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Sky News Sunday Agenda, Interview with Peter Van Onselen and Paul Kelly

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PETER VAN ONSELEN: And, as we've mentioned, foreign policy issues have been big on the agenda this week, for a host of reasons. We're joined now live in the studio by the Deputy Liberal Leader, and of course the Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, thanks very much for your company.

JULIE BISHOP: Good morning, Peter. Good morning, Paul.

PETER VAN ONSELEN: There's a lot to talk about in terms of the Chinese Premier's visit, but can we start with what occurred in London? You were at high level talks overseas at the time about ISIS and terrorism. Tell us about when you heard about what had happened and the reaction, I suppose, of some of the leadership group there as well.

JULIE BISHOP: Indeed. I was in Washington at a meeting of the coalition of countries that had been called together by the United States. It was hosted by the new US Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson. It's the counter-ISIS group that was first formed after the declaration of the Caliphate by ISIS back in July of 2014. This coalition now numbers 68 countries. Then there's a smaller coalition group of about 25, and Australia is a member of both.

The 25 countries are those making the largest contribution to the campaign against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, so I attended both meetings. At the larger group meeting, the moderator was calling on various foreign ministers to make a contribution. She called on me first, and I was speaking, and at that time, Boris Johnson, the United Kingdom Foreign Secretary, left his seat and moved out of the room. I didn't notice it at the time, but the moderator went to call on Boris Johnson next, and he wasn't at his seat. And some thought, oh typical Boris, he's wandered off somewhere, but in fact he had just received the news. And at that moment, people started looking at their smart phones and realising that something had happened in London.

So the story then unfolded. Boris came back to the table and addressed all members of the coalition, all the foreign ministers who were there, about the unfolding events in London. He was visibly shaken. He's a former Mayor of London, he knows and loves that city, and so he was talking about the fact that the police had at that stage, killed the attacker. They assumed there was only one attacker, but it wasn't clear, and that the House of Commons had been shut down. So it was a fast-moving situation. He kept us updated during the day, and I spoke to him about it. He was still very deeply concerned and said that a number of people had been killed and many more injured.

But it's this idea that an individual can take a vehicle and use it as a weapon to kill innocent people, to kill civilians, that is so deeply troubling, and well you can track terrorist gangs. You can use all sorts of means to monitor people and have them under surveillance. If someone is self-radicalised and acts alone and uses – in this instance – a motor vehicle to mow people down in a public place like Westminster Bridge, it is nigh on impossible for intelligence and security and law enforcement agencies to detect that in advance.

PAUL KELLY: Minister, what was the take out from the meeting you attended? And in particular, to what extent and how serious do you think the Trump Administration is in intensifying the military campaign against ISIS?

JULIE BISHOP: The importance of this meeting was – it was the first meeting that the Trump Administration had called. It reaffirmed the objectives of the Counter ISIS Coalition that had been set up under the Obama Administration. And the objectives are; to defeat ISIS, inflict serious damage on ISIS; to take back the territory, the so-called Caliphate that ISIS had declared in both Iraq and Syria; to address the humanitarian crisis, particularly in Syria; to find a political solution in Syria to end the civil war that is raging, beyond the attacks from ISIS, and to provide support for the Iraqi Government, so that it can embrace political reconciliation. And then finally to prevent ISIS having the capacity and capability of carrying out attacks elsewhere, or inspiring others to carry out attacks elsewhere. And I was of course particularly interested in what's going on in our part of the world in Southeast Asia.

PAUL KELLY: But what was the message from the Trump Administration? Are they prepared to do more in terms of this campaign against ISIS?

JULIE BISHOP: Yes. The message from the Trump Administration via Secretary Tillerson and their Secretary of Defence General Mattis, was that the Trump Administration are committed to the campaign against ISIS; that they have embraced the objectives of the coalition to defeat ISIS and that they would commit more militarily, in order to do so. And the focus will be on Syria. The campaign in Iraq is a little clearer, there's more clarity to it. The Iraqi Government is in control of the country, except for the territory around Mosul, the city of Mosul that has been taken by ISIS. They have troops now – security forces and police – taking back Mosul. They're confident that that will happen in coming weeks.

Australia has contributed significantly. We have trained almost 20,000 of the Iraqi security forces who are now in this operation of retaking Mosul. So the Iraqi Government are confident that they'll be able to do that and drive ISIS out of the country. The challenge for us is, where do they go? Where do they reappear? The United States is then turning to Syria, where a similar operation will take place to retake Raqqa, the city, the province, that has been taken by ISIS.

