do you think the Government should have handled this better, that we shouldn’t have had so much of this language around China being so- they’ve taken it quite personally. We don’t trust the Chinese.
GREG HUNT:
We stand up for Australia, and we will always stand up for Australia. Senator Dastyari did not stand up for Australia, and he should stand down from the Senate now.

JOURNALIST:
Do you think country Liberals are given a raw deal on the Government’s frontbench because the Nationals are handed the positions instead?

GREG HUNT:
Look, matters of the membership of the Cabinet and the Ministry are a matter for Parliament, but we’ve got magnificent people such as Dan Tehan, who’s doing an extraordinary job.

I also represent an area which is a regional area, in terms of the Mornington Peninsula and Bass Coast. We have many, many people who represent the interests of regional Australia, and I’m passionate about it, Dan’s passionate about it, and so many others are passionate about regional Australia. Thank you.

(ENDS)