



**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP  
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE  
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
TELEVISION INTERVIEW  
SKY NEWS – AM AGENDA  
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***SUBJECT/S: Barnaby Joyce; ISIS Fighter; PM's Washington D.C visit.***

**KIERAN GILBERT:** With me now the Shadow Defence Minister Richard Marles. What's Labor's view on this as you watch on from the opposing benches?

**RICHARD MARLES:** I think Keiran it's hard to watch that's the truth of it. I think we're all completely clear about where this train ultimately stops, but right now we're watching a train wreck. I think for the sake of the nation, for the sake of proper government, to be honest for the sake of Barnaby Joyce, the government needs to do something about this and bring this to a resolution. The thing I find amazing is your seeing a whole lot of comments from former Deputy Prime Ministers, former National Leaders, but the Prime Minister has gone completely awol.

**GILBERT:** He's got to be careful doesn't he because it's a Coalition of the Liberals and Nationals and the junior party don't like to be told what to do from their Coalition partner.

**MARLES:** I get there's a Coalition involved here but is he running a unified government or not. A Prime Minister with a semblance of authority right now would be stepping in and bringing this to an end.

**GILBERT:** But he doesn't have a vote in the national party room. I know you want to extend it to the Prime Minister but Mr Turnbull doesn't have a vote.

**MARLES:** Mr Turnbull doesn't have authority. Can you imagine John Howard letting an issue go on like this in the way that we're seeing it happen now. Forget about votes, Malcolm Turnbull does not have authority and that's why this thing is limping from disaster to disaster and why we are all being inflicted with just the most appalling drama being played out on TV.

**GILBERT:** Well we haven't seen a scandal like this for some time and you make the comparison with John Howard and he was always very keen to let the Nationals do as the Nationals saw fit.

**MARLES:** Imagine a comparable situation with a Prime Minister with the authority of John Howard, no way would this be allowed to limp on in the way its going now. Barnaby's private life is obviously a matter for Barnaby and I don't like seeing it all over the news and on a human level I feel deeply for Barnaby actually, I think this would be a terrible situation for him to be in. But there are Ministerial standards around the employment of staff who are family, who are partners, I think there are questions that need to be asked and answered here and the Prime Minister is the custodian of those members.

**GILBERT:** But he can't sack him can he.

**MARLES:** The Prime Minister is the custodian of the Ministerial code of conduct and he is the one who ultimately needs to step in and see that this thing is brought to a resolution—

**GILBERT:** How, should Barnaby Joyce step down or be sacked, what's your view on that?

**MARLES:** Between the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister how can we imagine that there isn't the ability to have a conversation where sense is brought to play here and there is an outcome. But that's not what's going on and so we're seeing taudry play, being put on our screens-

**GILBERT:** Why can't he stay in the roll if he hasn't misused funds as he argues-

**MARLES:** Well first all I think there are real questions that are to be asked and answered about the Ministerial code of conduct and whether that's been complied with-

**GILBERT:** Well he answered them yesterday.

**MARLES:** Well there real questions about those who are partners and whether or not they are employed as staff or members of the executive. Now those rules are in place for good reasons. It's important there aren't conflicts of interest when talking about Ministers and-

**GILBERT:** He gave the timeline yesterday when he said he wasn't partners with his staffer and at what time and it wasn't when she was in his office or Matt Canavans office, it was subsequent to that.

**MARLES:** Well I don't think those questions have been answered satisfactorily, but look –

**GILBERT:** What else can you do, provide a log or when you met and how, that sort of thing?

**MARLES:** It is absolutely critical that the highest standards are applied to Ministers so the public can have confidence that there is no conflict of interest or indeed an appearance of a conflict of interest. But listen, Barnaby Joyce can stay there as the Deputy Prime Minister, both you know and I know, we've both been watching politics for a long time. This isn't going away, and the media is going to look at this day in day out and this is going to keep giving rise to a circumstance where we have a government which is going to be talking about itself, talking about internals and the sorts of issues that Australians want to have dealt with. You know making sure a take home pay which allows them to deal with rising costs of living. Dealing with issues rising health insurance costs that we're focusing on. All of those issues none of them have been talked about by the Government.

**GILBERT:** Should he be allowed to, obviously your view is that he should leave the role as Nationals Leader and Deputy Prime Minister but he should be allowed to remain in the parliament surely.

**MARLES:** Oh look there are always dignified ways through here if people with authority and common sense apply their minds to an outcome. I know if I was in their shoes I that's what I would be doing, but right now-

**GILBERT:** You don't think he needs to quit as a Member of Parliament?

**MARLES:** I'm not going to go into that. What I am just saying is what we're witnessing this government is a train wreck. We're watching a Prime Minister who is failing to resolve it, end of story right there.

**GILBERT:** But again he's limited as to what he can do. It's not like you've got one party, there are two separate parties and one is junior party.

**MARLES:** It's one government. It's one government, and it's been a Coalition for a long period of time. And the Leader of that government is Malcolm Turnbull and right now the only thing that people are talking about is this governments internal.

**GILBERT:** Let's talk about a couple of other matters, Jim Mattis the US Defence Secretary believes and is urging other countries, partners, including Great Britain, including, I believe he means Australia as well, needs to take foreign fighters that are their citizens, to take them back, prosecute them, imprison them. What's your view

on that given our own legislation through this Parliament particularly with dual citizens.

**MARLES:** Well firstly, I think it's hard to argue with Jim Mattis as this is an international problem, I think countries do need to take responsibility as he said. The worst outcome of all would be to allow people who have committed appalling crimes to be able to walk free somewhere in the world and have those crimes perpetrated in other ways. We also know that you can be sitting free in Baghdad or Syria and do a whole lot of damage here in Australia, America or Britain, so this absolutely needs to be dealt with. I think in terms of the laws that Australia passed, before one thing that Labor was keen to do was to make sure those laws were amended and changed to meet our international obligation and they do. I think it is important that our agencies are given every tool possible to deal with a particular circumstances of any given case. In saying that it's also important that as a government and as a nation that we play our part and we should do that.

**GILBERT:** We've got to accept our responsibility. If it's a jihadist that's come from Australia, born in Australia or raised in Australia we should be prosecuting them here shouldn't we?

**MARLES:** I think it's important that the tools are available to our agencies but we absolutely need to play our part and part of doing that is making sure that if we are talking about someone who is dual citizen I think there needs to be a conversation with countries who might also have an interest in that person and work out what's the best way forward. You've got Neil Prakash right now whose been prosecuted in Turkey, you know there is dialogue between Australia and Turkey in relation to him. There are sensible ways that can be worked out to deal with this but the principle about it that each country needs to take responsibility here, is an important one.

**GILBERT:** Finally the Prime Minister is going to visit Washington next week because we've heard several times in relation to the Barnaby Joyce matter. Mr Turnbull's focus will be the Governors Association Winter Meeting with dozen of US Governors plus the President at the White House. From a defence and strategic perspective what do you hope is achieved out of this visit to Washington DC.

**MARLES:** Well firstly it's a unique visit in a sense participating the governors meeting and I think for the State Premiers who are participating in this it's going to be a great opportunity for them. From a defence point of view with the defence strategy that was announced by the US government by Secretary Mattis I think it's important the government works out its lines about this. We do need to have as a government a single voice about critical issues of America's role in East Asia and I think this is an opportunity for the government to clarify its position on that and make sure it's working in a complimentary way with the United States.

**GILBERT:** Mr Marles as always appreciate your time.

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