And this is where it becomes really complex and strategically very difficult, because the United States, with backing of the Kurds, is prepared to retake Raqqa, and with other opposition forces. That is opposition to the Assad Regime. Russia and Iran, who are not represented at this coalition meeting, may well have a different agenda as to how to retake Raqqa. So there still needs to be a lot of strategic discussions between the United States on one side, and Russia-Iran on the other, and then there's the Assad Regime that is still in control in Syria.

PAUL KELLY: Just on this point. While we've done a lot – as you've just pointed out – do you think there's much possibility that Australia in fact might be asked to do more, to contribute more?

JULIE BISHOP: Well we were not asked, and if we were, we would of course consider it. But Australia is already one of largest contributors to this effort. We have about 1000 military personnel in the theatre. They are taking part in air strikes, in fact Australia has taken part in about 2000 sorties over Syria. We have people on the ground training the Iraqi security forces that are based Iraq. They're training, assisting, advising. And the security forces that we've trained are currently in operations undertaking the campaign in

Now that is a significant contribution. The United States ...

PETER VAN ONSELEN: [Interrupts] Can I ask on that ...

JULIE BISHOP: Yes, I'll just say the United States is directing their pleas to other nations who are directly beneficiaries of the campaign against ISIS – that is in the Middle East and the Gulf countries.

PETER VAN ONSELEN: And would you describe the US commitment to dismantling, taking down ISIS, as have been re-energised or increased with the change of administration?

JULIE BISHOP: It is clearly a high priority, and President Trump has made it clear, and this was reiterated by Secretary of State Tillerson, and Secretary of Defence Mattis, that it is a priority, a high priority for this administration to defeat ISIS, and they're putting more energy and more resources into that effort.

PAUL KELLY: Now you've recently been travelling in Southeast Asia and of course one of the issues is, what happens to these foreign fighters when they leave the Middle East. But there are quite worrying signs in a number of Southeast Asian countries. So to what extent are you concerned that these problems of Islamist terrorism will intensify in Southeast Asia, closer to home? In particular, what's your view of the situation in the Southern Philippines and in countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia?

JULIE BISHOP: One of my messages at this Coalition to defeat ISIS, was to point out that as more pressure goes on ISIS in the Middle East and the more successful they are in driving ISIS out of the Middle East, the more likely it is that the returning foreign terrorist fighters will come back to our part of the world. There are estimates of at least 600 foreign terrorist fighters from Southeast Asia in Iraq and Syria at present. It could well be higher, and if they are able to survive the campaign against them in Iraq and Syria, they may well seek to come home. That's why we've been working so closely and coordinating our efforts with Indonesia in particular, but also increasingly with Malaysia and the Philippines, because that's where a number of these fighters are from.

And it was a message that resonated in the meeting in Washington, and it is part of the whole consideration about defeating ISIS. We don't want to see it re-emerge elsewhere in the world. Otherwise we'll be back in a few years' time, talking about how to defeat a Caliphate in the Southern Philippines for example.

Now I was in the Philippines recently, I met with President Duterte. We spoke about the re-emergence of some of these terrorist networks, particularly in Southern Philippines. There's one, the Abu Sayyaf group, a particularly dangerous terrorist group. Their leader Hapilon has recently been declared an Amir by ISIS in the Middle East, an Amir, a leader, in the Southern Philippines. So there is concern that ISIS may well seek to declare a Caliphate, an Islamic Caliphate in the Southern Philippines.

This brings the threat right to our doorstep, and that's why we've been ensuring that our security and law enforcement and intelligence agencies have the resources they need. We're cooperating so closely with these other countries, to stamp this terrorist threat out in our region.

PAUL KELLY: How did your meeting go with the Philippines President, and did you express any concern at all about his domestic tactics that is solving his problems by shooting people?

JULIE BISHOP: We certainly did discuss that. In fact it was a very long meeting, probably about three quarters of an hour, 50 minutes. About 30 minutes was spent on his local war against drugs, as he calls it, and of course I expressed the concerns of Australia and other countries.

PETER VAN ONSELEN: What was his reaction to that?

JULIE BISHOP: He explained in considerable detail, what he sees as the biggest issue facing the Philippines, and that is the addiction, particularly ice, methamphetamines, by, in particular, young people. He estimated that there are about four million Filipinos who are addicted to ice, and he is intent on wiping out the drug lords. These are his words, wiping out the drug lords, and all those in the supply chain, to protect the Philippines people.

