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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
SKY NEWS LIVE
PYNE & MARLES
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SUBJECTS: Electoral Redistributions; Energy Policy; North Korea; Natural Disaster Resilience

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Good afternoon, and welcome to *Pyne & Marles* here on Sky News live on Friday 1 September at 1 o'clock eastern standard time. I'm Christopher Pyne and I'm here in Adelaide and my colleague is Richard Marles and he's in Geelong today. Welcome home Richard, you've been on the road, we missed you last week.

RICHARD MARLES: Well, thank you for that Christopher. Now I'm told you're wearing an Adelaide Crows tie, and given they're not playing this week, is that a case of premature supportification?

PYNE: Well I was wearing on this morning on *The Today Show* because of course the qualifying final is next Thursday night against GWS here in Adelaide, so this morning was my last chance to wear the Crows tie before the qualifying final on the *The Today Show* and I'll be wearing it again next Friday when we beat GWS and continue on our trip towards the flag, so it's very exciting times.

MARLES: Well fair enough, and I guess as minor premiers you should enjoy the moment.

Look, it's good to be back. Last week I was in PNG at this time, and in fact on this day commemorating the 75th anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of Milne Bay, which is one of the three battles, along with the Battle of the Coal Sea and Kokoda which represent the kind of southern extremity of the Japanese progression during the second world war. So it's not a battle that is spoken about a lot, but very significant, and the first land defeat of the Japanese in the Second World War, so a very significant moment and it was very enjoyable.

PYNE: And the first Victoria Cross, I think, awarded in the Second World War to an Australian - is that right?

MARLES: Indeed, to, I think it was Corporal French who received that Victoria Cross-

PYNE: -OK, I'm sorry I have to interrupt you, Richard, we're crossing from Sky News Live to the Acting Chief Health Officer of Victoria to deal with an issue around some deaths in a Wangaratta nursing home.

[PROGRAM BREAK]

PYNE: Welcome back to the show, and Richard was about to introduce our three subjects for today and our guest, so over to you Richard.

MARLES: Yesterday the Australian Electoral Commission announced that there is going to be a redistribution before the next election, so we're going to have a chat about that. This week the Prime Minister brought in the energy retailers again to talk about the question of energy policy, so we're going to chew the fat on that one, and of course we had the very concerning development over the course of the last week of another test by North Korea, which saw a missile traverse Japanese air space, we'll be talking about that. Our guest today is Dr John Bates from the Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience, and given what we've been watching on the TV around events in Texas we're going to talk about Australia's disaster preparedness at this time.

But to begin with it's the question of the redistribution, and the Australian Electoral Commission, as it was required to do by the end of August, announced that its assessment of population going into the next federal election will see South Australia lose a seat, Victoria pick up a seat and the ACT pick up a seat, which actually will mean that we'll be electing 151 Members to the House of Representatives at the next election.

This is a routine process Christopher, which has very significant outcomes. What do you make of the consequences of what the AEC has decided?

PYNE: Well Richard it's an unsettling process for those of us who are in the House of Representatives, I'm sure you'd agree, but it's a very fair process. It's really taken out of our hands. The electoral commission has a whole group of people that do this at arm's length from the political parties. Sure, we make submission, but if you compare what we do to the United States system it's chalk and cheese. In the United States the Congress gets together and discusses amongst themselves how the boundaries should look, and there are some pretty weird and wonderful outcomes, whereas here in Australia the Electoral Commission handles it. They hand down the final boundaries. We seek our pre-selections. We get on with the job. This is about my third redistribution so I'm pretty sanguine about it. There'll be a seat, hopefully, that I can stand for and I'll continue to try and represent the good people of the east and inner north eastern suburbs.

But from the outcomes, I mean, you must be pleased because in Victoria it looks like a seat will be in Labor heartland, whereas in South Australia it's a bit more up in the air.

