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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
TV INTERVIEW  
SKY NEWS  
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***SUBJECTS: Asylum seeker policy***

**HOST:** Joining me now live is the Labor frontbencher Richard Marles, who is of course the Defence spokesperson, but was also the responsible Minister at the time under Kevin Rudd. Can you clear this up for us? What was your understanding of that agreement with Papua New Guinea that you yourself struck with Kevin Rudd?

**RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE:** Well just to be clear, at the time I was the Trade Minister, but I am familiar with-

**HOST:** -But you went over to PNG, as you know, you've got a strong relationship with PNG, and you were involved in those discussions. Can you tell us your understanding?

**MARLES:** Sure. The agreement, you've played the clip from Kevin earlier this hour, made clear that people who came to Australia by asylum-seeker vessel after 19 July 2013 would not be re-settled in Australia. That was very clear.

The significance of the agreement was that it really took Australia off the table. It was, if you like, in the whole history of dealing with this question, something of a break-through, and it, more than any other decision taken by an Australian Government saw, a decline in the number of people seeking to come to Australia by asylum seeker vessel.

It's also true the agreement was to be reviewed after 12 months, and that was because it was completely expected that those who went to Papua New Guinea would be resettled, or at least that vast bulk of them would be resettled, within that period of time.

I think the point that Kevin is making in the last 24 hours is that the real failure here has been on the part of the Abbott Government in dealing with the question of resettlement, and that's continued with the Turnbull Government. They totally dropped the ball once they were elected, and it was months before you saw any substantive conversation between the then Minister Scott Morrison and his counterpart in PNG around the question of resettlement. It was not until after the

death of Reza Berati which was in early 2014, something like six or seven months after the Abbott Government being elected, that you actually saw sort of Ministerial dialogue being established between Australia and PNG around the question of resettlement.

Now, that is the failure, and from then on there has been a continued failure in trying to find other resettlement options around that world, which was exactly what we anticipated doing.

Now, there is the arrangement with the United States. That's, of course, welcome. It's good that the US is going to follow through on it, but of itself it's not enough and right now all the Government's eggs are in that basket. They need to be doing more, and there's no question that had we been re-elected in 2013 we would've been doing everything possible to have those people resettled and taken off Manus and in fact Nauru.

**HOST:** And if you had been elected and you'd done everything possible to see those people resettled, but some of them weren't, would you, as a Government, as Kevin Rudd asserted, brought them to Australia?

**MARLES:** Well, let's be really clear: what the agreement did was take Australia off the table. The clip that you played of Kevin at the time was correct. Those who came to Australia after 19 July 2013 by asylum seeker vessel were not going to be resettled in Australia - end of story.

**HOST:** Well I confess I'm confused, because Kevin Rudd has tweeted yesterday that that agreement was only for one year. He's done interviews this morning where he has said that they should've been brought to Australia three years ago. He specifically said that. Now, it's not making sense here to me. If you couldn't have found a home for those people, would they have been brought to Australia or not?

**MARLES:** A home resettlement option needed to be found for those people somewhere other than Australia. The point of the regional resettlement arrangement, struck at that time, was to take Australia off the table. That is the clear point of the agreement and that remains Labor's policy now. That is where we stand in relation to its effect and its import.

The failure of the Abbott-Turnbull Government has been to find options for those people to be resettled elsewhere in the world, and that's the real issue now. There is absolutely a tragedy unfolding in terms of the length of time that people have been put in the facilities of Manus and Nauru, far longer than any of us had ever anticipated. The relevance of the year review of that regional resettlement arrangement speaks to the sense of timing we had then about how long it would take to get people resettled in PNG or somewhere else in the world.

Here we are in 2017: we've got the arrangement with the US, but it's not enough of itself and the Government has completely dropped the ball, and when you look at the history of the Government's efforts in terms of finding resettlement options for these people, it is an appalling history. They have done precious little, something of a one-trick pony, to be honest, in this space, so that is the issue going forward now.

Now, obviously what Kevin says now and what he tweets now is a matter for him and I'll leave commentators to interpret, but I can tell you what was going on then and what the policy of the Labor Party is now and what needs to happen and the failure of this Government is about finding resettlement options elsewhere in the world for those people.

**HOST:** OK, but if you were elected tomorrow and the polls currently suggest you would, you would have to clean up that problem. What would Labor do? Would you bring these people from Manus that have languished there for four years, would you bring them to Australia?

**MARLES:** The answer to that question is no. It is absolutely critical that Australia be off the table. That is a fundamental point in terms of the whole apparatus that is in place to ensure that the journey between Java and Christmas Island does not restart. We shouldn't forget that that was a journey which saw an appalling loss of life associated with it, that had something to do with Australia and it's really important that that never happens again and we have a learning from that.

The fact that we have an offshore processing system which means that people will not be resettled in Australia is a critical ingredient in that, as is, in fact, the policy of turning around boats. Now, Labor's position on that is completely clear.

That said, to say that there is no responsibility for those people on Manus and Nauru is obviously not correct, and to be fair the Government sees that they have a responsibility, but they have not followed through on it in terms of finding resettlement options for those people elsewhere in the world. The US is a step forward but it doesn't resolve the whole question. There needs to be a whole lot more energy applied to that question from this government and they have failed to do it from the moment they got elected.

Our efforts, and this was outlined at our National Conference when we announced this two years ago, when I outlined it at that point, our efforts would be very much in terms of making sure that we put an enormous amount of energy into finding other options around the world and that's what we would do.

**HOST:** OK, Richard Marles in Geelong, thank you very much for your time today. We appreciate it.

**MARLES:** Thanks, Sam.

**ENDS**