He is unapologetic. He is determined to rid the Philippines of ice. And he will stop at nothing to go after the cartels, the drug lords and the importation in particular, of this drug.

PETER VAN ONSELEN: We're talking to the Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop. We're going to take a quick break. When we come back, we're going to move onto the visit to Australia by the Chinese Premier.

[ADVERTISEMENT BREAK]

PETER VAN ONSELEN: Welcome back, you're watching Sunday Agenda. A reminder: former New Zealand Prime Minister John Key coming up later. At the moment, we're talking to the Deputy Liberal Leader and Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop. Let me ask you about the Chinese Premier's visit. How realistic is it, or how feasible is it that Australia can maintain the trade links that we need with China whilst maintaining our relationship with the US, without, if you like, hot moments getting in the road?

JULIE BISHOP: We've been doing this for some time and I believe we're doing it very successfully. And other countries are in the same position whereby the United States is their major strategic and defence ally, and China is their major trading partner. And the visit of Premier Li has been exceedingly successful. I met with the Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, yesterday on my return from Washington. And from the Chinese side they're very pleased that we were able to enhance the free trade agreement between Australia and China that we signed a few years ago. That's already bringing great benefits to exporters from Australia and from China. In particular, the Prime Minister was able to announce greater access for chilled and frozen beef, so our beef producers will be happy with having greater access into that Chinese market. So the free trade agreement is working exceedingly well. We have what's called a comprehensive strategic partnership with China, that's one of the highest level engagements that you can have between two countries.

So that's working very successfully on one hand, and on the other hand we're working very closely with the new Trump administration to ensure that the United States remains engaged in our part of the world; that the United States continues to provide the security and defence guarantee that they have since the end of the Second World War to maintain peace, stability and security in our region. And I think countries in our region recognise that their peace and their prosperity has come about because of that leadership shown by the United States, but they're very happy to work with China as well.

PETER VAN ONSELEN: Is it a tougher balancing act, do you think, with the Trump administration than previous administrations? His rhetoric has been so strong.

JULIE BISHOP: In the beginning, after the inauguration, there was some uncertainty as to the foreign policy direction of the Trump administration, but since then, Secretary Mattis and Secretary Tillerson, and others, have visited the region. In fact Rex

Tillerson visited Beijing recently and it was considered to be a very successful, positive, productive trip. I spoke to Secretary Tillerson about it in Washington, and he was very pleased with the level of engagement they had with the Chinese, and the indication is that they can work together. And that's the impression that I got from Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday, that they were pleased with the visit from the United States, that it's off on the right footing, and that they will be able to work well together. They both recognise what's at stake. They both recognise that for the region to remain peaceful and stable and prosperous, in relative terms, then the United States and China must cooperate and work together.

PAUL KELLY: Now what's your view about the argument that's been put very strongly in this country since the Trump Presidency, that Australia should reassess our alliance with the United States and that we should rebalance, put a bit more distance between ourselves and America and get closer to China? This is a view put by a number of former Australian politicians from Bob Carr to Paul Keating. Do you think we should reassess the alliance along those lines?

JULIE BISHOP: I believe that we have the balance about right and we are committed to the US alliance, and any sensible commentator would understand that the US alliance is the cornerstone of our strategic and defence capability that we work very closely with the United States, we are very much the beneficiary of it. It includes our intelligence cooperation, we are one of the Five Eyes; that means we're one of the five countries that shares intelligence – well, four other countries – shares intelligence with the United States. That is undoubtedly to our benefit, and has been in our counter-terrorism work and the work we're doing in the Middle East, and so the defence relationship with the United States is absolutely essential. It's an indispensable part of our defence and security policy.

But we also are capable of conducting a very positive relationship with China, and we do. I'll be seeing Premier Li after I finish this show. We get along very well with the leadership. Malcolm Turnbull, as Prime Minister, has made it his priority to have good relationships at a personal level with the Chinese leadership, and that counts for a lot, and so I believe that we are getting the balance right. Of course there will be challenges along the way as an emerging and rising power like China finds its place in the region, finds its place in the world. It will come up against the United States and others from time to time, but Australia has always been very pragmatic. We're consistent and we can balance these relationships.

PAUL KELLY: Well just on this point; do you feel that we're under pressure from China? I mean, the Premier has made a number of comments in the last few days about warning Australia not to take sides. So to what extent are we actually under some pressure from the Chinese?

