

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

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
SKY NEWS LIVE
PYNE & MARLES
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SUBJECTS: Liberals education cuts; strawberries; Labor's support for women's superannuation; aged care

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Good afternoon and welcome to *Pyne & Marles* here on Sky News Live. It's Friday, 21 September at one o'clock Australian Eastern Standard Time. I'm Christopher Pyne and I'm home in Adelaide, happily, and Richard Marles, my co-presenter is in Melbourne today. Good afternoon, Richard.

RICHARD MARLES: Good afternoon, Christopher –almost home, but not quite, in the capital city today. But the news of the day follows on from the Government's announcement yesterday afternoon in relation to funding for schools. Tell us about that.

PYNE: Well obviously we've resolved some of the issues surrounding the funding of schools. The formula was under some cloud and Michael Chaney did a review of that formula, the SES model as it's called, and found that the Catholic schools and some independent schools were being disadvantaged by that formula, so we've altered it. So, there's \$6.3 billion of more funds going to public schools as part of our education reform, and as of yesterday \$4.3 billion more going to Catholic and independent schools to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by the model, so it's great news for parents and also of course for the children in the schools, and no doubt Labor is gnashing their teeth at the fact that we've solved yet another problem.

MARLES: Well, you've addressed what you think is your political problem, and that is the funding of the Catholic schools. Let me assure you everybody in a Catholic school knows the only reason they're getting more money is because Labor pushed for it.

PYNE: Rubbish.

MARLES: Well, that is how people see it, but you've now set up a situation

where in terms of only doing funding for private schools and Catholic schools you're creating the school wars again, and the only way you get out of this is if you restore the \$14 billion to the education sector that you cut.

PYNE: But of course Richard everybody knows, who is watching the show, that the state governments fund the state schools to the tune of 80 per cent of their budget and we fund them to the tune of 20 per cent because the states are responsible for state schools. Traditionally we've been responsible for non-government schools, so we are massively increasing the funding every year for the next four years and beyond to both government and non-government schools.

We actually ended the school wars that had been continued by Labor for six years.

MARLES: And now you're starting them up again.

PYNE: You've got funny money and no money. You're actually making promises with money you haven't got, and the public know it. When I talk to parents in schools they know that our funding is actually coming through. They know that it's real and they know that Labor's just trying to con them about school funding, like so many other issues.

MARLES: Well, I don't know how that aligns with the promises that I think you made, personally, back in 2013 when you were saying you were going to commit to Gonski. It's very clear-

PYNE: -We did. That's exactly what we did.

MARLES: Well, if you were going to commit to Gonski you'd be restoring the \$14 billion that you've cut and that's the fundamental issue in terms of the lack of funding-

PYNE: -No, that's not true.

MARLES: -for schools.

But we should probably get on to the other issues-

PYNE: -What are we doing today?

MARLES: -the other issues of the week.

It's been a big week in Canberra this week. Obviously the whole situation around strawberries has dominated a whole lot of the conversation. We will be talking about that, and you and I, Christopher, staged a photograph during the week in support of our strawberry farmers. Earlier in the week Labor announced a package for women's superannuation. We'll be discussing that. And there was of course at the very start of the week the Aged Care Royal Commission, which

is a big moment in terms of the whole aged care debate, and indeed our guest today is Everaldo Compton, who is the founding director of National Seniors Australia, and we'll be talking to him about aged care and indeed ageing Australia in our interview today.

To start with, the strawberries crisis. It's been the news which has dominated the week. Have a look at this.

PETER DUTTON [CLIP]: There are now over 100 cases where there is a report of fruit being contaminated.

SCOTT MORRISON [CLIP]: I'm just focused on making sure no idiot goes into a supermarket this weekend and does something ridiculous.

DAVID LITTLEPROUD [CLIP]: We have the best strawberries in the world and we need to make sure that these parasites don't get away with it.

MORRISON [CLIP]: The idiocy, the carelessness, the recklessness, the vengefulness of some characters out there would mean that we would have to be here today passing these types of laws, but when they're necessary you must act.

BILL SHORTEN [CLIP]: So on the way home tonight if you're in the supermarket on the weekend we encourage people to grab a punnet for yourself and a punnet for the nation.

MARLES: Well, with one voice the whole spectrum of Australian politics has been standing with our strawberry farmers. It's really hard to imagine what motivates anyone to engage in the actions that we've seen cost so much to the industry and so many jobs. This is a rare event, but it's actually not an unprecedented event, food tampering. I think at the end of the day we need some kind of national protocol, don't you agree?

PYNE: Well Richard, I think Christian Porter really hit the nail on the head when he talked in the Parliament, Question Time, about the combination of moron plus social media for all those people who, in a copycat way, started to put needles into strawberries thinking this was of no consequence and a harmless prank. It obviously began, we think, with disgruntled employees or employee of a strawberry farm in Queensland, but those people who then went on social media and thought they'd make themselves famous by doing copycat damage to the strawberries with needles: really unbelievably dumb.

