

Doorstop at APEC

PRIME MINISTER:

Welcome to Da Nang, and welcome to APEC.

You know, our prosperity is built on two foundations of free trade and open markets, which is what APEC is all about – it is an economic forum. And of course, national security, regional security, which is what the East Asia Summit is all about.

So here in Da Nang we will be talking about trade and opening up greater opportunities for Australian exporters.

Tomorrow, I will be signing a new free trade agreement with Peru, offering enormous, new opportunities for Australian agriculture and of course service exports as well. That's a very big opportunity for a very rapidly growing economy in South America.

And of course we will be seeking to take forward the TPP-11.

If we are able to conclude the Trans-Pacific Partnership with 11 countries, not obviously the United States since the Trump Administration decided to pull out, that would bring together economies with a collective GDP of about \$10 trillion. So that is a huge market.

It is the equivalent of entering into, across the 11 TPP countries, 19 new free trade agreements, offering very substantial new opportunities for Australian exporters, raising the level of market access in agriculture, in all manner of physical goods and of course in an unprecedented way in services.

Free trade means more jobs, more prosperity in Australia. That's why we back it so strongly.

And, of course, from the East Asia Summit point of view, the key focuses in the region are counter-terrorism. Of course, we are meeting in Manila where the government and the Armed Forces of the Philippines, with Australian assistance, has been battling an ISIL insurgency in the southern Philippines.

And then there is the looming challenge from North Korea, and its reckless and dangerous threats of nuclear war.

So there is a lot to talk about. A lot to resolve.

It is vitally important we continue to galvanise a concerted effort behind strong regional security and the free trade and open markets, that that is then enabled by that security to deliver the prosperity that Australians deserve.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, while you will be here to speak trade and security, even in transit here today your office was wrestling to the ground some kind of agreement with Bill Shorten on dual-citizenship. Will you be trying to simultaneously land such an agreement while engaging in these talks here?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, multitasking is the occupational objective of prime ministers.

The position that we presented on Monday was a very reasonable one. One that would enable, set up a process that would enable this issue of citizenship to be resolved. For there to be a full declaration of all the relevant information by members and senators. Some time for the House and the Senate to consider it. And then some time for the House and the Senate to determine which members and senators, if any, should be referred to the High Court.

As you know, we had a meeting with Mr Shorten yesterday. Again, he didn't bring any particular amendments or counter-proposals.

JOURNALIST:

He has now though-

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes, he sent me a letter today and I received that and I responded to it in some detail. And I hope that we can reach an agreement.

But, look, if we can't, we will present our resolution in both the House and the Senate.

The reality is the differences are that we are not that far apart.

The important thing is there is full disclosure and that that is done in a way that enables the House and the Senate to form a judgment as to whether to refer people.

JOURNALIST:

Should you can't reach an agreement with Bill Shorten will you be looking to send his suspicious MPs to the High Court? And if you do that, how will that be different to the witch hunt you talked about two days ago?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, it is very straightforward.

I was disappointed that Mr Shorten asked me to agree not to refer MP's of his to the High Court, even though they were admittedly British citizens at the time they nominated for Parliament. I mean, the Constitution says you should only be an Australian citizen.

So these were not people that didn't know they were British citizens, these were people who knew they were British citizens but hadn't got their

paperwork done in time to cease to be British citizens at the time they nominated.

Now, look, they have got arguments to present when they get to the High Court, as I am sure they all will.

JOURNALIST:

You don't think they've-

PRIME MINISTER:

But, look, let's be clear about this, we referred our own people to the High Court when we had advice that they weren't in breach.

Now, when you've got people that were on their own admission UK citizens at the time they nominated and said that they were in compliance with the Constitution, it really is a bit rich of Mr Shorten to say to me that the government shouldn't vote to refer them.

JOURNALIST:

Do you think he is doing the dodgy?

PRIME MINISTER:

I will be very clear about this – we will vote to refer to the High Court anybody, whether they are on the government side, the Labor side or on the crossbenches, if there are substantial grounds to believe they are not in compliance with the Constitution. To ask me to do anything else is quite unworthy.

And I'm disappointed that he made that request and that he even thought that was a proper thing to do.

The principle that we have to uphold is compliance with the Constitution. The court has delivered a judgment. It is very strict, it is very severe, it is very literal. It wasn't the outcome we sought, as you know, but that's it, they have laid down the law and now our job is to comply with it and that's what I'm committed to ensuring everyone does.

Thanks very much.

[ENDS]