JULIE BISHOP: I think you have to put that in context. When Foreign Minister Wang Yi was here in February, we took part in a very long press conference, and at that time he said, publically, we're not asking Australia to choose. Australia has an alliance with the United States, and it has a strong, comprehensive strategic partnership with China. We're not asking Australia to choose. So that was the position put by the Chinese Foreign Minister. In areas where there is potential conflict, the Chinese are asking us not to take sides. The South China Sea: we are not a claimant over any of the disputed territories or disputed features in the South China Sea, and we have consistently said we are not taking sides. We want the claimants to work out negotiations amongst themselves and, if necessary, to resort to an international tribunal or courts. So Australia has been consistent in saying, in relation to the South China Sea, all parties should de-escalate tensions, all parties should act in accordance with the rules based international order, and that's not taking sides. That's stating our values, our interests.

PAUL KELLY: Just on this point, the Premier also said that China wasn't engaged in military activity on these islands. Now, doesn't that contradict our own view based on intelligence about what's going on on these islands in the South China Sea?

JULIE BISHOP: There's certainly a view in the region, and I've visited Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines recently, and the met with Foreign Minister Wang Yi, there is certainly a view in the region that China is placing military assets on these disputed features. The Chinese say if they are doing that, then they're doing it in self defence. The question is...

PAUL KELLY: [Interrupts] Well, that's their standard defence, isn't it?

JULIE BISHOP: Defence against whom?

PAUL KELLY: Well, I mean, precisely. I mean, that's their standard defence.

JULIE BISHOP: So our position is that we urge claimants not to reclaim land, not to militarise, not to escalate tensions. And the ASEAN countries, the 10 countries of South East Asia, are currently in negotiations with China over a code of conduct that is to determine the behaviours of the various claimants in the South China Sea, and we encourage ASEAN and the Philippines are the Chair of ASEAN, the grouping this year. We encourage them to conclude that code of conduct as soon as possible.

PETER VAN ONSELEN: But isn't the concern that China are just going to run roughshod over the other countries in the region? They've essentially, by the looks of it, certainly from what I've read, been appearing to do that so far with that militarisation that's occurred. And that's only going to increase isn't it, the more dominant, powerful, larger they become on the international scale?

JULIE BISHOP: Which is why countries such as the United States, Australia, Japan and others, and the ASEAN countries, call for calm, call for a de-escalation of tensions, call for an end to land reclamation and any militarisation, and we'll continue to do that. We've been saying it consistently and we will continue to maintain that position because we believe that that's how you can maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea. And we have an interest because the vast bulk of our trade to our export destinations, in East Asia in particular, passes through the South China Sea. So we assert our right to freedom of overflight and freedom of navigation in accordance with international laws through the South China Sea.

PAUL KELLY: Now, in your recent Singapore speech you gave a little lecture to the Chinese, warning them that if nations wanted to get to the stage of true prosperity then they had to make the transition to democracy. You're being criticised for those comments by a number of academics in this countries. Has there been any kick-back from China?

JULIE BISHOP: Well, I made the self-evident point that history shows for countries to reach high income, advanced economic status, they embrace democratic institutions and principles, with the exception of a few very rich, oil rich, Middle Eastern monarchies. And other than that, history has shown that the way to become a high income, advanced economy, is also to embrace democratic principles. I wasn't lecturing anyone, that's not my style.

PETER VAN ONSELEN: Do you think that there's an inevitability though, I mean that the day of reckoning has to come in a country like China with a rising middle class, that democratisation will inevitably take hold? They either embrace it, or it embraces them?

JULIE BISHOP: This is the experience in other countries, and I was merely pointing out what history has shown. And these are conversations I have with my Chinese counterparts all the time. It's not an unusual proposition to put forward given that history backs it. So we have a very good relationship with China, they have their own model of governance, of a political system. Our focus is very much on a trading relationship, and as Premier Li's visit has indicated, our trade and investment relationship could not be stronger and we are now much more engaged at a strategic level and we're now in areas of dialogue like in energy, in security, in innovation. So it's a very sophisticated and diverse engagement that Australia has with China.

PAUL KELLY: Now in the Singapore speech you also said- you also called the United States the indispensable strategic power in this part of the world. To what extent do you think that's the view of the region? To what extent do you think that's the view in East Asia and South East Asia?

