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**E&EO TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
SKY NEWS AM AGENDA
WEDNESDAY, 24 AUGUST 2016**

SUBJECT/S: AFP raid; DCNS Submarine Leak

KIERAN GILBERT: With me now Richard Marles, the Shadow Defence Minister. Well Richard Marles I want to ask you about these AFP raids this morning. Labor staffers' offices here at Parliament in relation to the NBN. Stephen Conroy this morning says it's a shameful attempt by the government to hide the incompetent administration of the NBN. The government says this is the AFP operating independently as it should.

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: Well the starting point here Kieran is that the NBN and its rollout has been a complete debacle under this Government and particularly under the then Communications Minister, the now Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull. We've seen a doubling of the budget blowout. We've seen long delays in the rollout. At the end of the day this is about the information associated with that coming to light. Now the Government really has to explain, NBN has to explain why it is seeking the AFP to play its roll. It's very important for the people to understand that the material that has been obtained through the previous raids during the election campaign and any material that has been obtained during these raids will be subject to parliamentary privilege. That will certainly be asserted.

GILBERT: OK. But in terms of suggestions that the AFP, that this is an extraordinary attack on the Parliament, to hold the Government of the day to account. An attempt by Turnbull to hide his incompetence on the NBN. Even if he has been not up to scratch in terms of the rollout. To suggest the AFP is being used as a pawn in this is a bit much isn't it?

MARLES: Well, we're not talking about the AFP in terms of their conduct. What we're talking about is the conduct of the NBN. The NBN have initiated the AFP investigation. The NBN is not independent of government. The NBN has government members sitting on its board. They've made the decision in respect of referring this to the AFP. So, the Government can't run away from that. In that sense, they need to

own this. They need to explain why it is that this is information they don't want in the public domain.

GILBERT: I want to ask you about the report on the submarine leak today. The same French ship builder that we've got building our next fleet. I'll get your thoughts on that. In the context of the Prime Minister's statement this morning that it is not relevant, has no bearing on the Australian Government's future submarine program. What's happened in that project in India, it's a different submarine, ours is a Barracuda as opposed to the submarine built for the Indians, the Scorpene Class submarine. So the Governments saying it's measures, in terms of keeping sensitive information protected as well is very different to that to the Indian authorities.

MARLES: So, what is revealed in The Australian today is obviously going to be of enormous concern to India as well. It's going to be of enormous concern to other countries who've purchased that particular submarine. It does raise questions which the Government must answer and give the Australian people assurances about and they have to give those assurances today. And that is that in using DCNS that there is absolute confidence. The information, Australia's national security. There isn't any more privileged information than that around submarines. That that is in safe hands. We need that assurance today. I think the other point to be made here will be deeply concerning to our allies, who'll obviously work with us. Who will be looking potentially at putting systems in place so that of course our equipment has interoperability with them. They want to know from a security point of view that the information around that is safe as well. So, we need to hear from our government today what's revealed in The Australian is very concerning.

GILBERT: Well, the Prime Minister has said remarks to reassure people already that the Minister himself, a statement from his office says, the future submarine program operates under stringent security requirements that govern the matter and that all information is managed now and into the future. The same requirements apply to the protection of all sensitive information and data to the Collins Class subs and that's operated successfully for decades. So they have done exactly what you've called for.

MARLES: In light of what has come out today Kieran, what measures the government has undertaken in terms of speaking with the French company to ensure that to give us a sense of confidence that our information will be held in a safe and secure manner? I mean, what steps have they taken as a result of what has been revealed today? It's one thing to just blurt out the lines that we've heard before. If the government thinks that this does not require some steps on their part, in terms of their dialogue with DCNS then that's obviously crazy. Look, this is a really concerning moment and we need to know what steps the government is taking in its relationship with this company and make sure Australia's national security, that the information contained by this company, on Australia's behalf is completely safe.

GILBERT: Shadow Minister for Defence, Richard Marles, thanks for your time. We'll talk to you soon.