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**JOINT STATEMENT
LABOR BURIES THE TRUTH ABOUT TAIPANS**

Wednesday 14 February 2024

The Albanese Government must immediately clarify why it will not respond to new evidence and instruct Defence to pause the burial of Australia's MRH-90 Taipan helicopters.

Labor has made various excuses as to why Australia is unable to provide the Taipans to Ukraine, including that it's too late in the dismantling process to fulfil the request, that the aircraft may not be safe, and that the helicopters are not suitable due to low availability.

However, it was established in Senate Estimates today that the Taipans are in fact safe, some of the helicopters have not been extensively stripped, and that our close partners in New Zealand show that it is possible to successfully operate a reliable fleet.

Evidence showed that it may not be too late to pause the dismantling of the fleet and provide it to Ukraine in line with Ukraine's request and allies' offers of assistance.

Despite Labor's narrative having been shown to be inaccurate, Defence officials were unable to confirm during the hearing who within the department provided that advice.

What we see is a dysfunctional, confused Government, unaware itself that the helicopters could potentially be provided to Ukraine and now not strong enough to direct Defence to take a different approach.

The Opposition calls on the Government to recognise that it is not too late to pause the dismantling of some of the remaining Taipans and clarify with European allies and industry whether it's possible to meet Ukraine's request.

The Prime Minister, Defence Minister and Foreign Minister continually promise support for Ukraine, yet Australia is sliding lower on the list of non-NATO members providing aid to Ukraine.

This sorry predicament is another example of weak leadership, indecisiveness, and a lack of accountability from the Albanese Government.

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