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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
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***SUBJECTS: North Korea; Australian space agency; Liberals' energy crisis;  
same sex marriage survey***

**HOST:** Defence spokesperson for the Labor Party Richard Marles, thanks so much for your company. What's Bill Shorten doing at taxpayers' expense jetting over to have a chit chat with the South Koreans? He can't do anything, he's not even in government. It's got nothing to do with him.

**RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE:** So is your proposition, Peter, that opposition MPs shouldn't travel overseas?

**HOST:** They shouldn't waste my hard-earned taxpayers' dollars to be flittering around the globe trying to solve crises when they have no power.

**MARLES:** Well no-one is trying to solve a crisis here, but foreign policy is as important a part of policy as anything else, and so you would imagine that those of us in opposition are trying to be as engaged as possible in that as we would be in anything else.

**HOST:** You know I'm not being serious.

**MARLES:** Well, and you know I'm doing a little jab back! Bill Shorten seriously is trying to make this point, firstly, that when it comes to dealing with this question it is very significant and it's being dealt with on a bi-partisan basis, so if there is one message that he wants the region in North East Asia to hear, it is that the Australian polity is of one when it comes to how we deal with this crisis, and that is principally by expressing solidarity with those in South Korea and indeed later in the visit with those in Japan.

**HOST:** It's obviously an important defence issue, what's happening with North Korea, so it is appropriate, jokes aside, that the Opposition Leader's there. It's pretty inappropriate that as the shadow defence spokesperson you don't get to join him, though? Surely that's a bit of a shafty isn't it?

**MARLES:** No that's perfectly fine, I'll leave it up to Bill to do this trip and he'll do this with great capability. As you indicated he met with Prime Minister Lee Nak-yeon this morning and was able to talk to him about the situation and get his views. He was also meeting with the former Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, so it's a great opportunity for Bill to learn firsthand of how things are being felt in South Korea, but also to make clear to the people of South Korea that Australia stands as one in support of them.

**HOST:** Mr Marles, in light of Simon Birmingham's announcement today that Australia will establish a space agency, in your capacity of shadow defence spokesperson do you think that Australia needs one?

**MARLES:** Yes, we do. This is a long time coming. We're glad that the Government followed our lead in pursuing a space agency, and this is not about putting an Australian on the moon. What this is about though is that space has become much more accessible at a much lower cost to many more countries. There are micro-satellites being put into space doing a whole lot of activities and providing a whole lot of capabilities. There are satellites being built in Australia right now which will obviously go into space and this is trying to position us as best as we can be positioned to take advantage of what is a growing and very significant global industry. There are Australian companies now who have had to move offshore to Silicon Valley in order to pursue their businesses in this arena. We think that's business which should be able to stay here, which is why it is important that we move down this path.

**HOST:** From a defence perspective specifically, though: is it important?

**MARLES:** Look I think there's definitely a defence angle to this and I think it is important that we have our own space agency and our own focus on space policy, which will inevitably have a defence component to it. Making sure that we have secure communications for our defence force, but there also a range of other applications that space technology can be used for in a defence context, so this is important in that regard as well.

**HOST:** As you would well know the US House Armed Services Committee is proposing that America should establish a space corps as part of its new military service. Is that something that Australia should perhaps look at, some space troops?

**MARLES:** Oh look I think that's a fair way down the track. I don't think we're at that point now, but as I said earlier there's a whole lot of technology which is being utilised in space nowadays which is much cheaper and much more accessible than what it has been in the past, and it's important that we are as prepared as we can possibly be to engage in that, exploit it, get the economic benefit of it, and from a national security point of view as well, as you rightly say, making sure we're well positioned in that regard as well.

**HOST:** Sam Maiden, my colleague in Canberra, made the point a little earlier this afternoon that Mark Butler is putting something together to try to mop up the mess that Bill Shorten created talking about emissions reductions. Is that why he doesn't do too many television interviews?

