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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TV INTERVIEW
SKY AM AGENDA
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SUBJECTS: Dual citizenship; home affairs, Talisman Sabre; South China Sea

HOST: We've got Shadow Defence Minister Richard Marles with us. Thanks for your time today, Richard. I better start with just clarifying, I don't know if you've been asked this before: any dual citizenship issues to deal with?

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: I don't believe I have any dual citizenship issues to deal with. Look, I feel for Matt Canavan. How could you not? Indeed, we all feel for Larissa Waters and Scott Ludlam. It's a difficult situation that they found themselves in, but at the end of the day the Constitution is the Constitution and we need to be doing what we can to make sure that we are complying with that and there's obviously a High Court process that will play out in relation to Matt Canavan, and that's going to answer a number of questions in this space. Certainly from a Labor point of view, we go through a rigorous checking process to ensure that our candidates do comply with the Constitution.

HOST: All right, I'm interested in your thoughts on the home affairs portfolio. Labor was saying let's get briefings. Let's hear from the agencies. Have you sought any out? Are you getting them? Are you hearing whether they think this is a good idea?

MARLES: Well we're certainly seeking those briefings out. As yet we've not had them in depth such that we can I could answer that question for you, and this is part of the issue, Tom. Here we are a week down the track and the Government still hasn't really explained what the problem is that they're trying to fix with the creation of the home affairs portfolio, and I think it leaves us thinking that there's got much more to do with politics than it has with policy.

You have a triumphant Peter Dutton. You've got poor George there cowering in the corner. There was a winner and a loser here and you know whilst that soap opera you know we can all look at on programs like this it doesn't go to the question of governing Australia or maintaining the national security of our people, and that ought to be the focus when you're talking about decisions of this kind.

HOST: If this is bedded down, though, by the end of the year it's going to be a pretty huge operation and amalgamation. Labor would presumably tread pretty carefully about disbanding it. That would be pretty big upheaval within this area of national security.

MARLES: Well our approach is going to be one on what's in the national interest, and we've made it clear that our instinct and our reflex when it comes to national security is to engage in a bipartisan way, and if there is some sense in what the Government's doing we're absolutely up for that discussion, but the Government have to make a case here and they have utterly failed to do that. As I say, a week down the track we're still none the wiser as to exactly what is the issue that the Government is trying to resolve by the creation of a home affairs portfolio, and all I can tell you is that the way we'll go about this is focussing on the national interest and what's good policy.

HOST: Well we'll see what the briefings are. I want to get your thoughts on this debate at the moment when the UN and the Australian Government. The UNHCR has been saying essentially it wanted Australia to be open to resettling some refugees with family connections - only a handful or so, 36 is the figure out so far - in exchange for them liaising and resettling more than 1,250 in the US. If Labor was in charge, if you have a similar situation down the track, would you consider this a pretty good quid pro quo?

MARLES: What matters here, and it's a firm stance but it's a very important one, is that people who arrived in Australia by boat after July of 2013 are not resettled in our country. It's important that that stance is maintained because that's actually what takes Australia off the table and that's an import -

[INTERVIEW BREAK]

HOST: Let's go back to Richard Marles, though. I'd like to get your thoughts on what's happening at the moment with the Chinese spy ship. Now, this was observing the US and Australian military exercise off shore, it was in international waters. Do you think we should be at all concerned about this?

MARLES: Well, firstly no-one is suggesting that there was any breach of the UN Convention on the law of the sea here. Exercise *Talisman Sabre* was a huge exercise. We do it every two years, but this was the biggest one we've done and it's a huge exercise that we do with the United States. It demonstrated really impressive levels of cooperation between Australia and the United States, and indeed impressive levels of military capability when you put our two forces together.

None of it was kept as a secret. There were media there, there were open days associated with it, and in one sense it's unsurprising that other countries would seek to observe it.

I'm less concerned about the Chinese action. I'm much more interested in what we're able to achieve from a military perspective. We had the biggest amphibious landing that Australia has undertaken since the Second World War. What matters with

Talisman Sabre is the really impressive military capability that we were able to demonstrate and perform and do so hand-in-glove with the US and other countries.

HOST: Just very quickly, what about the threat apparently made by the Chinese against Vietnam and a gas exploration that's been halted there in the South China Sea - is this a concern?

MARLES: Well, again, what matters in the South China Sea from an Australian point of view is the UN Convention on the law of the sea and that the norms and the laws around that are maintained. We have so much of our trade going through the South China Sea, that is our national interest here and that's what we ought to focus on and we've expressed concerns. Labor has certainly expressed concerns previously about some of the Chinese action there, in particular the artificial islands, and the court of arbitration last year made its decision very plain in relation to that, but the UN Convention on the law of the sea is fundamental to our national economy and our prosperity and we need to uphold it.

HOST: We're right out of time, Shadow Defence Minister Richard Marles. Thank you for that today on *AM Agenda*.

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