



**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TV INTERVIEW
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SUBJECTS: *Citizenship; North Korea; Harry Harris; inequality*

HOST: For more on this and other issues of the day I spoke to the Shadow Defence, Minister Richard Marles. I began by asking him shouldn't there be an audit of all MPs now, given the questions around that Labor Senator Katy Gallagher.

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: Look, I think that the citizen issue is going to come and go. The High Court is going to make its decision and processes will be put in place. I don't think we need to overreact to this.

Ultimately it is about having systems in place and we're confident about the systems we've had in place as the Labor Party, and indeed I think Katy Gallagher situation bears that out. She indicated prior to her becoming a senator the situation with her parents, her mother's Ecuadorean birth, that was researched and it was clear that she didn't have a problem as a result. That's basically the process that we go through within the Labor Party.

Look, this is going to get sorted one way or another. I think the much bigger issue here has been the surprise of how the Government's reacted to it. They've been panicked, they've been shrill, at times they've been completely hysterical, and it's the way the Government has reacted to this which is going to last longer, not the issue itself.

HOST: Is it really overreacting to, basically what they want is a level playing field. They're saying, well, they have been upfront with their information where it's been appropriate so Labor should too.

MARLES: Well, there's a level playing field here. It's called the Constitution. There is a system in place and no-one is suggesting any wrongdoing, I think, on the part of anyone in the Labor Party, and if there is material that people have which they want to bring forward about any member of the Labor Party and their citizenship it can be answered. That's what we've been doing.

Ultimately, those who have had circumstances which have required themselves to refer themselves to the High Court have done so, and the High Court will make its decision.

You know, we are seeing a panicked reaction on the part of the Government to this. They've had one rule for Matt Canavan, another rule for Barnaby Joyce. It's been completely inconsistent.

The High Court is going to make a decision. We are going to get through all of this. It's actually not our biggest issue in the world. What's much more concerning is the reaction of the Government.

HOST: Well, let's turn our attention to some big issues. The regional one as Shadow Defence Minister that you'd be focussing on is that out of North Korea, and we're hearing again from the White House that the military option is on the table, but is it really, given just how much damage, how many lives would be lost, if there were to be an attempt to take out the nuclear capability in North Korea?

MARLES: Well, the starting point with North Korea is to condemn what North Korea are doing. They're in breach of UN Security Council resolutions. Obviously their actions in the last few days have been highly provocative and that's been consistent with the way in which they've been acting over the last few months, and the starting point here is how the North Korean government and regime have gone about their issues.

Obviously, it would be far better to deal with this in a diplomatic way. Your point is right that any military options are very difficult. But there is-

HOST: -They're almost impossible aren't they? Not just difficult.

MARLES: Well I think diplomatic measures have a long way to go. It's important that China plays its part and I'm encouraged by the way China has been acting in the last few weeks, both in terms of the position that they took on the UN Security Council but also tightening of their sanctions against North Korea. We need to give that an opportunity to bite and to have an impact on the North Korean regime, but the world needs to stand united to bring an end to the North Korea is doing.

HOST: But the sanctions, if you look at the UN Security Council resolutions, will the sanctions work, because from my understanding I don't think North Korea's honoured a UN Security Council resolution since 2006?

MARLES: Well, the global community can stand united. China has a particular role to play and it is playing more of a role. The sanctions that it has put in place in the last few weeks to not take imports out of North Korea, in terms of commodities such as iron ore. That's an important step forward. I've spoken with you previously this year about my concern that earlier in the year, in fact, China was increasing its imports from North Korea of iron ore, which was giving North Korea a much needed hard currency. So if that is turned off, that tap is turned off, that's a good thing and I do think we need to allow time for those sanctions to bite and for that diplomatic measure to take its course.

It is very important that the world stand united in relation to North Korea. It's also a moment, though, where we need to have very clear eyes and sober heads because this is a dangerous moment that the world is facing.

HOST: We've seen the show of force by Kim Jong-un earlier in the week and then overnight a show of force by the United States off Hawaii, shooting down a ballistic missile to basically send the message to Pyongyang that you can fire off your missile but we've got the capacity to knock it out of the sky. You encouraged by that?

