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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
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SUBJECTS: Sexual abuse in the ADF; Andrew Hastie; offshore detention

HOST: Richard Marles, welcome. There are reports today of a spike in sexual abuse and misconduct within the Defence Force, this after many updates to parliament that they were on top of things. Do you think it's evidence that Defence is slipping in this area?

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: Greg, I certainly think it is concerning. This is an issue we had hoped that we were on top of. One of the recommendations that came out of the Defence Abuse Response Taskforce was a real beefing up of the Defence Force Ombudsman, particularly the ability to cover reports of sexual abuse. I think it is really important that that mechanism be used.

I have asked my office to seek a briefing on exactly what the rates are here-

HOST: -It would be more reporting, is that what you are suggesting?

MARLES: Maybe, but clearly the numbers of reports are still concerning. I think the point to make here is our Defence Forces do a remarkable job and people sign up for service in our nation's name, and for the vast majority of people they give that service. There are obviously some people who are not living up to that obligation, and, in the process, putting people in hazard's way in a way that they would not have expected in terms of signing up to our Defence Force. This is certainly an issue that we need to get sorted and I think the Defence Force Ombudsman has a role to play here, but we will be seeking a report from the Government about exactly what is going on.

HOST: There are opportunities to do that with Defence at estimates next week. If we move on to other areas of national security, in your view, did Andrew Hastie do anything wrong in laying out his foreign interference case in the parliament?

MARLES: The answer to that question lies in the basis in which he was given the information that he was, the terms on which that was provided to him. Now, if that was done in a private briefing, well, then the private briefing hasn't been honoured-

HOST: -What if it was done in a private briefing but with information that's otherwise obtainable publicly?

MARLES: I think if you are given information in a private briefing, the briefing is private. That is what it means. That is really the question that Andrew has to answer. Ultimately, he is the person who understands the terms on which this information was provided to him and the terms on which he obtained it, and it's for him to actually justify the basis upon which he provided that information to the House, and that is ultimately a matter for the Government to resolve.

I think the other question here is what heads up was provided to the American embassy, for example, about the fact that he was going to make this statement?

HOST: Alright, well, they have put out a statement today saying we are, amongst other things, we are in lockstep as we work together, diplomatic relations between the US and Australia are as strong as ever. They don't seem too perturbed about this, but from Labor's point of view, what is the end game here? You used the word resolve. Mark Dreyfus used words like a question of trust. Is this unsettling or even unseating Andrew Hastie as the Chairman of that committee?

MARLES: I am not going there. In terms of the relationship with the United States, it is broad, it is deep and not for a moment do I think an incident of this kind in any way jeopardises the relationship with the United States and I don't think we should be analysing every incident against that bar.

I think what is important to understand are the terms on which the information was provided to Andrew and the basis on which he then spoke about it the House.

If you want to know my view about the end game here, it does go to the foreign interference legislation. We do have an issue, and I think that became clear, actually, after the ABC-Fairfax report more than a year ago around the level of Chinese donations into the Australian electoral system.

Since June of last year we've been calling for a ban on foreign donations. We're working constructively with the Government on the foreign interference legislation but we need to get a consensus and we need to get this Bill done and we particularly need to get it done before the next Federal election.

HOST: Now, an important part of getting that done is the work of the committee itself. It has been put to us that this Andrew Hastie argument, if that's what we're calling it, is actually about more than him, it's actually about the settled bipartisanship and nature of that committee. Do you share the view that some might be trying to unsettle that committee and the work that it does?

MARLES: I don't, actually. I think the experience I've had in talking with members and colleagues, actually from both sides of parliament, involved in that committee is that there is a high degree of collegiality in there. There really a genuine attempt to achieve a consensus between the major political parties around national security issues and around intelligence issues, and so-

HOST: But when you have people like Mark Dreyfus on the committee saying reasonably strong things directed at the Chairman alongside him, it doesn't auger well for the history and cohesion that you speak of.

MARLES: I think Mark has done a fantastic job on this committee and it is important. I mean, details here matter and Mark is a person who understands the law in this area as well as anyone in the parliament and we owe him a debt of gratitude in the way in which he forensically goes about making sure that we get the details right, not just in terms of Labor's position but in terms of the Bills and the legislation that ends up going through this parliament. He has done work on a range of national security Bills through this committee, but let me say the committee has a great record in terms of the way in which discussions have happened around Bills of getting Bills through the Parliament on a consensus basis which have made our country safer. I think that remains fundamentally the case here.

HOST: Let's move off to another area now. At some cost to you, I will suggest, you authored, fundamentally, the ALP policy platform on asylum seekers. Do you agree with Linda Burney that there needs to be some sort of time limit on offshore detention?

MARLES: Everyone wants to see those on Manus and Nauru out of detention as quickly as possible, or should I say out of the circumstances of being on Manus and Nauru as quickly as possible.

That people have been left to languish there for five years or more is an absolute disgrace and it speaks to the fact that this government has been incredibly slow in being able to negotiate third-country resettlement options. The arrangement with the US, to be sure, is really important, but it will not resolve the circumstances of everyone on Manus and Nauru.

HOST: So Labor would seek other third-country settlements, that's in office, but in the meantime you have got things like the Victorian conference this weekend, and an urgency motion that calls on a future Bill Shorten government to bring all remaining asylum seekers on Manus and Nauru to Australia within 90 days. These are questions you need to address in the short term, before government.

MARLES: Well, the Victorians will have their say. At the end of the day, it is the national platform established by the national conference which has a bearing on the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, and I'm confident-

HOST: -And you don't want time limits in that?

MARLES: Time limits are difficult because ultimately when you are negotiating an agreement with another country you are not in complete control of that process. I think the point that needs to be made here is there is a very different posture set up by the Labor Party's platform to what is happening with the Government at the moment. In essence, the Government has put a wall around Australia, turned our back on the world and said 'we're not going to engage in the issue of the globally displaced'. We are very different.

In seeking a transformative commitment to the UNHCR, in seeking to double our humanitarian intake we are saying to the world 'we want to engage in the plight of

the world's displaced and indeed do it in a bigger way than any Australia government has ever done before, bigger than what the Fraser Government did in the '70s, and it's that act which actually provides the opportunity where we will be able to work with other governments in terms of finding third-country resettlement options for people on Manus and Nauru.

I am confident it will be done. It's-

HOST: -Without a timeline, as you suggest?

MARLES: It's the different posture, Greg, which allows that to occur and it is a very different posture from what the Government has at the moment. Now, it's absolutely essential that that policy, and I'm sure it will be, is affirmed at national conference, and-

HOST: -And underpinning it, not to come to Australia, which is the second part of that Victorian motion, for example?

MARLES: I understand the sentiment behind that, but there is a system going on here which we need to understand and if we were to do anything at any point to empower people smugglers and put them back into business and see the appalling loss of life - which had something to do with us - on our border in the past, that would be a huge mistake, so it is important that our intervention into this area make things better rather than have unintended consequences which make things worse, and that's why this is such a difficult area, but the policy we have crafted which is in the platform at the moment, which represents the policy of the Labor Party right now, does do all of those things.

HOST: Alright, let's see what the Adelaide conference brings. Richard Marles, thanks for your thoughts today.

MARLES: Thanks, Greg.

ENDS

Authorised by Noah Carroll ALP Canberra