

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

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
SKY NEWS LIVE
PYNE & MARLES
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SUBJECTS: *Drug Testing Welfare Recipients; Energy Policy; Quantum Computing; Women in STEM; Foreign Outfits*

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Good afternoon and welcome to *Pyne & Marles* here on Sky News Live. It's Friday 2 March at one o'clock Eastern Standard Time. I'm Christopher Pyne and I'm here Adelaide and my co-presenter, Richard Marles, is in Canberra today. Good afternoon Richard, and I'm sorry to say that you're stuck in Canberra on Friday after a sitting week.

RICHARD MARLES: It is always a bit grim to be spending Thursday night in Canberra and waking up on a Friday morning here but I am here nonetheless. But we had an interesting week here and certainly you didn't spare any moment in terms of having some fun at my expense, have a look at this.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE [CLIP]: I really suggest, because I wanted him to stay safe, stay away from butter-knife-wielding state ALP member of Parliament Mr Speaker, or carry his own butter knife. If he carries his own butter knife Mr Speaker, in a fast moving butter knife fight I would back the Member for Corio because in spite of his looks he is quite fast moving.

MARLES: So Christopher, I absolutely acknowledge your abilities as a politician, but I can tell you that your life in politics is such a huge loss for Australian vaudeville.

PYNE: Well Richard at least you and I know there's a time for light-heartedness and there's a time for seriousness in politics, and sometimes it's been a bit grim this last couple of weeks with all of the issues that have been running and it was nice to be able to try to lighten the mood of Question Time a bit, and thank you for being such a good sport about it.

Now before we get into the rest of the show the Prime Minister is speaking at the Australia-New Zealand Leadership Forum. Let's have a look at what he has to say.
[BREAK TO FORUM]

Right, well the Prime Minister is not quite there yet, so Richard we'll outline what we're going to do with the rest of the show. Richard, what have we got on today?

MARLES: Well I will go through that. I think we may not end up taking part in this, but you can switch to multiview if you want to hear the Prime Minister's speech later in the half hour but I'm not sure why you'd want to do that, in terms of missing out on Christopher and I, because we've got an action packed show for you.

PYNE: Absolutely.

MARLES: This week, we should get into it this week, this week we've got a new Deputy Prime Minister so we're going to have a talk about Michael McCormick and his ascension to that role. The Government's trial for a drug test for those receiving government income support made its way back into the House of Representatives this week. We're going to have to check that. And we're going to return to an old favourite in terms of a topic and that's energy policy. Quite a lot going on in this space during the week, there's been chat about Adani, Andrew Liveris made a call for there to be a bipartisan national energy policy in this country and then, of course, this morning the Government has announced that it is going to acquire the entirety of the Snowy Hydro scheme and so we'll be talking about energy policy as well.

Our guest today is the Australian of the year, Professor Michelle Simmons, who is a professor in quantum computing at the University of New South Wales and we're going to have a chat to her about her role as the Australian of the year, but also her amazing work there.

But let's start with our new Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack. He was sworn in on Monday. Have a look at this.

MICHAEL MCCORMACK [CLIP]: I will honour that faith and trust.

JOURNALIST [CLIP]: Michael are you just keeping the seat warm for Barnaby until such time as he can mount a comeback?

MCCORMACK [CLIP]: I have been elected to do the job by the National Party.

MCCORMACK [CLIP]: I, Michael Francis McCormack do swear that I will well and truly serve the people of Australia in the office of Deputy Prime Minister.

MARLES: So Christopher, there's the obvious point that since 2013 we've now had two Prime Ministers, three Deputy Prime Ministers, I think three Defence Ministers, I'm not sure how many junior defence ministers, but when we look at Michael McCormack I guess the question I've got for you is this: Barnaby Joyce casts such a long shadow over the National Party - and you've made a point of telling us that there are two parties in this Coalition, the National Party and the Liberal Party - you wouldn't really know Michael McCormack was a National but for the fact that he has to keep telling us. How is Michael McCormick going to appeal to National voters as something different to a Liberal?

