



**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TV INTERVIEW
SKY NEWS
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SUBJECT/S: ABCC, Asylum Seekers to US & Australian Defence in Syria

KIERAN GIBERT: Joining me now the Shadow Defence Minister Richard Marles. Richard Marles, thanks for your time.

Penny Wong's saying the Prime Minister's desperate and wanting to get a deal done, making all sorts of compromise, but isn't this the way Parliament should work? You do compromise with the cross bench and they've got the core elements of this promise made to the people at the election through the Parliament – or it looks like they will today.

RICHARD MARLES: Well, Kieran, what we know is this: this was bad legislation as it was put up before the election. We regard it as bad legislation now. What matters for every parliamentarian is the position they take in this building and they need to answer for that. From our point view what we know is that when the ABCC was previously in place we saw workplace deaths go up. When it was removed we saw them come down. That is a compelling fact.

Obviously, the cross benches will have to explain their position themselves, as will the government, but our position has been consistent, it has been clear. It's the one thing we control and that's what we'll continue on through this parliament.

GILBERT: But the government made the commitment to reinstate the Building and Construction Commission. To conclude the year it looks like they've achieved what they say is a reform.

MARLES: Well, if the government is looking to measures such as this to claim success then they have set the bar very low indeed, and I don't think there will be many people out there today cheering about this reform having gone through the parliament, if that's ultimately what occurs. This is a reform, if you-

GILBERT: -Those in the construction sector would - businesses and those who complain about militant action of the CFMEU and others.

MARLES: Let's remember this: this so-called reform, such as the government might describe it, will reinstate a body when it previously existed saw workplace deaths go up. There is nothing which is progress in that and I don't think Australians will be cheering for that.

I can tell you this: we are very clear about the position we are taking on this and we are very happy to argue that case out in the public. If this is what the government calls success, well, frankly I think they are deluded.

GILBERT: Well some within Labor agrees and support, as did Penny Wong this morning, some of the amendments put, including the procurement provisions that Nick Xenophon has argued for and Derryn Hinch, which Xenophon has said this morning is a major boost for Australian industry and manufacturers. What's your take on that?

MARLES: Things which support Australian industry are obviously a benefit, no question about that. But at the end of the day we come back to the fundamentals of what this legislation is about, which is what will guide the position we take.

GILBERT: Now, to Laura Jayes' report last night on Sky News. She had rare access to Nauru, the conditions she reported on. From what you've seen of those reports and the suggestion, initially, that 300 would be accepted by the US, that now looks like it's going to be an initial number from which more will be received. The Minister hasn't confirmed how many, but that 300 looks like it's an initial intake with more of that 900 cohort to be taken later.

MARLES: I think the first thing to say here is that people need to be got off Nauru and Manus. They've been allowed to languish in those two facilities by this government for far too long, and that is the most important thing that occurs. Now, no one is expecting that that is to be done overnight, but it is really important that people are got off Manus and Nauru.

I think the other point here is that it's important that the government clarifies exactly what is going to happen and what people can expect. See, the issue here has in part been about the fact that people have been on the islands for so long, but it's being there with their lives in limbo, with a sense of being totally unclear and unsure about what the future holds, and that's what is so detrimental to peoples mental health. It is critical that the government clarify-

GILBERT: -Do you agree, though, with the Minister – clarify the numbers, do you mean? Is that what you're talking about?

MARLES: I think those on Manus and Nauru really need to be given a sense of what their future holds, and, to be honest, if people can be given that sense now that immediately relieves their circumstances on Manus and Nauru, because-

GILBERT: -Some of them don't want to go to the US, anyway. Would you urge them to accept the deal, the offers, if they are made to them, because, as Laura reported, some of the individuals there don't want to go to a Trump-led America.

MARLES: At the end of the day it is a matter for the government to work through with those people on Manus and Nauru in terms of what their future holds. Again, one of the issues here, frankly, has been, in terms of leaving people in those facilities for so long with their lives in a state of limbo, it does make it more difficult for the government to negotiate these issues through. This needs to be done with their consent.

GILBERT: Would you urge advocates not to be telling these individuals not to accept, because that was one of the criticisms levelled by Minister Dutton last night.

MARLES: I think it's really important that everyone who is playing a role in this space does so from the point of view of what is ultimately best for those who are on Manus and Nauru, and more broadly what's best in terms of the system of people flows in and around Australia so that we're not seeing results which give rise to people, obviously, dying at sea as the result of some other move.

But I make this point: the Coalition have raised and dashed peoples hopes so many times before it is absolutely critical that they provide some clarity for those on Manus and Nauru now.

GILBERT: I want to ask you about this incident, it was back in September, Australian fighter jets involved in an operation that mistakenly killed 83 Syrian soldiers. It was believed to be an IS facility in Syria. It wasn't. A US-led report out overnight suggests that the rules of engagement and the laws of armed conflict were fully complied with. Are you satisfied with this outcome?

MARLES: I've seen the reports today. I think the first point to make is this: I completely accept the finding that there was no wilful disregard for the rules of war by any Australia service personnel. I think that's an important finding to make. I think it's important that be accepted straight away.

I'm receiving a briefing on the full report later today, as it turns out, and I'll be in a better position to understand exactly what occurred and exactly what the learnings are here, but it is obviously a concerning incident. It's really important that we do learn the lessons from it, and it is good that this has been properly investigated and it's important that the recommendations coming from the investigation are fully implemented.

GILBERT: OK, Mr Marles, thanks so much. As always we appreciate your time.