



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

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
RADIO INTERVIEW
TERRITORY FM
WEDNESDAY, 5 APRIL 2017**

Subjects: Darwin & Northern Territory Defence Industry, Robertson Barracks, Larrakeyah Barracks.

PETER BUTLER: Let's have a chat now with Richard Marles the Labor Federal Member for Corio and I've pronounce it wrong. I know I have because I'm up here the parochial little Territorian I am now. He's also the Shadow Minister for Defence. Richard good morning.

RICHARD MARLES SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: Good morning Peter. You did not a bad job, its Corio. But many people get the name wrong. Well they sure don't worry about it.

BUTLER: They should, and this is my NSW education showing now they should misspell it with a K then not a C. I'm sure we can move beyond that. You're up in town you've got in yesterday you've already caught up with the NT government and some local businesses. Defence is obviously a big part of the Territory we've got twenty billion dollars to be invested here over the next 20 years with a lot of that coming online. Well not a lot of it, but a large portion of that will be online this year. So it's very very important, what sort of conversations have you been having with local business and the NT government?

MARLES: Well Peter you're right it is. I think Darwin has many characters but one of it is that it is a big defence town and there is a large investment slated for this part of the world going into the future and I think the biggest issue that people have been raising with me is making sure that local businesses get their share of an ability to work for that and to get a slice of that in terms of the services that are provided. There are a whole lot of really significant bases that are now in Darwin and have been for a while. There's a lot of pretty sophisticated equipment which is based in Darwin as well. The maintenance of those bases the construction and upgrading cases and the servicing of the equipment that's here. All offer opportunities for local businesses, but I think there is a concern locally that local businesses are going to

miss out and I think it is really important from an industry point of view that if we're committing to Darwin in this part of the world which we really need to well then that has to be done in an industry sense as well and local businesses need to be given an opportunity to do that kind of work for the upgrading and the maintenance of defence spaces and assets that are here.

BUTLER: What sort of policies are you, is the opposition looking at to try to help retain some of those businesses. We have a very big challenge up here that we don't we have two House Rep Members we have two Senators and we are always up against the likes of Christopher Pyne and sort of placating his backyard and getting you know industry down there. What sort of policies has the opposition party got to go forward to the next election to try to bring in and give some reassurance to local Territorians up here that a lot of the money will stay here in the Territory?

MARLES: Well firstly you make a good observation having your voice heard matters and in Luke Gosling and Malarndirri McCarthy and Warren Snowdon you've got some really quality representatives who are absolutely speaking out for Darwin and for the Territory and Luke particularly has invited me up here over these couple of days to deal with this issue and speak to local businesses here. I think the answer in a policy sense is making sure that the way in which work is contracted and the size of those parcels of work are kind of manageable enough that local businesses can meaningfully compete for this work. The point that's been raised over the last couple of days is that a lot of the contracts that are being tended for are absolutely massive and it means that unless you've got experience in dealing with vast contracts across the country you're not really even allowed in the front door to compete for some of this work and yet the work that we might be talking about servicing particular bases is absolutely work that can be done by companies that are here in the top end and so I think the way forward here is that the way contracting and tendering is done it needs to be user friendly and have halve up the work in sizers which are actually digestible for local companies so that they do, they can have a meaningful opportunity to compete for this work and ultimately I think that that is probably a more cost effective outcome for the Commonwealth anyway, it means you're not having to transport people up here to do the work. There's a lot of capability up here and up here at the top end and that ought to be used in terms of servicing these bases and creating a place where you know really significant maintenance and sustaining of equipment can be done.

BUTLER: So you'd look at going forward you'd look at ways to help streamline that bureaucratic behemoth that is the Defence Department and try to make it a little easier and get rid of a lot of that red tape because I know it is very onerous for people to put tenders forward.

MARLES: Look in part that's right, but I actually think it's about defence thinking about this in a slightly deeper way I mean I think actually what's going on at the moment is there's sometimes administrative ease, I'm not sure it provides a cheaper result but there's a kind of an administrative ease in just dealing with a large national companies, which can provide services around the whole country without necessarily thinking about whether or not there are other more local options which can do the job just as cost effective price and so I actually think it's about encouraging the way in which we contract be done in a more thoughtful way so that the doors are open for

local businesses to actually compete and that's the sort of thing that we would be looking at whether, how we can provide opportunities for companies in the Territory and really what I'm describing goes to the situation in Darwin, but I think there's a bit of a regional Australia story here and I come from regional Australia myself. If we're going to try and build regional Australia and businesses in that part of the country we do really need to be putting ourselves in the shoes of those businesses and creating opportunities where they can meaningfully compete and that's what needs to be done here in Darwin when we're talking about defence work.

BUTLER: I know you're busy you're on your way now out to Robertson Barracks so you'll be meeting up with some of our commanders today I take it?

MARLES: Yes, I'm meeting one brigade obviously which has its headquarters here in Darwin. Robertson Barracks is a really significant defence asset. I'm really looking forward to the opportunity of talking with one brigade about their work and one of the three combat brigades that we have in the Australian Army at its headquarters here in Darwin although some of those in one brigade are now operating from Adelaide, I'm kind of keen to understand what's happening in that regard as well. Part of committing to Darwin from the point of view of the ADF is making sure that we keep defence numbers here in Darwin and I'm keen to understand what the prognosis is and what the projections are for that going forward. But really looking forward to meeting with the Australian Army today I'll be going to Larrakeyah and talking with those in North force and some of the other elements that are here in Darwin. It really is you know, Darwin is one of the most significant defence cities that we have in Australia and you know it is a critical part of the character of Darwin and very much looking forward to speaking with and meeting those people today.

BUTLER: All right well good luck with your journey today and how are you enjoying the weather up here at the moment.

MARLES: I went for a run this morning and I came back completely soaked in a way that I wouldn't if I went running around Geelong. But I'm looking out the window now, beautiful sunshine; you've got to love that.

BUTLER: Richard Marles there, as I said Federal Member for Corio also the Shadow Minister for Defence.

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