

Interview with Samantha Armytage, Sunrise Channel 7

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

Good morning and welcome. Firstly, on this latest Paris attack, have you heard anything more on this from your advisers?

PRIME MINISTER:

The account you've just had from Keith Suter is the advice I have had from our counter-terrorism coordinator who I spoke to just a moment ago.

Our prayers are with the family of the police officer that has been killed and we pray for a quick recovery for the police officer that has been wounded.

As Keith said it has all of the hallmarks of a terrorist attack, but at this stage the, I am advised that the French prosecutor is on the scene and they'll obviously be making further announcements as they investigate the crime.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

Paris is a big tourist destination – is it safe for Australians to go to France, to Paris at this point?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well they should pay attention, every Australian should pay attention to the travel advisories on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website. They're updated all the time and particularly in, well everywhere, but especially in Europe at the moment, to pay close attention to your surroundings, be alert, but above all follow that travel advisory because it is updated all the time in the light of events.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

Okay, let's move home now. Let's talk about values. The changes to the citizenship test, is this just a political move? Are you just trying to harness supporters of Pauline Hanson? Liberal Party supporters who may have moved to the right?

PRIME MINISTER:

This is all about the very essence of what makes us Australian and, what makes us the most successful multicultural society in the world. We see so much division around the world. So much disharmony, and yet here we are, so diverse, such a success. Why is that? It is because we define our nationhood by common political values. Shared political values. And we should celebrate

it.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

If we are so successful as a multicultural nation, why do we need the changes to the citizenship test?

PRIME MINISTER:

Because we want to reinforce our success. Because we want to ensure that when people apply to be Australian citizens, they speak English. I think that's a pretty good idea.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

Fair enough.

PRIME MINISTER:

That they be a permanent resident for four years and that they share our values and they include freedom, the rule of law, democracy, a commitment to the equality of men and women. Mutual respect. A fair go.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

Yes, fair enough, but some of these new values are illegal in Australia.

PRIME MINISTER:

They are not new values. They are not new values-

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

Singling things out like marrying a child. Hitting a woman. They are actually illegal.

PRIME MINISTER:

Of course they are.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

How will this new citizenship test stop things like that happening in some houses, households in this country?

PRIME MINISTER:

What it will do is bring to the forefront the values that we share and push back against those who reject our values. We believe, and we are proud to believe, and we stand for and our laws stand for the equality of men and women. And we say no to domestic violence. We say no to the disrespect of women. It doesn't always lead to domestic violence, violence against women and children, but believe me, as well know, that is where all violence against women and children begins.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

Where has this new 'Australia first' push come from? Where was this 12 months ago?

PRIME MINISTER:

The values I am talking about, I have been talking about for 20 years. You could go back to when I was chairman of the Republican movement back in the 90s and I used to talk about the Australian values that united us. I've always talked about the fact that unlike many other countries who define themselves by race and ethnic background, by religion, we do not. We are defined by our commitment to the shared political values. I believe in them, and I know Australians do too. Now, why should we be ashamed of what makes us Australian, if we are proud of those values, if we're proud of our nation, then lets make it part of our citizenship process.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

Okay – Mike Pence arrives in Sydney tomorrow. What are you two going to talk about?

PRIME MINISTER:

We will be talking about a range of issues, but obviously top of the agenda will be regional security. North Korea is going to be right at the top of the agenda. Also of course, the global battle against terrorism. Our shared commitment to destroy the Islamic State, Daesh in the Middle East. And obviously issues of trade and other matters. Security is right at the heart of it. And I think it is very good, we're really appreciative that so early in this new Trump Administration, the Vice President has come out to the region and visited Australia.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

Are you disappointed the President himself didn't come?

PRIME MINISTER:

We would always welcome the visit from the President, but the President has got many calls on his time and frankly this is the earliest visit to our recollection of an American Vice President in a new administration. So, this shows that the Trump Administration is committed to the region. They're committed to Australia, and we are close allies.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

Okay – finally, I want to talk to you about Tony Abbott. And I know it pains all of us to do this.

PRIME MINISTER:

You are right there.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

It keeps overshadowing everything we talk about-

PRIME MINISTER:

It doesn't have to – we can focus on the issues that are important to Australians.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

However, it does and there is this leaking that keeps going on. Is he doing a Rudd? Does he want your job? How do you contain him?

PRIME MINISTER:

My job as Prime Minister is to deliver for the Australian people and to ensure that-

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

It has got to be annoying to have a former prime minister sitting on the backbench interrupting.

PRIME MINISTER:

There are many potential distractions in my job but my focus is to concentrate on delivering for the Australian people, ensuring that we have strong economic growth and opportunities.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

He's not letting that happen.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, you know something? I am delivering.

We have got more legislation through the Senate, vastly more than anyone, all of the people – you would have had so many experts on this show, and they would've said Malcolm won't get anything through the Senate. And look what we've done. We have got through our election agenda, agenda through the Senate.

Do you know, more than half of Australians work for businesses that have now got a tax cut to encourage them to invest more and employ more to grow. We have done that.

We have got industrial reforms through.

We have got our child care reforms through. This is the biggest reform in child care in decades and we delivered that through the Senate.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

And yet, we still keep talking-

PRIME MINISTER:

You do. I don't.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

Well, we don't know what's going on behind the scenes. Hawke and Keating didn't like each other. Howard and Costello didn't particularly like each other. They all seemed to make it work for a time. Can you and Tony Abbott do that? Find a happy place?

PRIME MINISTER:

I look forward to all the members of my party room, all the members, whether they are on the backbench or the frontbench, working together and getting out there and talking about the success of the government's policies and the government's delivering of the policies and the programmes that are securing our future.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

Prime Minister, if it was me, you are a much more patient man than I am. I'd be much more outspoken on this if I were you but I will let you go.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thank you so much, great to be with you.

SAMANTHA ARMYTAGE:

Thank you for your time, we appreciate it.

[ENDS]