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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
TV INTERVIEW  
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***SUBJECTS: Anzac Day; US ambassador***

**HOST:** We'll go live now to the Shadow Defence Minister, Richard Marles, and as we've seen over recent years, Mr. Marles, we see this very positive reaction to Anzac Day in large turnouts around the country. What do you say in a general sense to the critics who question Anzac Day, describe it as a myth and something that shouldn't be at the centre of our national consciousness?

**RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE:** Well, I think it's a very organic movement and in that sense it's a very democratic movement. This is not something which has been decided by governments or in parliaments. It's actually been decided by people voting with their feet and turning up to Anzac ceremonies all over the country in greater numbers every year, and I've been to a couple of services this morning and that trend has continued at least here in Geelong, and I think it is because whilst this is a day which is about celebrating the sacrifice of those who have served wearing our nation's uniform, and that is a day which many countries have, there is something else I think going on here. 1915 was the first moment in which Australia really presented itself on the world stage and there was a sense in which our character came to the fore and that the uniqueness of it, the camaraderie associated with it, some of the irreverence, but the mateship as we've described it.

And of course in the Second World War really the events surrounding that and particularly in the Pacific theatre gave rise to what was in effect our independence, so our nation is inextricably linked to the events of Australians serving in conflict, and I don't think it's wrong at all that we should be celebrating something more than the sacrifice of service, as important as that is obviously, but that there is something greater about our national spirit.

Let me say, this hasn't been decided by governments. It's been decided by the people and I think there's something wonderful about that.

**HOST:** It's a very good point. Recently, as we know over many years Gallipoli has been the centre of the focus, understandably. This year, though, in recent times as we've marked the centenary of key moments in World War I, this year we look, of course, to Villers-Bretonneux, where there was such a significant battle, the turning

point of World War I, and the great General Sir John Monash being honoured with that centre which could well become another central focal point of a pilgrimage which we've seen over many years in Gallipoli.

**MARLES:** Well I think that's right and Villers-Bretonneux is a very significant moment. 2,500 Australians, almost, lost their lives in the battle of Villers-Bretonneux, which is just phenomenal, and all the numbers, in truth, associated with the First World War are on a different scale to any other conflict in which we've been engaged. You're right, General Sir John Monash played a critical role later in the battle of Hamel where he jointly commanded Australian and US forces, beginning that particular battle on what was American Independence Day, the 4th of July, and so we're commemorating this year the centenary of mateship between Australia and the US, but Australians played a very large role on the Western Front. In Villers-Bretonneux today there are signs in that town 'Never forget Australia', and again it says something about the contribution that was made.

It's hard to imagine what was going through the minds of those who volunteered for a conflict which was on the other side of the world and were willing to give their lives in pursuit of that, and there's something very, irrespective of what the sort of outcome and the forces were that led up to the First World War and the outcome of it, there is something very noble about that.

**HOST:** And from the dawn service itself, recalling the stand to military routine of diggers being ready to fire at dawn, and that being commemorated through the dawn service around our country, to the very fact that it happens not just here but when diggers are serving in the Middle East and wherever else they find themselves on Anzac Day, it has a contemporary resonance as well, doesn't it, for service men and women.

**MARLES:** Well I think it does, and certainly in the role I now hold, getting to know our service men and women a little better, this is the most important day that they have in their calendar and it's a moment for them which is particularly poignant. Really it is about the sacrifice that they engage in everyday, but where they get an opportunity to give their respects and remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, and it's worth remembering that people wearing our nation's uniform fighting in our country's name have made that sacrifice over the last few years in Afghanistan, and so it is a very, very poignant and significant day for those who wear our nation's uniform.

As much as there is a national resonance in Anzac Day I think what's absolutely important is that first and foremost we remember and acknowledge this as a day to acknowledge those who have given service and those who have given sacrifice in the service of our country.

**HOST:** You touched on the battle of Hamel and the fact that that was the first time Australia and US troops fought side by side, 100 years of mateship honoured today. Just on a related issue, though, the ambassador, US ambassador to Australia designate, Harry Harris, has since been reassigned overnight to Seoul. You can understand the urgency, in terms of the Korean peninsula, of course talks looming, but it goes to what is a debacle, doesn't it, in the Trump administration that they

haven't filled either the post to this point and so with one of their closest allies, as Andrew Shearer put it, the former adviser to John Howard and Tony Abbott, and a serious thinker on foreign policy, he says the Trump administration is treating Australia shabbily in this context. What do you say?

**MARLES:** Look, I think we all look very much forward to an ambassador from the United States being in the role in Canberra. Ultimately this is a matter for the US and who they choose to put in that role is for them. Harry Harris would have made a wonderful ambassador to Australia, but I've got no doubt whoever fills that role in the future will do that and we do wait looking very much forward to the day that Ambassador is put in place.

I make this observation, that Jim Caruso, who is the Charge d'Affaires of the United States in Australia right now until an ambassador is appointed, is doing a fantastic job on behalf of his country and on behalf of the relationship and the alliance between Australia and the United States, so America is well served in Australia right now, but I agree the sooner we get an ambassador the better.

**HOST:** It's not ideal, is it, to have one of your closest allies without a senior figure representing the country here? Over years we've had a lot of very strong ones, from Jeffrey Bleich, up until recently John Berry. There's been some good ones in recent years, but sadly the last couple of years vacant. It's not a good look, is it?

**MARLES:** Well sure, there hasn't been a formal ambassador. I would hesitate to say it's vacant. Jim Caruso is doing a wonderful job on behalf of the United States in Australia and he is a diplomat of the highest order, so

**HOST:** -So it's not a snub? You don't see it as a snub?

**MARLES:** Well look, I think the sooner we get an ambassador the better. There's no doubt about that, but we're close friends. I don't think anyone's taking offense. America is well represented day in day out. As I say we do look forward to having an ambassador present, but Jim is a really good diplomat and is doing a fine job.

**HOST:** Richard Marles, talk to you soon. Have a good Anzac Day.

[ENDS]

***Authorised by Noah Carroll ALP Canberra***