

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

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TV INTERVIEW
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SUBJECTS: Marriage equality postal survey; Bennelong by-election

KIERAN GILBERT: With me now I'm joined by Labor frontbencher Richard Marles, and your thoughts on a big day for Australian politics, but for the nation more broadly, as Ian Thorpe made the point, there?

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: I think if the vote happens as we expect it to, if there is a yes vote, I think that's actually a great day for Australia. Certainly, as somebody who has supported marriage equality for a long time, I certainly see it as such.

For me, it is a day when Australians embrace diversity, embrace people who are different than themselves, and embrace the lives they lead as being valid and meaningful and important. We're at our best as a country when we're bigger and broader than simply ourselves, when we see that people come don't come in all the same shapes and sizes, and I this will be a great day if it turns out the way that we hope it will.

GILBERT: I guess there's a bit of anxiety, and Penny Wong expressed that, Tim Wilson, among others. Part of that is because of recent results we've seen in term of Brexit and the Trump result going against what the published polls had suggested.

MARLES: Yep, sure, and I get that. It feels kind of a little nerve wracking to be talking about results before we know what they actually are. As someone who's been in politics for a long time that tends to be a bad practice, so I'm touching wood as I'm saying all of this, of course, but I'm very hopeful and I think we're all very hopeful of this outcome and it would really be a great statement for our country. We're a better country if this is the way it goes.

GILBERT: We've seen the debate about the way forward in terms of the legal and legislative moves in the parliament, but it's incumbent upon Labor as well now, isn't

it, not to try and stoke any division within the Government. You'd want to make sure you get something through that can have as much support and as broad support as possible in the parliament.

MARLES: I think that's absolutely right, Kieran. This is not now about partisan politics. That's the furthest thing from what needs to be the case over the next month, really. I think there is a huge premium, if this vote goes as we hope it will, in getting a bill through the parliament before the end of the year.

Now, the Dean Smith bill I think is a really good start. Speaking from my point of view as somebody who supports marriage equality it's a pretty good effort at trying to embrace what the yes case would mean in a legislative form, and I think all those who are supporting the yes case who I'm talking to are keen to make sure that there is a willingness to compromise so that we get a bill through by the end of the year, and I hope that happens.

GILBERT: What do you say to voters in your electorate of Corio and viewers this morning who voted no?

MARLES: Well, for people who have voted no, I understand the decision that they have made. I absolutely respect it. In exercising my conscience vote on this issue over the past few years I've made a point of speaking to everybody who wants to speak to me about this issue.

Of course, people who are opposing marriage equality, you know, for me, I do think there is an issue around freedom of religious expression in all of this and that was a surprising path, I guess, for me to walk down in talking to and consulting with people in relation to this issue. I think it's important to get a sense of the other side of the coin here. It's important that we stand by that religious freedom of expression.

Ultimately, I also hope that people who have voted no accept, if it is as we expect it to occur, accept the result of the majority of Australians, and I really do feel that that would be a wonderful result for our country.

GILBERT: Finally, former Sky News presenter and former premier of New South Wales, Kristina Keneally, running in the seat of Bennelong – she would have anticipated, while she's repudiated the political attacks on her from Greg Hunt and Scott Morrison and the Prime Minister, she would have anticipated them, surely. She's been in politics for a long time.

MARLES: Kristina is going to be great. She'll be a great MP. She's going to be a great candidate in Bennelong. I think she's going to give it a red-hot go.

Of course she would have anticipated all of this, and as I looked at her yesterday, read the papers this morning, this is water off a duck's back from her point of view, and really a pathetic smear campaign on the part of the Government which speaks much more about their own sense of insecurity about their own fortunes in this than it does about Kristina Keneally, so-

GILBERT: -But if you're Premier of the largest state in the country, you're going to have, you bring with it some political baggage, don't you? I mean, that's the reality, so why wouldn't they seek to make the most of that?

MARLES: A whole of political asset as well, Kieran. She is an absolute political star. It was a very long-serving NSW government. Kristina Keneally as an individual within that did a fantastic job. She did a fantastic job as a minister. She did a fantastic job as premier at the end of that government. The particular smears around the various ICAC investigations really don't hold water at all because all the comments from ICAC were incredibly positive about Kristina.

She is going to be fantastic. She's going to be a great candidate. I really hope she gets elected because she has an enormous contribution to make in this place.

GILBERT: Richard Marles, thanks for your time.

MARLES: Thanks, Kieran.