Interview with Ray Hadley, 2GB The Ray Hadley Morning Show

Hadley: Into the studio Immigration Minister Scott Morrison, g'day.

Morrison: G'day.

Hadley: A few hurdles put in front of the government this week with Operation Sovereign Borders. One of the things people don't understand and I understand that you would be reluctant to comment on it but I can certainly comment on it. This happened under the previous Labor Government. Bill Shorten would know by now as I guess many in the executive would know who signed off on it from and on behalf of the government, there is a choice of probably three – the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister or the Attorney General or a combination of all three so someone – and none of those people were from the Coalition who currently govern. But convention dictates that the current Prime Minister can't top them off because the government, any government of the day has I guess a charter of not discussing such matters that are of nation significance or security.

Morrison: Well, that is all true and there is not much to be profited really at the current time going back to that history. What we are focused on is dealing with what is before us and restoring the relationship as quickly as we can. We have had an excellent relationship with Indonesia, the Prime Minister particularly has had a very good relationship with the Indonesian President and I think that is really assisting as we work through what is a very difficult issue.

Hadley: Would the Indonesians accept, even those who are doing more sabre rattling than the President, would they accept that this is not of your government's doing? I mean, you know, they expect an apology from the people who are in charge at the moment or accept a clarification from the people in charge but they would understand because they are in election mode now themselves, aren't they?

Morrison: Well, Djoko Suyanto has said something very similar to that in terms of the change of government but really this is about the relationship between two countries. I think the partisan nature of this just doesn't come into it and the Australian people I think rightly expect us to address what is before us and that is what the Prime Minister is doing and I think both countries have a very big interest,
and Alexander Downer made this point yesterday, it is in both of our interests to get beyond this currently challenging time and we are certainly seeking to do that as far as my responsibilities are concerned. We are moving beyond not just what we are doing in Indonesia. I have had the special envoy up in Malaysia over the course of the last week, remembering 60 per cent of the arrivals that come to Australia illegally by boat come through Malaysia, so upping our disruption activity there, the work we are doing with Sri Lanka, we have the people smuggling ambassador up in the Middle East dealing directly with source countries. So, Ray you have to combat this right across the board, you just don't have one measure and that is it and any operation that exposes itself to just one measure, as the previous government did, then they are bound to find themselves coming a cropper.

Hadley: You have had one boat in the reporting period arrive and I think I am right in saying there are 35 people on board that one confirmed by yourself and defence on Friday but what I find interesting and I mentioned top of the show, well maybe I should get a comment from you in regards to my comments in relation to Fairfax Media and the polls that are out today and it is a funny poll in that the 2PP has Labor in front of the government now and it is a funny poll in that the 2PP has Labor in front of the government now but if you go to the question on which your victory was predicated - should the Labor Party support your move to abolish the carbon tax well the vast majority of people and one would imagine both Labor and Coalition voters support that premise. So it is a strange one but they have laid the drop in the polls at your feet, when I say your - the immigration department's feet and you are the minister…

Morrison: Of course.

Hadley: Saying this is all a reaction to Sovereign Borders. Now I make the point today that I think they are wrong, horribly wrong because last November 2630 people arrived on 43 boats, up to and including today the 25th, we have got four boats and 200 people.

Morrison: Well, that is right. There has been less than 200 people turn up in November and as we have chatted about before, November is typically a very high tempo month. Now, Operation Sovereign Borders has produced an around about 80 per cent drop in arrivals illegally by boat since it began and since the change of government and that is compared to the period under which the PNG arrangement had been announced and was operating under the previous government before the change. Look, others can run their commentary on the polls, Ray. Our government will be judged on border protection by one single thing - have we stopped the boats? All the rest of it, well people can engage in navel gazing. I am not measured on how many media conferences I give, although I give quite a number of them. I will be measured, as the government will be, on how many boats don't get to Australia. At the moment, we are very pleased with that progress.

Hadley: Well even Bernie Ripoll the Queensland Labor MP who has a penchant for riding push bikes and strangely enough was able to go on a travel study trip to France to coincide with the, of course, Tour de France, he was making the point this morning that you promised to stop them and all you have done is slow them. You have slowed them by about 90 per cent but you have just slowed them, you haven't stopped them.
Morrison: Well, I think the Opposition is on, I think, very unstable ground here because every time they raise this issue, I think, people are reminded of their shocking record. Over 50,000 people turned up on over 800 boats and that cost taxpayers, in blow outs, over $11 billion. Now, Tony Abbott and I have not said we have stopped the boats at this point but we have certainly made a very good start and we said we would make a difference from day one. We are making that difference. We are doing exactly what we said we would do including how we said we would treat information and we will stand up to what is a fairly strong campaign being run by the Opposition and the Greens and we have the Shadow Minister for Immigration Sarah Hanson-Young and we have the deputy Shadow Minister Richard Marles working in concert to combat the Coalition’s policies. Now, similar things happened when we were in government last time, Ray, under John Howard. There was a big campaign against offshore processing, there was the chardonnay chorus that continued to raise their voices against those policies and the Labor Party adopted that position in 2007 and over 1110 people in the wake of that decision died at sea. So we are not going to be intimidated by those sorts of campaigns. We will run the policy properly and we will get the job done.

Hadley: Ok. Can you stay there because I want to address this other story that has been broadcast today and published today via News Limited – gangs getting students to smuggle drugs.

Morrison: Happy to Ray.

Hadley: Stay there.

[break]

Hadley: Back to Scott Morrison. High school students we are told by News Limited today are being paid by international crime syndicates to have their family homes used for drug drops.

Morrison: Yeah, that is right Ray. As you know I am not only the Minister for Immigration but Border Protection as well, that picks up Customs. I think Customs are doing a good job here trying to get the message out to schools and out to students and families and teachers that crims will be out there trying to use their kids to smuggle drugs into the country. If you are asked to go and pick up a package and they will give you a few hundred bucks, don't do it. Ring 1800 06 1800 and report that activity so we can get onto it. We are doing all we can, not just to stop boats coming to Australia, Ray, but we also have the important responsibilities of protecting our borders against drugs - particularly with our own kids being used in that way. The government is dealing with some significant cuts to the border protection budget and Customs under the previous administration – around $700 million worth of cuts over the forward estimates which has left Customs really having to work double time I think and they are doing a great job.

Hadley: Ok. That number again 1800…

Morrison: 1800 06 1800.
**Hadley:** So it is 1800 06 1800. Now the other thing is they're not targeting year 11 and 12 students, it looks like they are targeting year 8, 9 and 10 students.

**Morrison:** Well, I don't think there is anyone who is immune from being used by criminals to try and smuggle drugs and that is why it is important that everyone is aware of this and that is why I think Customs has done a very good job bringing this to the public's attention. I am happy to support that and I appreciate you raising it in the way that you have today.

**Hadley:** So it is important tonight that mums and dads and you will be called lame and they will say 'you are kidding aren't you, I am not that stupid' but you need to sit down with your secondary school children and say look this is what's happened, we don't want you caught up in this because these two young blokes could face charges depending on their total involvement.

**Morrison:** Well, that is right. You wouldn't take something from someone to carry on a plane, you shouldn't pick up something from a post office. We are increasing the resources for screening that goes across not just parcels but also the post but if parents can assist and teachers in raising awareness about this then we protect our kids and we protect our borders.

**Hadley:** Ok, we will talk to you again same time next week.

**Morrison:** Thanks a lot Ray.

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