JULIE BISHOP: Most certainly the countries that I've visited – and I've also been recently to South Korea and Japan – want to see more US engagement and leadership in the region. They were concerned. They were in a bit of a holding pattern over the new Administration in the lead-up to the inauguration, but the recent visits from senior Cabinet Ministers from the Trump Administration has, I think, calmed their concerns and they are reassured that the United States will continue to provide the security and the defence and the stability that has allowed them to prosper since the Second World War. So I didn't get any sense that people want the United States to leave. They certainly want China and the United States to have a strong, engaged relationship, there's no doubt about that, but they see the United States as very much a part of the security and defence apparatus in South and East Asia.

PAUL KELLY: Now while President Trump sends different signals on virtually every issue, including his foreign policy towards Asia, you've had the chance of meeting the three other key figures in the Administration: the Vice President, the Secretary of State, and the Defence Secretary. What's your take on these three individuals in terms of their outlook and their view about the region?

JULIE BISHOP: They are very impressive appointments, I think. Secretary Tillerson, coming from a global business background provides a very measured, reassuring approach. He has met Kings and Presidents and Prime Ministers from all over the world in his capacity as the Chair of ExxonMobil, so anywhere that Exxon's had a project or a proposed project, he's been there and discussed international affairs. He brings a very pragmatic approach to matters, but his visits to Japan, South Korea and China were well-received. Secretary Mattis is clearly a very strong personality and a clear, strategic thinker, and has already made a big impression as their Defense Secretary. Vice President Pence is a measured, humble, very likeable person, but very strong in his self-confidence about his position as Vice President, and he likewise is going to be, I think, a very important player in the Trump administration. I invited him to come to Australia, I understand he's on his way; he's going to visit Japan, Indonesia and other countries. This is very early in a Vice President's time to be visiting our part of the world, and I'm delighted that [inaudible]...

PAUL KELLY: [Talks over] Well all that's great news, I mean...

JULIE BISHOP: ... showing their commitment to our part of the world.

PAUL KELLY: Okay. I mean, all that's great news, but when is President Trump going to meet Prime Minister Turnbull?

JULIE BISHOP: Well clearly that will come at a time when either the Prime Minister is in the United States or President Trump comes to Australia. Now, I'm not in charge of either of their schedules, but there will come a time of course where they will meet. With the Vice President coming out so early in the Trump administration, it's a very positive sign about the focus that they place on Australia and the reliance we have on [inaudible] ...

PAUL KELLY: [Talks over] Yes, okay, let's just stay, let's just keep with President Trump and Prime Minister Turnbull. We know they had an ugly phone exchange. We know that.

JULIE BISHOP: Well, that's your description. That's not the way the Americans describe it. That's not the way the Vice President or others describe it. I think it's a recognition that we have two very strong minded leaders in President Trump and also Prime Minister Turnbull.

PAUL KELLY: Well do you think they can get on or is there some bad blood there?

JULIE BISHOP: No, of course they'll get along, and it's early days. They've been in administration for a matter of weeks and of course there will be a visit from either the Prime Minister to the United States or the US President to Australia. But at this stage we're looking forward to Vice President Pence's visit, and I know that the President and Prime Minister Turnbull, as previous Prime Ministers and Presidents have always done, will put our respective national interests first, and that includes a commitment to the US strategic alliance.

PAUL KELLY: Now given these recent reports can I ask, as Foreign Minister, have you had much of a dialogue with Senator Brandis about going to London?

JULIE BISHOP: No, I haven't. I haven't had a dialogue with Senator Brandis about going to London.

PAUL KELLY: [Talks over] But you've obviously discussed it with him, have you?

JULIE BISHOP: No, I've read the reports, but I think people who write these articles or their sources don't understand the process of appointments to overseas positions, and they are totally within the discretion of the Prime Minister. If he chooses to exercise that discretion, the Prime Minister would say to me, Foreign Minister I would like to appoint x, y, z to a position, well then of course I'd have my views, but at the end of the day the Prime Minister has the call.

PETER VAN ONSELEN: So you and the Prime Minister must have discussed these appointments that are being referred to in the papers because they're coming up fairly soon.

JULIE BISHOP: We discuss appointments all the time. There are particular appointments that the Prime Minister's interested in, there are others where he will exercise his discretion, there are others that he would leave to me. So it depends on the particular appointment and the particular position because different positions require different skills; there might be cultural sensitivities, there might be personality differences, there might be strategic or trade issues. There are a whole range of considerations that are brought into account.

PAUL KELLY: [Talks over] Anyway, the point you were telling us is you've been involved in no discussions about Senator Brandis.

JULIE BISHOP: I've been involved in discussions about newspaper reports.

PAUL KELLY: Okay. Now, there are also reports that Marise Payne, the Defence Minister, might be posted to the United States, might be posted to New York. What's the drum on that?