MARLES: Well, I think America has got an absolute right to demonstrate its missile defence capability in the context of what North Korea has been doing, and so, sure, I think that that's a reasonable step for America to take, but again we just really need to be, as a global community, making it very clear to North Korea that their actions are totally unacceptable.

HOST: Is one of the concerns here that if this were happening at another time, during a different presidential approach like the strategic patience doctrine that we saw under Obama, that we might not be as worried, but simply we don't know how Trump is going to react here?

MARLES: I think it's important that we have a sense of predictability from all of those on the global stage. I do think it's important that a hard edge is shown by the US in respect of North Korea, and it seems to me that was actually the direction that both the Republicans and the Democrats were going during the course of the presidential campaign.

I also think it's very important to be doing everything that can be done to engage China, and again that seems to be the consensus across the political divide within the US and there has been some success in engaging China in the path they've now taken.

It is important that all the players on the global stage act in a predictable way. That, I think, is the way in which we send the clearest message and get the best results in terms of trying to shape North Korea's behaviour.

HOST: One of the hawks when it comes to China within the United States is Admiral Harry Harris. He's the commander of the Pacific Command, based in Hawaii. You're very familiar with Admiral Harris and his career. They're talking about him as a possible next ambassador from the United States to Australia, so that would be quite a clear message to Beijing, wouldn't it, if they were to send one of those hawks on China policy to Canberra?

MARLES: Well, let's see how all of that plays out, but there's no doubt that Admiral Harris is a fine public servant. I've met him on a number of occasions in Hawaii. He has done an excellent job as the Commander of Pacific Command, which is the largest of US commands, and obviously the command which is very pertinent to Australia and our national security interests. Admiral Harris knows this country very well. He has visited Australia on numerous occasions, and as you say he is very familiar with the strategic situations of East Asia, the rise of China and what that means. Admiral Harris as a very serious player and a great friend of Australia.

HOST: I want to wrap up on domestic policy. We began with it. We'll come back to domestic issues and this speech by Scott Morrison today warning about, again that Bill Shorten is the most left-wing Labor leader in generations, and Simon Benson reports in the Australian today that the Treasurer is putting a price tag - \$31 billion - on the Labor tax hit to the economy. It is a contrast with the Government's approach.

MARLES: As you know I've been a friend of Bill Shorten since the time we were at university and I've never heard that claim made in respect of Bill Shorten until the last few weeks, so it is deeply amusing to me I have to say.

Scott Morrison lacks credibility. Only a couple weeks ago he came out with a figure which he claimed was based on PBO analysis. They had disavowed that by lunchtime on that given day. I think the only issue here is how long this new figure lasts in the public domain. It's a trick he seems to be pulling every couple of weeks.

If at the end of the day the heart of the criticism is that Labor is active in trying to tackle inequality, well, to be honest, Kieran, we're guilty as charged. I mean we are trying to -

HOST: -And taxing more. A lot more.

MARLES: Well, if we want to talk about taxing more, this is a Government which in its last budget increased taxes by tens of billions of dollars, so this is a very high-taxing government itself.

The sort of taxes we're talking about in relation to negative gearing, if we're looking at what we're doing in respect of trusts, multinationals, superannuation: all of these go to areas of the tax system where there is an opportunity to have a much fairer tax system which actually does something to improve the budgets bottom line and tackles inequality along the way. I mean that's what we are about.

This government is precisely the opposite. They do tax - let's not for a moment believe that this is a government which doesn't go down the path of taxation itself. Indeed, in their last budget: you earn less than average wages, you get a tax increase. You happen to earn a million dollars a year: you get a tax cut. I mean that's what they think is fair. We have a different view about that.

This is a government heavy on rhetoric, not so strong on policy or actually governing Australia. No matter how much rhetoric they use that's not going to find somebody a job, that's going to make a house any cheaper, that's not going to tackle the issue of inequality in our country.

HOST: Shadow Defence Minister Richard Marles, appreciate your time. I'll talk to you soon.

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