



**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
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PYNE: Well, good afternoon and welcome to *Pyne & Marles* here on Sky News Live. It's one o'clock on Friday the 24th of March 2017. I'm Christopher Pyne and I'm here in Adelaide, and my co-host is Richard Marles, and he is at home in Geelong today, which is great for him. Good afternoon Richard.

MARLES: Good afternoon to you as well, Christopher, and it is a lovely day here in Geelong, but I think all of our thoughts today, and over the last 24 hours or so, have been with those in London. They really were tragic events, and sadly we are doing this too often, in terms of acknowledging terrorist events around the world and giving our thoughts and prayers to those who have been affected.

I guess, with this one, Britain is a country with whom we have a huge affinity, but it was also an attack on a parliament, where you and I work, and, of course, politicians work in parliaments, but so do advisors and cooks and cleaners and maintenance people and, in this instance, innocent bystanders, tourists, were the victims of this terrible incident.

PYNE: Well, Richard you're absolutely right. It's also terrible for people to be killed in their line of duty, and one of the lines that really resonated with me yesterday was the Prime Minister saying that even as the first responders were urging other people to disappear from danger they themselves are running towards the danger. We are so blessed to have such support from police officers and ambulance officers, firemen in the case of fires, and so on, who protect and support us. It's a terrible, terrible day for London and the whole of the UK, but just reminds us how lucky we've been in Australia, and how we have to keep being lucky and making our own luck by doing

the things that both parties know are important, in terms of intelligence and security and supporting all of our agencies to protect us.

MARLES: That's right, and I think it's worth remembering, particularly, Tobias Ellwood, a Conservative MP, I think, but a Member of the House of Commons who actually rushed to the assistance, was trying to revive, one of those who was a victim in this. His brother, Tobias' brother, was killed in the Bali bombings back in 2002, and I just, well I hope we would all have the courage to do what he did in that moment

We should get on with the show, Christopher, and today we are looking at the child care package of the Government and the Omnibus Bill. These have been linked up until now, but during the week they were separated and started their passage through the Parliament. Of course, Section 18C has been a huge topic as it was debated in the Parliament as well, and we're going to try and do something today and that is talk about an issue which never makes it to the media but is really important. Science Met Parliament this week, it's an annual event where 100 or so scientists come and speak to MPs about what they do, and as a former Science Minister, Christopher, and I have been a Science Parliamentary Secretary, we're going to have a go at talking about that. Our guest today is Hugh White, professor of strategic studies at ANU. We've got the visit going on of Premier Li Keqiang of China. We're going to talk to Hugh about his visit.

To start with, let's talk about the Government's child care package and the Omnibus Bill. These have now been separated. They've been a huge issue of discussion during the week. Have a listen to this.

MALCOLM TURNBULL [CLIP]: We're determined to enable more Australian children to get access to the high quality child care.

BILL SHORTEN [CLIP]: When will the Prime Minister stop recycling cuts from the 2014 budget?

CHRISTIAN PORTER [CLIP]: No family would lose a dollar.

PENNY WONG [CLIP]: You know what Mr Turnbull is? He is the monkey to the Abbott organ grinder.

PAULINE HANSON [CLIP]: Look at what is right for this country.

NICK XENOPHON [CLIP]: This is not ideal but this is the, in my view, the least-worst option in dealing with these issues.

MARLES: Well, if the best thing we can say about the government, Christopher, is that you're no longer holding your child care package hostage to your cuts to the support of Australians, well, then that's not saying a lot about the Government, but I guess that's what has happened during the week.

We should remember, though, that the cuts in play are going to affect 1.5 million Australians who are on Family Tax Benefit A. I think, in terms of the childcare side of this, what my issue here is that this is really only being looked at through the economic prism, and there's an issue there about trapping people in unemployment because the activities test has been changed so that looking for work is not going to be enough to qualify you for the rebate, but kids are going to miss out on the two days of guaranteed access to childcare.

My dad taught for his entire career, and the thing said at the end of it was how you start is so important, how you start your education often tells you how you're going to finish, and this package is all about denying people or denying kids that start.

PYNE: Well, Richard, when Labor was in office childcare fees increased by 53 percent in just six years, so Labor has no feather to fly with in terms of childcare.

What happened this week was two more wins for the government in a Senate which we were told last July was going to be harder than the previous Senate. In fact, we've got more through in the last nine months than we have over the last three years, but we have this week achieved child care reform, \$1.6 billion of new spending, making it more accessible and more affordable.

A family on \$80,000 a year with two working parents with two children in long day care could save up to \$8,000 a year. That is real money, that is real savings, reducing their cost of living pressures, and Labor can only criticise from the sidelines.

