

The logo for the Australian Labor Party, featuring the word "Labor" in white on a red background, with a blue square containing white stars to the right.

**TRANSCRIPT** | WE'LL PUT  
PEOPLE FIRST

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

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
TELEVISION INTERVIEW  
SKY NEWS LIVE  
AM AGENDA  
WEDNESDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2017**

***SUBJECTS: Sam Dastyari; Reckless Chinaphobia***

**HOST:** With me on the program now the Shadow Defence Minister, Richard Marles. First to the Dastyari matter, and *The Australian* reported there's some tension within the party about the way this is being managed. I've confirmed that myself this morning in some private conversations, that there is some angst about the way all of this is being managed.

**RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE:** Well, it's obviously a very difficult issue. I'm not aware of that, Kieran.

This morning, I've got to say, my overwhelming sense is one of feeling sad, obviously, for Sam and that it's come to this. Sam had a long career ahead of him. He'd made a very significant contribution. He's obviously a person of immense talents, and I do feel very sad that it has come to a point where he's no longer going to be in the parliament.

I obviously understand the issues around China. I think a lot about it. People make mistakes. People have to pay a price, and he's paid that. He felt he needed to make the decision he's made, and I obviously support him in the decisions that he has made, but I do feel very sad this morning about where's ended up.

**HOST:** A Labor MP said to me this morning, I'll read you the quote: 'Shorten is very transactional. Has been close to Sam. Sam has helped him, but if anyone gets in the way of Bill there is a bus with their name on it.' What do you say in response to that?

**MARLES:** I don't know who's put that out there. Let me say I think that is completely unfair. I've known Bill all my adult life, so I can tell you that is completely wrong. Bill's done a great job as the leader of the Labor Party, and this is a really difficult position for a leader to be in, and I think in respect of Sam, Bill's shown, in difficult circumstances, knowing all the things I've just said about Sam, his talent, the contribution he's made, Bill feels all that as well, but despite all that he had shown leadership. He showed leadership earlier in the year when he removed Sam from the

front bench. He's shown leadership a couple of weeks ago when he removed Sam from a leadership position in the Senate.

Now, that stands in stark contrast to what we see on the Government side when Michalea Cash can say things that are completely wrong to the Senate on five separate occasions. She remains a minister of the Crown and the Prime Minister's done absolutely nothing about it.

Bill has shown leadership, but in terms of the decision to leave the Senate ultimately that's Sam's decision. It's a difficult one. I support the decision he's made, obviously. I do feel very sad that it has come to this.

**HOST:** Is this sort of episode, is it inevitable that there would be some tensions erupt internally when anything like this happens, particularly with quite a significant figure, I should say, as a powerbroker within the party.

**MARLES:** Well, I don't accept the characterisation of tensions. I think what I'm exhibiting in talking to you today is the way people are feeling. Sam is a friend, a colleague, a person we've worked with over many years, a person who's made an enormous contribution to the Labor movement as the General Secretary of the New South Wales branch of the ALP and as a Senator in the Australian Senate, and all of us [AUDIO BREAK] in a sense what the future would have held for Sam, and so it's impossible not to feel sad today, and we feel that. That's not tension. We feel sad about it.

Now, we get people have made mistakes. We get that politics is a difficult business. We get that you pay a price and we get that Sam himself has made this decision and we support him in it, but for all that I think people are entitled to and it's appropriate that we feel sad at this moment - and I do.

**HOST:** Does Labor need to be careful in terms of its use of the phrase 'Chinaphobic language'. The Government, you say, Mr Shorten has been using that phrase, that they're Chinaphobic. Are they really, or are they just calling out someone who's acted very poorly, in Senator Dastyari's behaviour?

**MARLES:** Kieran, you've been an observer of politics as closely as anyone. I don't think anyone who is looking closely at the Australian political scene and looking at the language the Government has used over the last few weeks could see this as anything other than politics.

I mean, when you hear words such as 'double agent', 'treason' - I mean, there was a question in the parliament last week which essentially purported to describe China as one of our enemies. Now, I've been as robust as anyone around issues, around the South China Sea, for example. Not for a moment would I describe China as our enemy. China is an incredibly important partner going forward. There are really complex issues [AUDIO BREAK] in relation to China. They have been hugely beneficial in terms of our economy. They're responsible for the largest alleviation of poverty in human history, and they deserve credit for that, so I would say all of those things, and do in all of the speeches I make, but I think we need to take a breath here.

These are really significant matters, and when you talk about strategic policy and foreign policy we often say 'these are above politics, there's a degree of bipartisanship about them', that's true, and it's for a reason: because they are so critically important they affect all of our lives; they determine the future of our country; and they need to be above the political fray-

**HOST:** -Labor's not just using this for its own benefit in Bennelong?

**MARLES:** Absolutely not. We're not the ones using the kind of language that you've heard used by senior members of the Government: 'treason', 'double agent'. I mean, they are dangerous terms to be using, and that question last week to the parliament was, I think, frankly dangerous. All of this is in the name of politics when in fact foreign policy, strategic policy, our national security, need to be above all of that, and this Government's form on being able to see the bigger picture, transcend the day-to-day political maul and actually act as statesman, is not great, and what we need to see from here on in from the Government is actually a different way of doing business in this respect because this is too important to leave in the daily political fray.

**HOST:** Richard Marles, thanks as always, joining me from Geelong this morning. We'll talk to you soon.

***ENDS***