



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

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
RADIO INTERVIEW
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SUBJECTS: Ninja Warrior; home affairs; asylum seekers

HOST: I wanted to check in with Richard Marles, who is the Shadow Defence Minister, the Labor spokesperson, who's on the line. Richard Marles, good afternoon.

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: Good afternoon, Ben. How are you?

HOST: How was your TV show with Christopher Pyne today?

MARLES: It was good, but probably not as good as *Ninja Warriors*. I'm loving that.

HOST: There you go.

MARLES: The kids in my household are obsessed with it.

HOST: Are they really?

MARLES: Yes, they are.

HOST: There's a good way of starting the interview.

MARLES: We're on Lee Cossa.

HOST: You're on who? Lee Cossa.

MARLES: Yup.

HOST: Lee Cossa, or Lee Cossey?

MARLES: Cossey! Well, the older brother of the rock climber.

HOST: Let's not keep talking *Ninja Warrior*, otherwise we'll get in trouble.

Now, I want to ask you about a couple of things today, but first of all the home affairs ministry. You're against, right?

MARLES: It's not so much that. It's more we don't see the argument's been made out for it, or at least we don't understand what is the problem that is being trying to be fixed here.

I suppose our starting point is when you're talking about national security our reflex, our instinct, is to be bipartisan, and we're happy to be that here as well, but we just want to understand what is the problem the Government is trying to fix? What is it that they are actually on about.

HOST: Can I have a go at answering that question?

MARLES: Sure.

HOST: We've had examples where agencies have not been talking to one another about vital information regarding terrorism.

MARLES: That's a fair enough issue, although in the myriad of briefings that I've had from these agencies over the years, they would describe their communication as being very good, but in any event if there is an issue there and this is the means by which you fix it, we're happy to have the conversation and work through it, but what you've just described there is actually not what the Government is saying. Right now, the critical thing is what do the agencies themselves say? The Government refuses to answer that question. They won't even say whether the agencies support this move.

It does lead you down the path of imagining that this has actually got more to do with the internal politics of the Cabinet than it does keeping Australians safe.

HOST: Let me ask you about Labor's Left faction, which is pushing the party to stop supporting the Federal Government's tough border protection laws. I don't know how many of my listeners will remember this, but you played a key role in strengthening Labor's position when it comes to border security policy because, well, you convinced Bill Shorten to toughen up the policy and essentially match what the Federal Government was doing, so how do you feel about the idea? I know that you're no longer the shadow immigration minister, you now have the defence portfolio, but how do you feel about the prospect that some within the Labor Party are trying to soften that policy?

MARLES: Well, look, you're going to have a myriad of views and people have their right to have their say, and that's fair enough, but let me tell you the policy is not going to change. We took a very big decision at our national conference a couple of years ago. We couldn't have been clearer about the fact that we know supported turn backs, making sure that the journey between Indonesia and Christmas Island was brought to an end for all time. Too many people lost their lives on that journey.

Frankly, I think to take any step which encouraged anyone to get on a boat now raises real moral questions, given what we know about the danger of that journey. As far as I'm concerned, and as far as the Party is concerned, there is a decision that's been made, a position which has been taken. We took it into the last election. We'll take it into the next. It's what a future Labor government will do.

HOST: What do you make of this epiphany that Kevin Rudd seems to have had, the former Labor prime minister, who claims that refugees at Manus Island should have been resettled in Australia three years ago? In 2013 then Prime Minister Rudd struck the deal with Papua New Guinea for asylum seekers to be processed there on Manus Island. He's come out saying that that agreement with PNG was for one year only, so the asylum seekers should have been brought to Australia three years ago. Back in 2013 he said that illegal asylum seekers would never be resettled in Australia. He's trying to have it both ways, surely?

MARLES: Well, look, I obviously can't speak for Kevin in terms of what he says now. I was involved at the time. I was in PNG when that agreement was signed, and the significance of it, it was a really important decision taken by an Australian Government, was to take Australia off the table, to make it clear that anyone who came by boat to Australia after 19 July 2013 would not be resettled in this country.

That's a strong and hard position to take, but it's important because it does take Australia off the table and removes any incentive whatsoever for people smugglers in Indonesia to set up these trips. It's really important that we maintain that stand.

HOST: Are you doing your best to avoid slapping down Kevin Rudd, are you?

MARLES: I'll tell you where Kevin was right. Kevin-

HOST: -Where he was right?

MARLES: I'll tell you. The part of this where Kevin is right is that the agreement was to be reviewed after a year, and that's because we imagined that the bulk of those who were on Manus and Nauru would be resettled, either in PNG or somewhere else in the world, during that period of time. It is absolutely the case that the Government has dropped the ball on the question of finding resettlement options for these people around the world, and we should be keeping pressure on the Government to make sure that they get people out of those facilities into resettlement options around the world, but that has to be in a context where-

HOST: -It's a bit rich for Kevin Rudd to be offering advice when we know what he did wrong. He's the bloke who changed the policy. We had 50,000 people arrive on board more than 800 boats. 1,200 people lost their lives at sea. 8,000 children were in detention and Kevin Rudd wants to give lecture? Please.

MARLES: Well, we've had this conversation before, and I've been happy to say on your program that mistakes were made. I think laying all the blame at Kevin's feet isn't entirely fair, and the Coalition didn't help in not supporting the Malaysian arrangement which would have made a real difference here, but if you take everything you've just said, Kevin actually deserves credit for the decision he made

in July of 2013. It was a really important decision. The way the Labor Party takes that decision then, and has taken it since, is that it was about taking Australia off the table, and a future Labor Government would keep that in place.

HOST: Good to talk to you. Thanks very much for coming on.

MARLES: No worries. Thanks, Ben.

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