We've also paid for it. We got the savings through the Senate which means that we are not just putting up more debt, more deficit or higher taxes, which was the hallmark of you when you were in government.

MARLES: Even the childcare package, on its own, I mean, you're lauding this as people being better off - the truth is a whole lot will be worse off. Trying to meet the activity test now for people who are on part time or unpredictable work is going to be really hard, and it's actually going to discourage people getting back into the workforce rather than the reverse.

PYNE: Well, Richard, you have the last word, fair enough, but now we're moving on to Section 18C, and let's have a look at what the Prime Minister had to say about our announcements of reforms of Section 18C.

MALCOLM TURNBULL [CLIP]: Today we are strengthening the Racial Discrimination Act.

BILL SHORTEN [CLIP]: Why on today, of all days, has the Prime Minister chosen to weaken protections against racist hate speech?

MALCOLM TURNBULL [CLIP]: We are standing up for freedom of speech.

ANNE ALY [CLIP]: What forms of racial speech does the Prime Minister want people to be able to say that they cannot say right now?

DAVID LEYONHJELM [CLIP]: I've never known a straight bloke yet that doesn't discriminate against girls that he thinks is ugly, for example. Should the law intrude on that?

PYNE: I've been surprised by the muted response from the Labor Party and from the community, quite frankly, to our reforms to Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. Labor promised us an almighty battle and gave up asking questions about it on Tuesday, similarly how you've given up asking questions about penalty rates.

The reality is I think most Australians think that Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act had lost its credibility, and what we are doing, by making it to harassment and intimidation rather than insulting and offending people, has restored credibility to it, made it fairer and made it stronger and more fit for purpose.

It wasn't achieving its original intentions. Instead, it was being used as a weapon against cartoonists and students, and I must admit I think it's been widely accepted by the community as a sensible reform.

MARLES: Well, I think it is a heroic claim to suggest that most Australians thought that 18C, as it has been, lacked credibility or indeed that what you've done has wide acceptance. I mean, I'm really struggling to understand where this is all coming from. I completely get the politics of it. Malcolm Turnbull is appeasing the right wing of your party, but you know-

PYNE: -That's not true.

MARLES: It is absolutely true, and look - you've been doing street stalls throughout your career as a politician. So have I. Not once in the last 10 years has anyone come

up to me and complained about the way 18C has been framed, and so when you put in place these reforms, the question that it inevitably begs, given there is no problem which needs solving here, is what is it? It's in fact Anne Aly's question that she asked in that clip: what is it that you now feel people should be able to say which they hadn't been able to say up until this point?

PYNE: But Richard, Section 18C is certainly not a bread and butter or cost of living issue, but it's an important issue of principle and philosophy, and it's got nothing to do with the right wing of the Liberal Party. Many of the proponents of reform of Section 18C who want to expand freedoms are the small-l liberals in the party. I support this change. People like Marise Payne and Simon Birmingham and George Brandis and Tim Wilson - not people that you would describe as being on the right wing of the Liberal Party - have been enthusiastic proponents of changing this Section 18 say to something that is more fair and reasonable.

We'll have to move on, and it's your turn.

MARLES: It is my turn. I reckon there's a whole lot of communities in Australia who wouldn't be feeling particularly comfortable about what's just happened, but we do need to move on.

This week, Science Met Parliament. I think more than 100 scientists came to the parliament and were speaking to MPs, and there was a dinner on Tuesday night which brought them all together, and the Science Minister, the current Science Minister, Arthur Sinodinos, was speaking about the event. Take a listen to this.

SINODINOS [CLIP]: Science Meets Parliament is a great event. It's about recognising and celebrating the invaluable contribution of Australian scientists to this, the best country in the world. Scientists and parliamentarians should be natural collaborators. By drawing on scientific rigour and experience, we have the best chance to solve seemingly intractable economic and social problems.

MARLES: Now, there is a degree to which everyone loves scientists, and the work that scientists do to advance our country, so this is not a controversial issue, as such, but I actually want to say something controversial, and not in a partisan way, but in a sense a comment about our parliament.

Christopher, I think the economic literacy of our parliament is high. I think the legal literacy of our parliament is high. I think the scientific literacy of our parliament is not.

As a result, often when we are having debates around science I feel very frustrated about the quality of the debates which ensue. To me, science is at the heart of so many of the really critical decisions that we are going to be making as governments,

going forward, over the next decade or so. Climate change is an obvious one, but as a nation we're going to need to climb the technological ladder, from the point of view of our economy, if we're going to compete with our near neighbours.

Science is absolutely fundamental to that, but we never hear it really discussed in the public domain. It's never a question in Question Time.

Do you agree, Christopher? Do you think we need to improve the science literacy of the parliament?