MARLES: Well, I was going to ask you a bit more about how you saw it playing out in South Australia, but you're right, well, firstly you're right about the process, and it is important to make that point because in other parts of the world it is not at arm's length from the political process, and given that the outcomes can be so significant it's important that it is the way it is and we should be grateful for that.

You're right, what we would expect to see is a new seat created in Melbourne's west, and obviously a new seat created in the ACT around Canberra. Both of those places are parts of the world which in the past have returned Labor members, so we don't take anything for granted, but obviously we feel good about the prospect of contesting those areas. But what do you think it's going to mean: will it be in Adelaide that we see the loss of a seat, in metropolitan Adelaide?

PYNE: Well it's probably high time that Canberrans returned a Liberal Member to the House of Representatives, so I'm hopeful that there might actually be a seat created in Canberra that we can win.

In South Australia, look, it's completely up in the air really. My seat of Sturt is 1 of 11. It's no more or less likely to be merged or abolished. They start on the outside extremities of the state, as you know, and move inwards. The last time we lost a seat it was Wakefield, the time before that it was Hawker over on the western suburbs in the beach areas.

The bottom line though is the Weatherill Government has caused this to happen because they haven't been promoting jobs or population. In the last 16 years we've lost three seats while Western Australia's gained three seats, so it's a malaise for our state.

But moving on to energy, which is a big topic, one of the most important topics, let's have a look at this.

MALCOLM TURNBULL [CLIP]: Too many Australians are paying more for their electricity than they need to. We've secured the agreement of the energy retailers to write to more of their customers to inform them that a better deal is available.

TURNBULL [CLIP]: We are absolutely committed as far as possible to coming to a bipartisan agreement on this clean energy target.

MARK BUTLER [CLIP]: We will present a proposal on that shortly.

DAVID SPEERS [CLIP]: Your own while paper told you that there'd be an impact on prices, and yet you've said you weren't warned.

BUTLER [CLIP]: No, everyone knew there was going to be an impact on prices.

PYNE: Well gosh Richard, yesterday Sky wrought out of Mark Butler an admission that what had previously been the position of Labor, that they didn't know that gas prices were going to go up was in fact completely wrong, and that you were warned

when you were in government that gas prices would increase, putting pressure on energy. Why is Labor all over the shop on this issue?

MARLES: Well, let's not get overly excited here. Let's be clear about the concession that, if you call it that, that's being made. What we understood was that you would see an increase in the gas price up to the Asian parity price, so what that meant was a price of say \$4 or \$5 back at the time that we were in government, might rise to what the Asian parity price is today, which is around \$9. That's the only thing we understood.

What we've actually see because of the behaviour since you've been in government of a number of the LNG gas exports is in fact the domestic price go up to \$15, potentially to \$20. That is the issue that has caused the crisis in Australia today, and in that respect we've been saying for years now that there needs to be a national interest test in terms of making sure that some of that gas is available to the domestic market. You guys have been dragged kicking and screaming to that point.

PYNE: But Richard we've now managed to get out of Labor that they knew that the gas prices were going to go up, but we can't get from Labor whether they're in favour or against closing coal fired power stations and more, you won't admit to that. But you voted in the Senate to close coal fired power stations, and in South Australia, of course, the Labor government here was proud of the closure of the Northern Power coal fired power station, so are you or aren't you in favour of closing coal fired power stations?

MARLES: Listen, Christopher, we're happy for the market to determine all of that, and the issue there is that there is no private investment money out there to build coal fired power stations in the future, unless you engage in public subsidy of them, and that's the question that is now vexing the Government party room where you've got people in your own party room who say that we should be spending taxpayer money on seeing coal fired power station. Now, Finkel in his report said it would be a very extraordinary-

PYNE: -Clock's run out, you've got to move on.

MARLES: -It'd be an extraordinary thing if that were to be the case, but we do need some policy certainty from you.