PYNE: I think Michael McCormack's got off to a great start, a very calm and considered opening in Question Time. He's had a good week in Question Time and his reshuffle brings back Darren Chester, who of course was a Cabinet Minister up to about a month ago. He is a very safe pair of hands in Veterans Affairs and Defence Personnel and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the ANZAC Centenary. Michael McCormack will be very much in the mould of a Warren Truss, a Tim Fisher, a Mark Vale, a John Anderson.

He certainly hasn't got the flashiness, if you like, the personality of a Barnaby Joyce, but from the National Party's point of view they've usually been led by people who are more like Michael McCormack than by Barnaby Joyce, and I think that the National Party voter who strongly supported Barnaby, and I think liked Barnaby, will equally embrace Michael McCormack and he will do well. He'll do well across rural and regional Australia fighting for the issues that are important to them and being a good Coalition partner.

MARLES: Yeah I'm not sure about that. I think that one of the talents of Barnaby Joyce is that he was able to walk that line of being in a Coalition and part of a team and yet, on the other hand, projecting a very different identity and personality as the head of the National Party. I think Nationals out there want to receive the sense of being a distinct and identifiable constituency, and when I look at Michael McCormack, I mean he's a very personable chap around Parliament, he's got lots of friends. I like him, although certainly I wouldn't ascribe to a whole lot of the comments that he's made in his past. Really the question for me is how is he going to product differentiate from the Liberals in the context of a Coalition where it seems to me the head of the National Party, it's almost their primary job to be able to give something a very distinct personality, and I think where you are right is he doesn't have the personality of Barnaby Joyce and I reckon that's going to be an issue for you.

PYNE: Well I don't agree with that. I think that Warren Truss and former National Party leaders have done very well electorally. I mean your party is something of a coalition between the left and the right, and left have got their own manifesto which you in the right have got to manage, so we have all these kinds of challenges but we need to move, the clock against us.

The next issue that we're going to talk about today is the Government reintroducing the drug testing trial for people on unemployment benefits. Let's have a look at how that panned out this week.

DAN TEHAN [CLIP]: The Government will introduce that will trial drug testing for new welfare recipients in three locations across Australia.

LINDA BURNEY [CLIP]: Why spend incredible amounts of money on a process that is not going to deliver anything when we also know that the Government has taken \$10 million out of supporting people to get off drugs.

PYNE: So Richard I can't for the life of me work out why the Labor Party doesn't want people who are on drugs to get rehabilitation.

MARLES: Well of course we do it Christopher. But the notion that you are going to achieve that by using their income support as a form of punishment or a weapon is simply ridiculous.

PYNE: But we aren't.

MARLES: I mean I'm sure that you in your electorate have done what I have, and that is visit drug rehab centres, speak to those who work with people who suffer from a drug addiction. I mean this is a really complex issue and it's certainly not as simple as holding them to ransom over their income support. I think all that's going to do is drive people more into poverty. Indeed, we've got former police commissioners saying that this could have a negative impact on crime.

Ultimately Christopher, doesn't it go like this: there is not a serious medical voice out there right now which is suggesting that this is a good idea. The point they're making is that this needs to be treated as a health issue, not a welfare issue and that this is going to do a whole lot more harm than good in terms of actually achieving the end of getting people off drugs.

PYNE: Well, I used to be it responsible for the illicit drugs policies in the Howard Government. I can tell you almost all the medical practitioners in this area are harm minimisers as opposed to being tough on drugs. Now what I find surprising about their position is that this is a harm minimization program. This is about finding people who are on unemployment benefits and not using their welfare against them or taking it away, it's identifying that they're on drugs, getting them into rehabilitation, then getting them back into work and making sure they're not spending the taxpayers' money on illicit drugs which they should be spending on either themselves or their children's food or housing or education. So this is a harm minimisation policy and you and the Nick Xenophon Team have blocked it in the Senate. The Nick Xenophon Team tries to say that they are tough on drugs, they're calling for mandatory rehab for ice addicts and yet they're voting against this measure. I just find it extraordinary.

