



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

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
TV INTERVIEW  
SKY NEWS LIVE  
PYNE & MARLES  
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**SUBJECTS:** *Energy prices; media reform; marriage; Israel and Palestine*

**RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE:** Well, welcome to *Pyne & Marles*. I'm Richard Marles, and unfortunately I'm not here with Christopher Pyne today, who has been the victim of the vagaries of flight schedules around Australia, but fitting in very admirably at late notice is Sam Maiden. Sam, welcome.

**SAM MAIDEN:** Every time I fill in for Christopher you ruin it by saying that he's not here. I should be able to have the opportunity to say 'and I'm Christopher Pyne'. That would be much more fun.

**MARLES:** Well, OK, I think you got the line out, but it obviously means that we are going to have a fair and balanced show here today, notwithstanding Christopher's absence. So, Sam, you would clearly agree the Government is going terribly.

**MAIDEN:** Well, I'm glad that you have finally manned up on this program. I think you allow Christopher Pyne to push you around far too much. What I have enjoyed this week, I will say on a serious note, is I have enjoyed the Government seeming to not quite get the fact that they have got themselves into a sticky, sticky, sticky web with this weird argument that they're having with you guys over whether or not power prices have gone up and picking over the detail, and every time they basically come up to the dispatch box – and look, the detail is important, I think Labor got its figures wrong, the idea that they've gone up by \$1,000, I think that figure is not right, but I think politically the idea that you are going to repeatedly get up to the dispatch box and tell families that are really struggling, that have got low wage growth, there's a lot of pressure, hip-pocket pressure, despite the fact that inflation isn't really going at a galloping pace, is really, really politically stupid, so let us know, now, like, is that what's going on in the tactics committee, that you're just clipping up ads for your 'working families have never had it better off' campaign at the next election?

**MARLES:** So, I'm just going to reveal to the viewers of Australia, the vast hordes out there that tune in at this time: we always have a pre-broadcast meeting where we go through the plan. Sam has just thrown it out right now, so we are now absolutely free-falling, but let's go on with that topic, which is one of the topics of the day because it's been a big debate throughout the week. We've got a clip – just have a look at this.

**JOSH FRYDENBURG [CLIP]:** AGL will take to its board a proposal to keep Liddell open.

**BILL SHORTEN [CLIP]:** This is 50-year-old equipment.

**INNES WILLOX [CLIP]:** The debate has done quite frankly has done nothing to give business confidence.

**FRYDENBERG [CLIP]:** I'm not going to debate those issues in relation to the Clean Energy Target.

**BARNABY JOYCE [CLIP]:** I just want to make sure we keep coal-fired power in the mix.

**MARK BUTLER [CLIP]:** Since this Government came to office, power bills have gone up by \$1,000.

**FRYDENBERG [CLIP]:** This is false.

**MARLES:** So, Sam, obviously as you rightly said there was a to-ing and fro-ing in the parliament about prices, but at the end of the day I reckon this is the single biggest test for Malcolm Turnbull's leadership within his own party room. If the Government doesn't come to their senses and have some kind of clean energy target, then what it demonstrates is that they are paralysed, they can't make any difficult decision at all, and they're just not in a position to govern because the industry is crying out for some investment markers, and without a clean energy target they're literally are none, and so what we've got is an investment strike on the one hand and old power assets going offline on the other which inevitably is going to throw prices up. Do you reckon it's as serious as that for Malcolm Turnbull?

**MAIDEN:** It's not a religious debate, is it? I think that the conservatives within the Liberal Party are right to the extent that the majority of families don't really want a necessarily kumbaya and calling it a clean energy target. They just want cheaper, more affordable power, and if you can do that in the context of reducing emissions, well sure, that's important, but I mean if they change the name to something else and if they include coal in some way in the mix, what's wrong with that? Mark Butler and Bill Shorten have already said that they would not necessarily oppose a clean energy target if it includes some sort of incentives for clean coal, so what's your problem with it, really? Haven't you guys already said that you will be OK with them having a clean energy target that includes potentially some incentives for clean coal in the mix?

**MARLES:** At the end of the day they have to get to some form of dealing with the issue that the market is basically moving beyond coal. There is not an investment market out there for new coal in the future, and they have to give some markers for investment going down the track, because if they don't what you're going to see is what we're currently seeing, and that is in essence an investment strike, and you're right: we can sort of talk at that level. The way voters and consumers are going to deal with this issue is what's happening to their power bills, but the inevitable consequence of power going offline on the one hand and no investment on the other is that power bills go up, and that's what they're seeing.