PYNE: I do agree with you. One of the things that really surprises me is when I tell people that Australia has won 15 Nobel prizes, of which 12 have been in medicine and science, and China has won 2 Nobel prizes, one of whom is not available to the public because he happens to be in prison, people are absolutely shocked. They have no idea that a country of Australia's size has produced 15 Nobel prize winners – and that is an enormous achievement, 12 of them in science and medicine.

So, Science Meets Parliament is a really important annual event because it puts science on the agenda in the parliament, but also it gives us an opportunity to talk about the things that we're doing, like the Next Generation Technologies Fund, the National Innovation and Science Agenda that I was responsible for when I was the Minister for Science.

It has been a good event in parliament, and it's important that scientists keep talking about the great things that they do.

MARLES: And look, there's a bit of an obligation on scientists here as well. I think they need to be participating more in the public debate, but, you know, the media has a responsibility here. The Square Kilometre Array telescope, which you know well, Christopher, is a huge endeavour that our country is a part of, ground-breaking science. The media don't talk about it. They should.

We need to throw to a break. Join us afterwards when we will be talking with Professor Hugh White.

PYNE: Welcome back to Pyne and Marles, this is the part of the show we have an interview to talk about the political issues of the day in a little more depth and today we have the ANU's Professor of Strategic Policy at the School of Asia and the Pacific Professor Hugh White who's well known to many of us, Hugh thank you for joining us.

WHITE: Nice to be with you both.

PYNE: Obviously the visit of Li Keqiang gives us an opportunity to talk a bit about Australia's relationship with China and Australia's relationship between China and the United States. What do you think has come out of this visit that's been the most significant for Premier Li Keqiang coming all the way to Australia?

WHITE: Well I think the first thing to say Christopher is that obviously it reflects they take the relationship very seriously and I think 90% of what we've seen in this visit has been the warmth and the strength of the relationship and the phenomenal economic opportunities that underpin it and Li Keqiang's spoken about that himself and so have Australian political leaders but what we've also seen is that 10% of the relationship in which there is a real issue. In his speech in Parliament yesterday for example Premier Li did address, occasionally but quite distinctly, the big question about how Australia positions itself between the US and China, to what extent we're still trying to prop up as he would see a US led order in Asia and to what extent we're prepared to accept China playing a bigger leadership role. And I think beneath all the good news about the Australia-China economic relationship, which is really very good news, there is this underlying question about where we see Asia going, how we define China's role and how we define America's role and what that means for Australia which I think as a political community, as a policy community we still haven't quite come to terms with.

MARLES: I think, Hugh, that's right, I reckon there is a growth in the political relationship but I guess the question I'm keen to ask you is, I suppose ultimately it's what do you think China's aspirations are as a regional power and in terms of the region as China sees it, are we a part of the region where they would seek to exert influence?

WHITE: Yeah look a really good question, I mean I think it's very clear now that China does seek to be a much stronger leader in Asia and maybe the primary leader in Asia and this is a shift, you know after 1972, after Nixon went to China the Chinese basically accepted a sort of subordinate position to the United States and that was very good for China, it was very good for the United States, very good for us but I think that moment has passed, I think over the last few years we have seen China increasingly posing a very direct challenge to US leadership and I think, really, seeking to become the leading power in Asia itself and we might not like that but we can hardly be surprised by it as its power grows. Now do they see Australia as part of that, I think very much yes, they see Australia as part of what they would like to see become a Chinese sphere of influence and a big question for us is how much does that worry us, how hard do we push back, what does that cost us and how far can we rely on the United States to manage this problem for us?

PYNE: So Hugh a lot of this of course I think is the inevitable outcome of Deng Xiaoping opening China to markets, to much greater economic growth and obviously

over the decades since that time starting in the 1980s and coming to the present day, China as it became wealthier was always going to want to exert more influence. I guess the question we have to ask ourselves is is that a threat or a challenge, I mean a challenge is obviously less concerning than a threat, could it be an opportunity. I mean for example what role could China play in North Korea that it isn't playing now, which I think is the most dangerous part of the world and the most unpredictable part of the world right now?

WHITE: Yeah look I think that's exactly right, what we're seeing here is the inevitable play out of the fundamental shift in the distribution of wealth and power as China's economy has grown and we've all talked about the rise of China for so long we forget how remarkable it is but it's the biggest fastest shift in the distribution of wealth and power in history and we shouldn't be at all surprised that as China's economy has grown its power has grown it seeks a bigger role. But I do think it's fair for us to see that as very unsettling, I don't think China's growing power threatens Australia directly in any sort of traditional military way or anything like that but I do think it upsets the regional order, the way Asia has worked, in ways which is very unsettling for Australia, we've lived with American primacy in Asia, and before that British primacy in Asia ever since the First Fleet arrived and now for the first time in our history we're going to live in an Asia in which the strongest power in the region is no longer our best mates, it's a country in which for all the strength of the relationship as we've seen during the Lee visit there are difference and I think we haven't yet worked out how to handle that. As you say there are – it could work out well if China uses its power responsibly and if we're happy to work with it then we can make it work. If we try and push back too hard I think we're going to find a very destabilized region indeed.

