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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TV INTERVIEW
ABC NEWS BREAKFAST
WEDNESDAY, 19 JULY 2017**

SUBJECTS: National security; Resignation of Greens' senators

HOST: Now, the new super-ministry announced yesterday is being described as the most significant reform of intelligence and security in more than 40 years.

HOST: Not everyone seems convinced, with many claiming it has more to do with politics than policy. With his response we're joined by the Shadow Defence Minister, Richard Marles, from Geelong. Shadow Minister, thank you for your time this morning. Peter Dutton has been talking just in the past hour on AM and saying that Labor should really be supporting these changes because it's going to make Australians safer. What evidence do you have that it won't?

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: No evidence has been presented about anything here. I heard the comments from Peter Dutton talking about the fact that the Prime Minister has been thinking about this for a long time now, and yet the reality is there has not been a word of discussion with the public. This was essentially dumped on the Australian people yesterday.

I guess what concerns me here, Paul, is that when the question was asked of the Prime Minister yesterday, what the national security agencies feel about this proposal; whether they supported it, whether they recommended it - Malcolm Turnbull was singularly silent in answer to both of those questions, which leads us to the only conclusion, that this is actually much more about politics than it is about policy. You only have to look at George Brandis fighting through the tears yesterday to it be very clear there was a winner and there was a loser yesterday, and you get the distinct sense that this was about promoting one individual to prop up his own prime ministership.

HOST: So, what about it don't you like, and do you believe that Australians won't be safer?

MARLES: Well, the point here is that it's for the Government to actually explain to us what is the problem that they're trying to fix. What's the rationale behind what they are doing? Now, there might be something sensible going on here-

HOST: -I'm just asking-

MARLES: -in which case we're open for-

HOST: Sorry to interrupt, just asking what don't you like about it, structurally?

MARLES: Well, we don't know anything about it in terms of what is the rationale behind it. I'm interested in hearing from the national security agencies about what their view is in relation to it. I mean, if this is about greater coordination, of information, of command, well then what I'd like to know from the national security agencies is whether or not there is in fact an issue around issues such as coordination and command right now.

Now, I've had plenty of briefings from the national security agencies over the years. They do an amazing job, something which was pointed out by the Prime Minister yesterday, and not once has there ever been an issue raised about the question of coordination.

It seems to me that there is a high degree of cooperation between our national security agencies right now, so I come back to this point: what is this the issue they are trying to resolve; what is the problem they are trying to fix?

I'm not saying there isn't a rationale here. I'm not saying there might not be a good idea in here. We just haven't heard it.

The Government have handled this in a totally hopeless way. They certainly haven't sought to discuss this with us first. You know, we have gone about national security issues with an instinct and a reflex for bipartisanship. We've supported a whole range of raft of legislation in this space during the last four years.

If there is merit in this we're happy to look at it, but right now we don't see any substance. We just see politics.

HOST: We do know there will be one Cabinet minister who is in charge of those three pegs of national security, moving out of a purely immigration area, but also there's still some safeguards in there, for instance the Attorney-General will still have to sign off on ASIO warrants. So, we do know some detail. Are you saying that-

MARLES: -Sure.

HOST: -pending some more information that you like what you've heard so far?

MARLES: Oh, we have heard the barest minimum so far. Let's be clear about that. Sure, they've sketched out the way in which agencies are now going to be reporting to ministers, but there's a whole range of questions which arise out of the announcement that was made yesterday.

For example, as you rightly point out, they've said the ASIO warrants will still be issued by the Attorney-General. What does that then mean in terms of is there dual

reporting now in terms of ASIO to ministers? How is that all going to work? No answers to those questions.

Again, you come back to what do the national security agencies think about this? How do they see this operating? There's a whole raft of questions which are completely legitimate in this space which you would want to have answers to before you formed an opinion about whether this is a good idea or not.

Peter Dutton, in the last hour, has talked about the fact that the Prime Minister has been thinking about this for months. That's great. He hasn't spoken to anyone in Australia about it. Is he going to give us the opportunity to have that same period of thought as well? I mean, there has been no public discussion. If there is the biggest transformation in this area in the last 40 years, well then it has been handled in the most hopeless and inept way, that it has been dumped on the Australian people with no discussion yesterday, and we are left with no other alternative than to look at what has been the core thing that has driven this Government for the last four years - and that's its internal politics.

HOST: Well, you can also compare what we know so far in the announcement made yesterday against what is in the US and what is in the UK. It doesn't seem to have gone as far as their super-ministries, if we want to let them all fall under the one banner. What do you make of the comparisons?

MARLES: Well, I think it is a valid comparison and it is right to be looking at models overseas, and again this is where there's a lot of devil in the detail and they're the sort of questions we want to have answered, but the point is that countries are different. The UK, for example, isn't a federation. There aren't state police forces and so the way in which it manages the relationships between its police, its civil police, and its Defence Forces is different to how it exists in a federated structure. Of course, the United States is a massive country, with huge bureaucracies and so their circumstances are a little different as well.

I think you're right to point out that this looks more like the home affairs model of the UK than it does the homeland security department of the US, but where in that spectrum Australia falls, how things would most appropriately be applied to our country, what was wrong up until now such that this reform is needed - all of these are questions which the Government has not answered and were unable to answer in yesterday's press conference, and, again, it is very telling that when asked about whether the national security agencies themselves had recommended this, the Prime Minister was completely silent.

HOST: Richard Marles, just on another matter before I let you go and that is do you think it's fair that the two Greens senators should have to now leave Parliament because of the mistakes they made?

MARLES: Well, I feel for Scott Ludlam and Larissa Waters. It would be impossible not to feel for them at a personal level. These are the rules that govern our political system-

HOST: -Are they still fair?

MARLES: Well, the Constitution is not a technicality, and you can have a discussion about whether we should be changing the Constitution, but the reality is we live by the rules which are in the Constitution. You can't just decide to abide with them or not. One can understand the rationale inside the Constitution.

At the end of the day, I think what this really highlights is the difference between serious parties of government, which obviously do rigorous checks in this case, and parties who are not, and clearly the Greens aren't.

HOST: Shadow Minister Marles, thank you very much for your time.

MARLES: Thanks, Paul.