**MARLES:** Well I'm not sure who you're saying is not doing television interviews.  
Both—

**HOST:** -Bill Shorten.

**MARLES:** You had a quote from Bill just earlier! And-

**HOST:** -Yeah that's my point. He's literally just done one and he doesn't do them very often, but is that why he chose not to do them very often, because you end up having the scenario where the relevant shadow of what he talks about has to come on and mop it all up?

**MARLES:** That's ridiculous. Bill does-

**HOST:** -That was Sam Maiden's analysis.

**MARLES:** And I have great admiration for Sam; enjoy doing my program on the odd occasion on Friday with Sam; but on this occasion that is off the Mark. Bill would be as accessible to the media and would do as much media as any opposition leader there's ever been. I mean the notion that Bill is not in the public domain I think is ridiculous. He's there all the time.

**HOST:** Let's get into the issue, though, which is the one that apparently Mark Butler's going to clean up, this whole emission reductions target, 45 percent or 50 percent – whatever it is – it's pretty high. Is it simply, in your opinion, a target, a goal, not necessarily something that we'll get to but will have a crack if technology improves, or is it hard and fast, because the Australia Institute tell us that we would need to have a target of 66 percent to be able to even get to our Paris agreements, yet the Government tells us the Labor's target, which isn't nearly that high, is too high to be economically realistic?

**MARLES:** We need a clean energy target. It's as simple as that Peter. Without one-

**HOST:** -As high as Labor's?

**MARLES:** Well, what we're willing to do, we're willing to look at what was in the Finkel report and come to a position where we work out some kind of consensus with the Government. This country is crying out for settled policy when it comes to a clean energy target. Without it we basically have an investment strike on foot, and what that is seeing is a whole lot of power sources going offline – forget how they're generated for a moment – but ageing power resources going offline, and nothing being put in place to replace them, because those who would invest in the power sector have got no idea what the rules for investment are going to be over the next year, let alone over the next 30, and that's absolutely what we need to see. So a clean energy target is needed so we can have some settled policy. We actually need a partner on the field here in the form of the Government to talk to in relation to this. The real questions to be asked here are around the total paralysis of the Government's party room which is preventing it, hobbling it, hobbling the Government from making any policy at all in this space.

**HOST:** Just on the issue of same-sex marriage, I believe you are a supporter. I know you obviously along with most, if not all, of your Labor colleagues don't like the idea of the survey as a process that's been embarked upon. Having said that though, are you confident that the survey will return a yes verdict?

**MARLES:** You're right, I am a supporter of marriage equality and have been for a long time. Indeed, I voted in favour of the bill when it was first brought up in the Parliament back in 2011.

Look, I'm hopeful is answer to that question. I don't take it for granted, though for one minute, and nor can any supporter of marriage equality take this for granted. If you've got a vote, you need to exercise it and you need to be telling friends about it as well. It's really important that people fill out their forms, put it in the mail, do it as quickly as possible and not for a second am I counting my chickens here. I think this is going to be a close-run thing, and it's really important that people who feel strongly about this issue are out there exercising their voice.

**HOST:** Because one of the big betting agencies has just posted its latest market on this, and a yes vote is at \$1.38 and a no vote is at \$3.00. You wouldn't have a bit of a flutter at \$1.38?

**MARLES:** Well, look I'm not a great better, and that's probably a good thing. I was about to put some money on Geelong winning the flag, but ultimately didn't do that so I showed some wisdom there-

**HOST:** -Or a lack of loyalty depending, on your perspective.

**MARLES:** Look, I always pick them though in the tipping, so I'm completely loyal there no matter what the odds actually say.

I'm confident, I'm hopeful that this result comes home, but I don't take it for granted and it's to state the obvious that if you support marriage equality but don't care enough to fill out the survey then the right result is not going to come home, so it's really important that people exercise their voice and they encourage their friends to do the same.

**HOST:** Richard Marles, always appreciate your time. Thanks very much for joining us today on *Newsday*.

**MARLES:** Pleasure, Peter.

**HOST:** Cheers.

**ENDS**