**MAIDEN:** The thing that I just find weird about the whole debate is that everyone has adopted these positions that are completely counter-intuitive to their original positions, so Labor, for example, keeps jumping up and down in parliament demanding that the Prime Minister bring forward those brakes on gas exports, even though we had Mark Butler admit on Sky News that everyone knew that this was going to be a problem and the previous Labor administration that you were a part of didn't do anything about it. Then you've got the Government arguing this whole thing, it's Labor's fault electricity prices are up, when there's an argument that one of the reasons why they've gone up is that Tony Abbott got rid of a price on carbon and left in place the renewable energy regime, the renewable energy incentives, so there was incentive to put money into renewables, not necessarily coal, and everyone's just arguing these bizarre positions that are kind of completely counterintuitive to what they've actually done when they had the power to do something, so I think voters are probably welcome to be a bit cranky with both sides of politics.

**MARLES:** Yeah, I'm not going to accept that entirely. We have consistently been, in one form or another, about pricing carbon right back to 2006-2007, when John Howard was spruiking an emissions trading scheme as what was going to be the policy of his Conservative government. What we had is Malcolm Turnbull who, I mean, this pretty well defined him as a politician such that he lost his leadership of the Liberal Party first time round over this issue, and now he has just turned into basically the biggest scaredy cat in Australia and is completely unable to deal with his own party room on the issue.

**MAIDEN:** The other thing that's curious about the clean energy target, and I take the point that some people just don't buy the idea that a clean energy target would reduce prices or put downward pressure on electricity prices, although the Finkel Report insists that it would, is that you also just have all of these Liberal MPs running around saying 'we can't possibly have a clean energy target, we've just got to talk about electricity prices', despite the fact that the point of the clean energy target, according to Finkel, was that it was going to put downward pressure on electricity prices. It's just a really bizarre argument.

You just can only hope, really, that the Coalition MPs who are saying that clean energy target won't reduce prices are right, because otherwise they're really chewing off their own arm. I mean, they're basically refusing to implement something which might actually do exactly what the Government claims they want to achieve. It's a very, very, very weird debate, but I do think that, regardless, you can split all the hairs you want on how much electricity prices have gone up by or how much they haven't gone up by, I do think politically it's a mugs game having that argument with you guys. I really think it's a mug's game. I know the Government thinks that they've had a good week and they've got Labor on the ropes. I don't think they do when they are just continually essentially telling families that prices haven't gone up for electricity, or they haven't gone up as much as you think. I don't think anyone who's received a bill lately, particularly after winter, thinks that.

**MARLES:** Spot on. I could not have put that better.

**MAIDEN:** Well done.

**MARLES:** Let's talk about some other issues, because there's a bit to get through.

Yesterday the Government got through its media reform bill. Take a look at this.

**NICK XENOPHON [CLIP]:** This has been the most difficult and protracted and robust set of negotiations I've engaged with in 20 years.

**SAM DASTYARI [CLIP]:** A dirty deal that is going to hurt public broadcasting.

**MITCH FIFIELD [CLIP]:** The media laws that we have were crafted for an era which today is barely recognisable.

**DAVID LEYONHJELM [CLIP]:** In the end I've had to sort of hold my nose and say yes I'll go along with it.

**MARLES:** So, Sam, I think at the end of the day these reforms will enable big media companies to get bigger, and when those mergers happen you can bet your bottom dollar that we will see redundancies occur as a result, so people will lose jobs because of what happened in the parliament over the last 24 hours, but what I find amazing, and Sam Dastyari put it pretty well then, is that the deal that was done along the way puts a whole lot of pressure on the ABC and on the SBS with this competitive equivalence commission that's going to be put in place at the behest of One Nation. We'll see exactly how that plays out.

But what Nick Xenophon has gone out and negotiated is effectively subsidies to both News Limited and Fairfax, so this was just a straight win for the large media companies – I know you work for one of them – and the people who have missed out here are those who are consuming the media, who want to see a diversity of voices, and you know I actually those working in the media would want to make sure they're jobs are safe.

**MAIDEN:** Well, I couldn't disagree with you more in relation to that. I mean, I think that Labor's position on this legislation is completely unconscionable. The Labor Party has basically just squibbed this and walked away. You couldn't possibly argue that the media landscape hasn't changed since those laws were introduced. They are completely outdated. They were completely outmoded.

I have to say I really like Michelle Rowland. I don't think she's a bad person, but I think she's been incredibly weak in this area. She hasn't been doing a lot of doorstops for a reason. When she has done doorstops she's often stumbled, and I really think that for the Labor Party just to have no position on this at all is a joke.

Now, you know as well as I do, because you visit ABC studios, the ABC is rolling in money. It is rolling in money.