PYNE: Richard just one second, isn't North Korea though an opportunity where China could prove that it's going to be a positive influence in the region rather than a negative one and why isn't China doing more about North Korea, sorry Richard.

WHITE: Yeah it's a good question Christopher, I think there are two reasons; the first is I'm not convinced that China has as much influence over North Korea as we would like. China of course gives it huge aid but that doesn't necessarily mean they can control what North Korea does as if they were sort of wobbling a joy stick, what China could do if they chose to is just turn off the lights in North Korea and really bring about regime collapse but the Chinese take the view that even the North Korea as it's behaving now would be better than a North Korea that we might see if the regime starts to collapse and the nuclear weapons got in anybody's hands and all that sort of stuff. The other reason though is that I think from the Chinese point of view even though North Korea is worrying to them that they are quite happy to see North Korea challenge the United States' position in Asia because that serves their long term interests in terms of building up their regional leadership and undermining

America so I think in the long run, sad to say, their interests and ours are not necessarily aligned on that.

MARLES: Well Hugh you are speaking to a topic which is of an interest to obviously both Christopher and I and I feel like we could get you back on and have an entire program devoted to this...

PYNE: Indeed.

MARLES: And I'd love to ask you about how you see the future of the US in terms of where it's going but we've run out of time, thank you so much for joining us today and we will definitely get you back.

WHITE: Great pleasure to join you both.

PYNE: Thank you.

MARLES: Thank you, and that brings us to the question of the week which this week comes from Graham from Greenpoint in New South Wales, now Graham asks this: are questions from the cross bench and opposition in question time really without notice? This is a question that goes to the heart of some of the big secrets in Parliament, I'm not sure that government questions are such without notice when they're asked but cross bench questions and opposition questions, largely they are but Christopher you've been a Manager of Opposition Business and now the Leader of Government Business in the House, what's your answer to this question?

PYNE: Well certainly the government questions are with notice because I sit down and do the final cut for the question time every day and that's because we use them to talk about the good things that we are doing and change Australia for the better...

MARLES: Well we've heard it first on our show, we've heard it first on our show.

PYNE: Indeed, I don't think that'll come as a big surprise to many people though Richard but anyway, in terms of the Opposition questions I've never had notice of an Opposition question I must say, ever. And obviously I've been asked a lot of questions over the years from the Opposition, cross benchers though are a bit different, sometimes they give you a question if they want you to have a chance to give a substantial answer and that's not a stupid thing to do, other times they don't and different cross-benchers behave differently. So Adam Bandt doesn't give the government any notice but Andrew Wilkie or Bob Katter, Cathy McCowan might say we're going to ask you a question about skills in Tasmania in the naval shipbuilding industry for example and then you can give a substantial answer rather

than just saying I'll get back to the Member later which I think is not a stupid way to behave.

MARLES: Well it makes sense, I mean it's not unlike the way in which we often do interviews where interviewers will give you some notice because they want you to be able to give meaningful answers and you have an interesting discussion. I would say one thing, I think there are occasions where there is notice given from the Opposition, it's rare to be fair but sometimes there are questions, I've asked them where you want to make clear that this is an issue that we all care about but you don't want to be seen to overly politicise it and certainly in the Immigration space I can remember letting Peter Dutton know a couple of times that we were going to ask a question on a really sensitive matter and I think that was appreciated. So there are occasions, they're rare, where the Opposition question is forecast, but I am very please Christopher that we've got the scoop on this program that government questions are in fact asked with notice and that the Leader of the House writes them all.

PYNE: Well I'm rather hoping that it's not true of the Labor side of the House because if Tony Burke is writing the questions he'll need to be replaced because he's obviously not doing a very good job.

MARLES: Oh not true, Tony Burke does a fantastic job, he does a fantastic job as the Manager of Opposition Business.

PYNE: You'd do a better job Richard.

MARLES: Well I could never be a match for Tony, he does a fantastic job in doing this, but we, and we could debate the merits of Tony Burke and that would be an easy debate to have, but we have run out of time. It's been great talking to you today Chrisoper, thanks for joining me and thanks to you viewers for joining me again, we look forward to seeing you and speaking with you again next week at 1 o'clock on Sky News on Pyne & Marles, we'll see you then.