But we do need to do the next issue and that's the very concerning development over the course of the last week where we saw North Korea test a missile which overshoot Japan. Take a listen to this.

NIKKI HALEY [CLIP]: It is time for the North Korean regime to recognise the danger they are putting themselves in. The United States will not allow their lawlessness to continue.

JULIE BISHOP [CLIP]: His actions are not only provocative and dangerous and threatening, they are illegal.

MALCOM TURNBULL [CLIP]: Essentially, they're standover merchants, what they're seeking to do is to intimidate other countries to not impose sanctions.

MARLES: Well there's no doubt this was a very provocative act on the part of North Korea, and there's no doubt that it escalates this issue dramatically. So Christopher, where do you see this all going from here?

PYNE: Well this story's just not going away unfortunately Richard. The Security Council very sensibly, including Russia and China, voted to increase sanctions on North Korea, North Korea's response has been to fire a missile across northern Japan, as we saw this week. China, to its credit, is putting the screws on North Korea in terms of their sanctions, we want to encourage them to continue to do so. It's vitally important as North Korea's biggest economic partner it can go in a number of different ways. The way that we don't want it to go is towards a war on the Korea peninsula, but we will stand with the United States, we have to because if North Korea can launch a missile that hits continental US it can do so to hit Australia, so we are in lock-step. That's the way we see it. How do you see it on the other side of the aisle?

MARLES: Oh look, I think that describes it well. It is a really concerning development, and the international community, and of course ourselves and the United States, need to stand together in putting as much pressure as we can on North Korea in relation to this and getting China engaged, as you say, is key and it's good we've seen what they've done.

I think the issue going forward is if we see a nuclear enabled North Korea that obviously increases the odds of miscalculation. It raises the stakes in any conflict.

I think the other point to make, which is not being talked about enough is that if we take it as a fait accompli that this is what North Korea now possesses, being a nuclear country, it is going to put enormous pressure in the medium term on other countries in east Asia to walk down this path, and if we see nuclear proliferation in our part of the world it's a much more dangerous part of the world in which to live, and it's why this is such a significant issue, and why we do need to be working with the international community as much as possible to stop this from proceeding.

But we have run out of time for this side of the program. Join us after the break when we're going to be talking with Dr John Bates about Australia's disaster readiness. We'll see you then.

[AD BREAK]

[PROGRAM BREAKS FOR EXTERNAL CROSS]

PYNE: Welcome back to *Pyne & Marles*. Obviously Richard that's a very sad story. As a former Minister for Aged Care, unfortunately, I was a Minister when five or six residents died in a nursing home in Melbourne more than 10 years ago, and it's always a very, very difficult issue to manage and obviously we'll find out more about that as time goes on.

MARLES: Yeah look that's right. It's a very sad story indeed and obviously there are a lot of risks with flu in these facilities, and one way or another I've been going into a number of these of late and your heart goes out to all the families involved.

PYNE: Indeed, but we don't want to keep our guest waiting any longer, obviously he would understand the importance of that story. We did want to cover today the issue of the Houston floods and disaster response and resilience, let's have a look at this really heart-warming clip.

[VIDEO CLIP PLAYS]

PYNE: These kinds of natural disasters bring out the best in people, and in that case of course human beings looking after man's best friend. So today we thought we'd have on the program an expert on disaster resilience, the director of the Institute of Disaster Resilience here in Australia coming out of Melbourne, that's Dr John Bates. Welcome to the show, John.

JOHN BATES: Thanks, Christopher.

PYNE: I guess the first question I wanted to ask you was how far have we come in Australia in terms of disaster resilience and response to disasters over the last couple of decades? I imagine we're a lot more sophisticated today than we used to be.