**MARLES:** [laughs]

**MAIDEN:** No, seriously, you shouldn't joke about this because there are people in the private enterprise, not just Sky, I don't talk about Sky but other places, you see on a daily basis the resources that we have and other media organisations have, and the resources the ABC has, there is just no comparison and there is a serious, they do very good work for the ABC, particularly in the regions, they do a great job. They should. They have a lot of money to do it, and they have a lot of people to do it, but for the ABC to cry poor is a joke. You just can't even say that with a straight face.

You see how many people they have working. They have so many jobs. Do you know, the other day I nearly fell off my chair laughing, they sent a cameraman and a journalist to Guam, and then the cameraman had time to bung off some sort of 1,000-word essay on this. I mean, can you imagine anyone else having time to do this about his own trip to Guam, where he was complaining, going 'and then we got hit by another \$1,000 excess luggage', and then they paid more, and then it's taxpayers' money. I mean, seriously, and there is a serious side to this as well: why the ABC is in the business of doing things on websites, that is a complete threat to the business model of new entrants, the Guardian, everything. They should just stop doing that. If they want to go and cover, like-

**MARLES:** -Sam

**MAIDEN:** -great stuff that they do - no, no you had your go – regional Australia, that is a very important role that they play, right, but any suggestion that the ABC-

**MARLES:** -OK, well, Sam-

**MAIDEN:** -just isn't rolling in cash is a joke.

**MARLES:** Well, Sam, you earnt your pay check then. There's no doubt about that. I actually think it might have been easier to do this segment with Christopher, but you've got to accept the fact that the ABC provides-

**MAIDEN:** -They are bathing naked in \$50 notes over at the ABC, I'm telling you.

**MARLES:** You don't think they provide an important service in this country?

**MAIDEN:** Of course I do! Of course I do, and my goodness they've got enough time and money to do it. You see how many people. I mean, come on. Seriously, they have too much money-

**MARLES:** -The one thing I need to say-

**MAIDEN:** -and too many people and too much time on their hands. They should do some work.

**MARLES:** If there's nothing else you get out of this discussion, Labor is for diversity of voices in the media, and Labor is for journalism jobs. At the end of the day-

**MAIDEN:** -Yeah, Labor is for a whole bunch of legislation that went out of date in the 1980s.

**MARLES:** I suspect we're going to have to agree to disagree on that one.

I think it is now time for the break. Join us afterwards when we're going to be speaking with Merav Michaeli. Now, Merav is a member of the Israeli Knesset. She is out here visiting Australia, was in the parliament this week. She is the opposition whip, a member of the Israeli Labor Party, and we'll be talking to her about Israel and Palestine, but we're also going to talk to her about the marriage equality debate. She's got very interesting views on the question of marriage, so join us after the break when we have a chat with Merav.

[AD BREAK]

**MARLES:** Well, welcome back to *Pyne & Marles*. I'm Richard Marles and we're here with Sam Maiden in Canberra. Now, our guest today is Merav Michaeli. Merav is a member of the Israeli Knesset. She is the opposition whip, a member of the Labour opposition. Welcome, Merav.

**MERAV MICHAELI:** Thank you, Richard. It's a pleasure being on this show. Hi Sam, nice to meet you.

**MARLES:** Now, Merav, you are somebody who's had very outspoken views about the institution of marriage, and obviously you come to Australia in that case at a particularly interesting time in our public debate with the marriage equality survey underway. I'm interested in what is your perspective on what you've seen in terms of the marriage equality debate in Australia?

**MICHAELI:** Actually, I was quite amazed that such a debate is even taking place in Australia. My image of you was of such an open society and a contemporary one that I was really astonished that some people can actually argue against marriage equality. Now, personally, I'm for the cancelling of the whole legal institution of marriage all together because I think it belongs to a time when we women, as were children, as were men of some other colours, were commodities, and men were alone there setting the rules, and this was a way to provide them with women and legal custody over children with the largest certainty to be their flesh and blood, but today when we are in a supposedly egalitarian law system, we should get rid of this and replace it with more beneficial structures.

Then I come to Australia and I find out that even though you are a secular country that does not have the same religious-secular debate that we have in Israel, still some people are actually against allowing everyone the basic civil rights that accordingly the state still grants duties or rights or obligations or privileges, so I am mostly surprised.

**MAIDEN:** That's a kind of a high art position, though, isn't it, to some extent, on marriage. I mean, you do have to have, I suppose, some understanding as well for where that sits culturally, and I think a lot of people would like to see gays and lesbians be able to marry if they wish to. Isn't it the case that if you as a person have that view, that's fair enough, but why shouldn't gays and lesbians be able to marry within the structure and laws of the country?

**MICHAELI:** That's exactly what I am saying: how can you justify depriving citizens from a basic civil right? I don't get it.

**MARLES:** I guess, Merav, in terms of your broader view in respect of marriage, there will be people who are happy to enter into the institution of marriage. Is your view that in a modern society that shouldn't be an option?