MARLES: Yeah, but it's not- at the end of the day what you are doing is putting on the line the question of people's unemployment benefits, their income support. So, I mean having policies which give people greater access to rehabilitation, that's all fine, but a punitive policy which walks you down a path of putting in question whether or not you have income support is only going to make their situation far more fraught and it's not going to do anything to actually get people off drugs and that's what the experts in the field say.

But we're going to need to move on, and energy has again been an issue of discussion this week. Adani has hit the headlines and we've had the announcement today about the Government purchasing the entirety of the Snowy Hydro Scheme, but I actually think Andrew Liveris' comment during the week, albeit that it went to the National Energy Guarantee, raised the point that we need to have a settled energy policy in this country if we're not going to have a haemorrhaging in private investment in the energy sector. So the real question for you is when are we actually going to see the Government land on a policy which is meaningful?

PYNE: Well, Richard, we have the National Energy guarantee. So we have a national policy, which has been signed up to by most of the states and territories except for South Australia who want to have a fight with the federal government. Andrew Liveris said that people should get behind the National Energy Guarantee. He is the head of Dow in the world. He's a former Australian - he's still an Australian actually, but spends a lot of time in the US.

We're doing so much in energy. As you just said yesterday we announced that we're taking over the whole of the Snowy Hydro Scheme, buying New South Wales and Victoria out. That means \$6 billion for those two states for infrastructure spending.

I only found out last night from Josh Frydenberg that the September quarter of last year was 0.9% reduction in our emissions, the biggest drop since September 2013, and our emissions are now the lowest they have been in 28 years per capita as a share of GDP.

Labor keeps wanting to have a fight about energy. When are you going to get on board and realise that bringing the carbon tax is not a viable option, and instead the National Energy Guarantee is?

MARLES: It's not about a carbon tax. I mean we would have supported, or our first point of call was an emissions intensity scheme, but when the Government commissioned the Finkle Review and it came out suggesting a clean energy target we were happy to sign up to that because we do get the idea that there needs to be settled policy in this country.

Let's be clear: the National Energy Guarantee is just a name. You do not have any flesh around those bones at all and to the extent that you are trying to sell to your party room an idea. What it will do is, you know, step on the throat of investment into renewable energy, which flies right in the face of what you've now done relation to Snowy Hydro because Snowy Hydro only makes sense if we have an uptick, and a very significant uptake, in renewables in this country. So you are at odds with yourself. One the one hand you're going down renewables, on the other hand you want coal.

PYNE: Richard, I don't understand how you could say that the NEG is not a substantial policy when most of the state Labor Premiers and Chief Ministers have signed up to it. But you've had horror week on coal and Adani. I mean your boss, Bill Shorten, has shown that he is a sovereign risk for Australia because he said to Geoff Cousins that he was going to use the powers of the federal government to take away the license of the Adani coal mine, regardless of the environmental considerations. And then your people had to talk him down. I assume that was you and Chris Bowen had to talk him down.

MARLES: Oh look, there's no question of sovereign risk. We made one simple point: if this doesn't stack up economically without public money, and it doesn't, then it won't go ahead, and if we were governing we wouldn't put any public money into it and it is as simple as that.

PYNE: You had to talk him. That's what happened.

MARLES: Christopher, we have run out of time for this part of the show. We need to go to a break, but join us afterwards when we will be talking with Professor Michelle Simmons.

[AD BREAK]

PYNE: Well welcome back to *Pyne & Marles* here on Sky News Live. The Prime Minister is speaking at the moment to the Australia-New Zealand Leadership Forum. Let's take a look at what he has to say.