BATES: We are indeed, and I think we've come a long way over the last couple of decades, for things that we know about, and for things that we've experienced before. What we've seen now with Houston, what we saw with Cyclone Debbie up in Queensland, is that nature's now starting to throw at us things that are beyond what we had imagined in the past. And if you look at Debbie and what happened in Houston, one of the things that caused a lot of the damage there was not the wind, wasn't the wind event coming through, it was the slow-moving rain and the water just kept coming down. And really, with the planning that we've had in place that's been in our planning for decades, those are the things that are starting to come to us now with the quantity of water that's coming down is beyond what we'd imagined in the past.

MARLES: So John, with that in mind, in terms of preparing for disasters, obviously there must be a whole lot of pre-planning which goes into it, but it must be difficult to predict the kind of things that you are coming across and therefore what pre-planning you can actually have in place for a disaster.

BATES: That's really true, and I think if you look at planning, planning happens in a couple of places. It happens at a government level with all the agencies and the community service organisations, but it also happens at the individual level, and at the individual level there are things we can do right up to the time that a disaster happens, but we need to start them well in advance of that so we know what matters, we know what the plans are like and we try to avoid getting into a situation where we're starting to make decisions where we think our lives are at risk, when we don't know what we do and when we're experiencing something else before, and if we get to that point we start to make decisions based on emotion rather than logic,

and when that happens that's when we start to see tragedy, it's when we start to see people make some really difficult decisions that can cost them their lives.

PYNE: Now I'm also interested to know John, because obviously as a Member of Parliament, and Richard's the same, we've covered lots of these stories over the last couple of decades, whether it's bushfires or cyclones or floods, and there's always a tremendous amount of interest at the time, as there should be, right across the country in the media, in government, and obviously the communities affected. But as somebody from the Disaster Resilience Institute you must've studied some of these things. How long does it take communities to recover from something as dramatic as, say, cyclone Debbie, or the Houston floods, I mean what would you expect a community to start looking like in the next few years or even months, what is the recovery process?

BATES: The recovery process can be really complicated, and it can last a long time and it depends on so many factors. But in reality people can look like they're back to normal, they're going through processes, but they are struggling: businesses that lose income, houses that are disconnected from their families, people that are thrown out of their communities and don't know where they live. I think one of the things that we find is public there's an outpouring of support during the response phase, there's an outpouring of support not long after that and the recovery phase can go on for years, particularly in areas where there's a lot of decimation. What do we put back first, how do we put it back, and are they the right things for a community, and I think one of the things we need to take into account is that every community is unique in its own way and the things that we build in one community, or rebuild, the things we do to support them might be completely different in another place. The message that comes out loud and clear is we need to talk to these communities and say 'what can we do with you, what would you like to do yourself, how can we help you, this is what we're planning, how does that fit in with where you think you need to go' rather than just walking in and saying 'we're here, we're here to help, we're from the government' and really might, it might be the right thing to do, but without the conversation to work out whether it is the right thing to do it creates tensions that could in fact be unnecessary.

MARLES: And John, we have cyclones, we have floods, we have bushfires, in terms of those types of disasters is one of those worse than the other in terms of times it takes for communities to recover?

BATES: I don't think so. If you're in the middle of it I think you'd find that you'd be affected, so it's really the magnitude of the event, rather than what type of event it is, because if you've lost your house, whether your house was burned by a bushfire, whether your house was destroyed by flood, whether you've lost a family member by flood or fire it's still just as tragic and I think it's unfair to say that one is worse than the other. I think one of the things that is potentially difficult is when we have floods, as we've seen in parts of Australia that go on for months, there is a huge mental health issue that comes with people who just can't get back into their houses because the event is gone. Public interest has disappeared because of the flood has been there forever and they're just left on their own.

MARLES: Well, John thank you for coming in today. Given all that we've been watching out of Texas this week we really did want to cover this subject and it's a very interesting perspective you bring to bear.

BATES: Thanks Richard, I appreciate the time.

MARLES: And that brings us to a point where we are out of time so join us next week on Sky News when we'll be joining you at one o'clock on *Pyne & Marles*. We'll see you then.

ENDS