**MICHAELI:** Listen, I'm only talking about the legal structure, not about religious ceremonies or whatever commitment ceremonies people want to have. That is something I'm not getting into. I am talking about the law, the state law, and yes: I think the state law of marriage allows not only an economy that still does not recognise the financial and economical worth of caretaking and household works, which to almost the total extent women do, but also it creates gender. The law

genderises us. It still gives women the right to be a parent and men less so. It still gives men the heads up in the professional work because they are exempt-

**MAIDEN:** -Yes.

**MICHAELI:** -from being more of a parent.

**MAIDEN:** I think that's really interesting as well, because we've sort of got an emerging debate in Australia that for many years we've talked about work-life balance, and when we talk about work-life balance what we really mean is that mums should be able to work part time because that would make it easier for them to do the all of the things that they have to do, and the emerging debate is really that if you actually want to give women greater equality, particularly in the workplace what you actually have to do is extend that freedom to men to actually make it socially acceptable for men to work part time or flexible hours because you're quite right that all of the data will tell you that even when you have men and women that are working full time or men and women that are working part time with kids that the women are still taking on far more of the emotional labour and organising the household.

**MICHAELI:** And the responsibility. The number one important thing is the responsibility, and that's one of the things that we have to start sharing. Also, I mean, that will come with changing the conception of what is feminine and what is masculine. You know how Carol Gilligan says that gender is the institution that prevents all of us to really experience our full humanity, the whole spectrum of our humanity.

But it goes back also to money, exactly what you talked about: the partial job because you have a full time job at home, and we have to acknowledge that an economy that does not include these jobs is not viable any more, and marriage is a cornerstone to start changing that.

**MARLES:** Merav, we can't let you go without talking about the situation of Israel and Palestine. It's really the bipartisan view in Australia of supporting a two state solution, which I assume is still the orthodoxy within Israel itself. There is, though, a sense that under this Israeli prime minister, under Benjamin Netanyahu, we are seeing a stalling of negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. Do you have hope for a two state solution, and what's ultimately your view about the recognition of Palestine?

**MICHAELI:** Not only do I have hope for the two state solution, I know we will get there, and the way I know it is because even though given so many failures in trying to achieve it, still a vast majority, both of Israelis and Palestinians, support the two state solution even though a growing number on both sides are losing faith in the ability to achieve it.

Now, the reason why they're losing faith is that on both sides we have leaderships lack the political will and who lack the responsibility towards their societies.

You know, Richard, I think what my government has achieved successfully is they gained criticism towards their policies and criticism towards the state of Israel. Now, I am the opposition to my government but I am not only a citizen of the state of Israel, not only a legislator and a leader in the state of Israel, but a sworn Zionist coming from two Zionist families who love my country and my state, and everything that I do

is meant to make it safer, long-lasting, better, better to live in. This is why I am so committed, me and my party, my Labour party and my new Chair, Avi Gabbay, so committed to doing everything in our power to achieve the two state solution, and it's true that reality may complex, and it's also true that the other side have their problem, but for me as an Israeli I want to take responsibility for my part, and I want to use this window of opportunities that we have, when you look at what's happening in the region, when you look at what's happening in the Middle East, in the way Syria has become a base for Iran and for Russia and you know that there are powers that want to stand against that, and you know that they are your partners and that they can not only be your partners against what we consider for us to be evil powers, but also to help us achieve an agreement, a long-lasting peace agreement with the Palestinians.

So, we will continue to do everything in our power to get there.

**MARLES:** Well, Merav, thank you very much for joining us today. I had the pleasure of meeting you on Monday and spending some time with you on Monday in parliament and it really has been a treat to get to know you over the course of the week – and enjoy the rest of your stay in Australia.

**MICHAELI:** Thank you so much for having me. It's a pleasure being in Australia.

**MARLES:** OK, and that brings us to the end of the show, Sam. It's been a very quick show. The time has literally sped through. I don't know what that says, without Christopher, but thank you very much for joining-

**MAIDEN:** -We didn't even get a chance to show you, thank you for having me, and we didn't even get a chance to show you another picture of Tony Abbott eating an onion to mark his second anniversary of being demoted, or Malcolm Turnbull's second anniversary of being the Prime Minister, but happy anniversary to both men and may they both no longer eat onions.

**MARLES:** Yes, and so I don't know whether the Sky producers can flash the picture up as we leave, but it is of course the two year anniversary of the fall of the Abbott reign, and there's an interesting interview that you can all read in the Daily Telegraph today from Sharri Markson about that.

But thanks again for joining us. Join us next week on *Pyne & Marles* at one o'clock on Sky News. Christopher will be back then and we look forward to seeing you then. Bye.

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