[BREAK IN SHOW]

PYNE: I'm sure many of our viewers would like to continue watching the Prime Minister, and if you wish to do so then you can do it on Sky News multiview. For those who wish to stay with us, our guest this afternoon is a very important part of Australia. She was the Australian of the Year this year, and importantly she leads the team as a Professor at the University of New South Wales in quantum computing and we lead the world in quantum computing. So our guest this afternoon is Michelle Simmons, welcome to the program.

PROFESSOR MICHELLE SIMMONS: Good afternoon, Christopher and Richard.

PYNE: Professor Simmons it's nice to see you again. I was last at UNSW a couple of years ago as Education Minister giving you some grants and some support for the quantum computing. Then we were a good 12 months, 11 to 12 months ahead of the rest of the world because most people don't know what quantum computing is. Perhaps you could tell us in 100 words or less, in layman's terms, what quantum computing actually means.

SIMMONS: Sure, so quantum physics is how the world behaves at its very smallest, and so we can write information into, essentially, wave like nature of state, and by doing so we we're able to get an exponential speed up in computational power that allows us to perform calculations real time that would otherwise, with conventional computers, take many thousands of years, so it's a real boost in computing power.

MARLES: Well, that was a simple explanation, and done within 100 words! I'm surprised.

Professor Simmons, so one of the things that I'm intrigued about here is that if you look at some of the most our most recent Nobel Laureates, Elizabeth Blackburn, Brian Schmidt, they've done a lot of their work in North America but this is really cutting edge work which is being done right here in Sydney. What is the trick, do you think, to keeping big science and these big science endeavours actually within Australia?

SIMMONS: That's a great question and it's a great question for the country. I guess one of the things that I think a lot of Australians are probably not aware of is the fantastic research schemes we have here through the Australian Research Council and so I've been a benefactor, really, of a scheme called the Centre of Excellence Scheme that's run now since 2003. That is a long-term, fundamental research

program that basically supports research from the very basic state all the way through, hopefully, to translational states. Australia actually leads the world in those programs, so the rest of the world looks with envy at the kind of research programs we set up over here. And that has put us in pole position to lead in many different high technology areas across Australia.

PYNE: It's fantastic, and I assume that you would hope that your team is going to win one of those Nobel prizes in the future. As a short vignette, we've won 15 Nobel Prizes in Australia, five of them, of course, by South Australians, but not that I'm boasting. But Michelle, congratulations on being Australian of the Year, it's a great achievement for you. How do you wish to use your newfound notoriety, if you'd like, your newfound fame as the Australian of the Year to promote the particular causes that are that you think are important for Australia?

SIMMONS: Yeah sure. So fundamentally we're trying to win this race to build the quantum computer, but I'm conscious there's a couple of messages that I realise are quite important to get out there. One is to encourage young girls to come into science, and in particular the hard sciences because I think there is a lack at the moment, and the opportunities there are phenomenal. But I guess the other thing I'm really passionate about is making sure that Australia grabs the horns right now, and make sure that we translate some of that fundamental research to industries here in the future.

I think the world is changing very dramatically. The kind of big semiconductor industries and the manufacturing industries are coming to the end of what we call Moore's Law. Huge opportunities for countries across the world to take the lead in the quantum information race, and I actually think Australia is sitting right at the forefront, right at pole position to do that.

MARLES: Michelle, how do we get girls, but also boys, interested in studying science? We've seen a drop off of people in year 10, say, choosing to study science. One of the things I wonder is whether as a country we celebrate big science in the way that other countries do. We've got the square kilometre array telescope which is an incredible project which, it seems to me, should be on the front pages of newspapers but it's not. Do you have a view about how we get more kids studying science?