JULIE BISHOP: That has never been raised with me. The first time I saw it was in the paper on Saturday. It has never been raised with me by anyone, not the Prime Minister...

PETER VAN ONSELEN: [Interrupts] Did you raise it post- you mentioned though, that you've talked about Senator Brandis in the context of the newspaper reports, have you talked about Senator Payne with the Prime Minister in the context of the newspaper reports?

JULIE BISHOP: I've only just got back from Washington and I've been in meetings with the Foreign Minister of China, I'm about to meet with the Premier. And yes, I speak to the Prime Minister regularly, but about matters of concern. This is not something that

has been raised with me by the Prime Minister, by Senator Payne, by anyone, so I have no idea of the source of that story. I put it down to "fake news".

PAUL KELLY: Okay, well I'd like to ask you about another report that concerns you. It's about your view as Deputy Leader of the Party, and the point was made that your view as Deputy Leader of the Party is that your responsibility is to the Party Room over the actual Leader of the Party. What is your approach as Deputy Leader?

JULIE BISHOP: In the Liberal Party there are two positions that are elected directly by the Party Room: the Leader and the Deputy Leader, and they are separate elections. They are not tied together. One could occur separate to the other. And I have been Deputy Leader now since 2007, and I have been through a number of leadership spills and leadership contests. Sometimes my position is up for election, sometimes it's not. It's just a leadership thing. So they are separate, and I see the Deputy Leader having a responsibility to the Party Room, to be a conduit to the Leader, but also to take account of the Party Room's interests, and that means that I answer to the Party Room because only the Party Room can elect me or not vote for me. So I retain the Deputy Leadership as long as I retain the support and the confidence of the Party Room.

PAUL KELLY: How many more Leaders do you think you'll be Deputy to?

JULIE BISHOP: Well I believe that Malcolm Turnbull will lead us to the next election. I hope to be his Deputy. He's performing strongly as the Prime Minister. He's had a very good couple of weeks as Prime Minister. I think he's an outstanding individual. I'm looking forward to him leading us to the next election and he certainly retains the vast majority support of the Party Room. He certainly has my support.

PETER VAN ONSELEN: Does he have to improve in the polls though? I mean, he's got plenty of time, but it was 30 consecutive Newspolls that he used as an important lever to remove Tony Abbott. It would be fair, wouldn't it, that he'll be judged by the same criteria.

JULIE BISHOP: The Prime Minister is making some tough decisions, but he's getting on with governing. He's tackling issues that have languished for some time and been a real problem for us. He's tackling the issues, he's getting on with it. He's a can-do Prime Minister and he's got a vision for this country. He's got a lot of issues to deal with, but he's performing strongly, and he will retain the support of the vast majority of the Party Room in order to lead us to the next election.

PETER VAN ONSELEN: Just one final question before we let you go, you've been generous with your time Foreign Minister. Can I ask you about Western Australia and what unfolded over there? Obviously it was a disastrous result for the State Liberals. How concerned are Federal Liberals that that is a sentiment for change that isn't just on State issues but could have Federal implications? You've got a lot of MPs, you've been very successful at the Federal level out of WA for a long time.

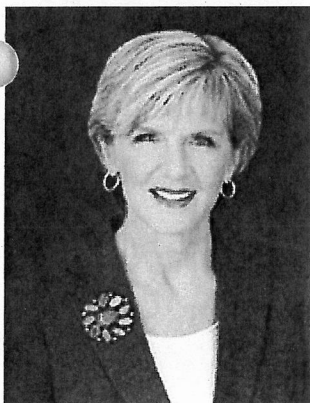
JULIE BISHOP: I have been through elections where the State Liberal Party lost and then, in the same year, the Federal Liberal Party won a Federal election. So I don't read too much into the overlap, unless it's obvious that the State election was fought on Federal issues. In this case, it was a very State-centric election. It was about the leadership, it was about the future of the leadership of the Party, it was about the changing nature of the Western Australian economy, the issue of jobs, the issue of priorities of the State Government versus the Opposition. So it was a very State-centric election, and I believe that with the Federal election several years away, we have every opportunity to encourage the Australian people to see what we're doing; the policies that we're putting in place for economic growth; for job opportunities, particularly for young people; and having a fairer society across this country.

PETER VAN ONSELEN: Julie Bishop, you've been generous with your time, as I mentioned. We appreciate you joining us, thanks for your company.

JULIE BISHOP: My pleasure.

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