SIMMONS: Yeah look, I think certainly in the female space, in particular in the field I'm in, there are pretty much 5% of scientists in the quantum physics space are female. We see there's a big drop off from the ages of 14 to 16, it drops by about 50% at that age. And if you look at it I think one of the challenges for us is to show young people what kind of job you can get out there. So if you look on websites and particularly MySpace you look around the world you see that most of the groups are mainly male, and obviously if you're a young girl try to see how you fit into that space it doesn't look very appealing. So one of the things I'm trying to do this year, and I hope to achieve, is to highlight some of the fantastic jobs that people that do the hard sciences end up getting, whether it's a fighter pilot, whether it's a marketing manager at Google, whether it's running a quantum physics team, there are a huge diversity in jobs that you can get out there if you take on the hard sciences. And one of the messages I hope to explain is it actually opens your horizons, it shows you a huge

amount of possibilities as opposed to choosing the more kind of traditional vocational courses which kind of limit your long term possibilities.

PYNE: One of the things we're doing at the moment, of course Michelle, is this campaign around defence industry, the work force behind the Defence Force, because we want to explain to people that there are so many different jobs available across defence industry and they're in high tech sophisticated parts of the economy. Obviously as the Australian of the Year, and as the professor that heads up this incredible team you're a great role model for women, which is really important for us right now, we need those positive messages to get out there. Do you see the quantum computing having substantial cross overs and support of our Defence Forces here in Australia.

SIMMONS: Absolutely, so I think quantum technologies in general, there's kind of three key areas that people are looking at. There is something called quantum sensing, it's looking at very sensitive detectors that can be used to look at biological systems, or looking at minerals underground, or looking at gravitational waves detection, these are all kind of fundamental things in the quantum sensing machine. You've got quantum communications, which is how you can transmit information across the world absolutely securely, and Australia has leadership in that area. And then obviously in the quantum computing space that I'm in it's really trying to get that exponential speed up in computational power and that will have applications all across different industries, including defence for designing aircrafts for fuel costs, saving fuel costs across the world, for drug design, for making sure that the drugs are targeted for the patient's DNA. Pretty much any industry that has huge amounts of data or lots of variables, quantum physics is going to come in with quantum computing and help solve those problems real time.

MARLES: Well Michelle thank you for joining us today. We've been really keen to get you on the program, and best of luck during the course of this year as you carry out your duties as Australian of the Year.

SIMMONS: It's a pleasure, lovely to talk to you both.

MARLES: And that brings us to the question of the week, inspired by Justin Trudeau, the Prime Minister of Canada's, visit to India where he got dressed in traditional costume, and this sometimes occurs when you go overseas. So the question is 'have you ever got dressed up on a trip overseas?' The answer for me is yes, but Christopher what's been your most colourful attire that you've adorned overseas?

PYNE: Richard I think that hopefully the viewers are seeing various photographs now of Justin Trudeau, and you and I in our various gowns. Look, I was rather taken with this story this week. Justin Trudeau copped quite brating on the social media. Maybe he over did it a little, he had about six or seven different outfits to every different event he went to, but I thought it was great. When I went to India a couple of years ago, and I've just been there in January, I donned a Modi jacket. It had a great impact on the people who I was talking to and my Indian counterparts, and it does show that you're prepared to be part of the local culture. And you like to dress up a lot in these kinds of outfits, you do the Army outfits, the Indian outfits, and when you

were a Parliamentary Secretary for the South Pacific you must have put on quite a few leis and various things. So I'm all for it.

MARLES: Yeah, well look my closet now, having done a few years in that role, has a whole lot of Hawaiian shirts in there which is a particular fashion out there in the Pacific, but I assume everyone- it doesn't translate back here in Australia and so I think a photo has gone up of when I met Admiral Harris, who is about to become the new US ambassador to Australia and the new Senator from New South Wales, Kristina Keneally, when she was in her former role on this on this channel said this is an example of when good people wear bad shirts. That says something about how these fashions don't translate.

PYNE: You've got to draw the lines at hats though.

MARLES: You've got to draw the line on hats. But it does say that you're making an effort, and by and large these things are well received when you do put on the garb overseas. Anyway we've run out of time, great to talk to you again this afternoon Christopher, I look forward to doing so again next week. We'll join you viewers at one o'clock next week on Sky News on *Pyne & Marles*. We'll see you then.

ENDS