Luckily the Government acted, and fair enough, Labor, in a bipartisan way, supported a very quick response from the federal government, from the new Government, the Morrison Government, and we passed legislation on Thursday through both houses of parliament to introduce new offences and penalties for those people who sabotage food produce. We have, of course, a number of protocols, but we haven't had them around the tampering with food and now we'll have that, so it's a good outcome but I think we'll all be happier when the

strawberry industry has recovered from what was a completely random act.

MARLES: Yeah, I think that's right, and obviously the parliament did act and that's good. A lot of the response to this lies in state agencies and authorities and it seems to me there is a difficult balancing act between obviously keeping the public informed of what risks there are, but the moment that you put the name of any particular strawberry brand out there, in this case, you do enormous damage to it and I think what protocols are in place so that those agencies respond, firstly, in a unified way around the country, but in a careful way which isolates the issue I think is really important.

PYNE: That's right, and look, the state governments, I used to be responsible for FSANZ in the Howard Government many years ago, in the glory days, and the state governments have a lot of powers. What they have to do, though, is they have to police the powers that they've got. They've actually got to implement the powers that they have and that's a resourcing issue for the states and territories to determine, but we've seen this week what happens if you have power and don't use them. We actually need to make sure we protect our consumers and our businesses.

MARLES: Yeah, you're right and the point you made earlier about how social media interacts with a phenomenon like this as well is a point well made, and those who engage in a copycat way were just complete idiots.

Earlier in the week Labor announced a package in relation to women's superannuation. Have a look at this.

BILL SHORTEN [CLIP]: A husband is not a retirement plan. Our community needs our mums to be mums, but you shouldn't have to pay a motherhood penalty and retire poor.

SHORTEN [CLIP]: Will the Prime Minister therefore support Labor's plan to invest \$400 million to strengthen the Australian superannuation system?

SCOTT MORRISON [CLIP]: The Government will consider all options. As a government, we've been acting.

KELLY O'DWYER [CLIP]: Under our government there are more women in work than ever before.

MARLES: Superannuation for women is an issue. There's something like a \$100,000 difference on average for women and men when they retire, in terms of what's in their superannuation. That's about a 40 per cent gap between what men have in their superannuation on retirement compared to women. So, this is a package which seeks to deal with this. It doesn't deal with the whole problem but it's an important step in the right direction. It effectively means that superannuation will be paid in respect of paid parental leave and the minimum threshold is going to be phased out as it disproportionately affects women.

It's a \$400 million announcement. It will add tens of thousands of dollars extra to your average woman's superannuation account on retirement, so it is an important step in the right direction. It shows our commitment to superannuation, but Christopher I guess I'd ask you the question that Bill Shorten asked in that clip in Question Time: is the Government going to back it, because your form in relation to super is not particularly good?

PYNE: Richard, I'm glad you finally give me a say. I thought you're going to talk out the rest of the segment.

MARLES: I was planning on it.

PYNE: I'm happy to give a bouquet to the Hawke-Keating Government because I think their reforms to superannuation in the '80s and then into the '90s has been one of the most important reforms in the last few decades. It's the envy of the rest of the world, is our superannuation regime, because we have taken a lot of the pressure off ourselves and we'll talk later on in the program to Everaldo Compton about our aging demographic, but because of superannuation we're actually in a better position now than we would otherwise have been, but that doesn't mean we can't keep improving it and what the Government has before the parliament right now in the Senate is a protecting your super bill, which has passed the House representatives. Labor won't support it. It would actually introduce more protections, particularly for low-income superannuation contributors, effect 1.6 million women positively.

I don't know why Labor doesn't support it. It would make it harder for them to lose their superannuation savings through fees and rip offs, and of course we do have the low-income superannuation tax offset, so we already do have strong support for low-income women. That affects about 1.3 million women around Australia, so of course we always look at ideas, but we've got an idea for the parliament right now and really you should be supporting it rather than blocking it-

MARLES: -That sounded like a no, though

PYNE: We always look at good ideas. Whether yours is a good idea or not I'm not absolutely sure.

But let's move on to the next subject, which is the Royal Commission into the quality and safety in aged care, a very serious issue. The Government has got out ahead of the curve to make sure that we are looking after senior Australians. Let's have a look at how that's unfolded this week.

SCOTT MORRISON [CLIP]: I think we should brace ourselves for some pretty bruising some pretty bruising information.

BILL SHORTEN [CLIP]: You can't repair the system whilst you're cutting it at the same time

MORRISON [CLIP]: Our government is standing with senior Australians to protect them, to protect their safety, their personal safety, Mr. Speaker, and the care that is being provided to them.

SHORTEN [CLIP]: Why, when he was Treasurer, in his first budget, did the now-Prime Minister cut \$1.2 billion from aged care?

MORRISON [CLIP]: I was hoping there'd be some bipartisanship, Mr Speaker, when it came to issues of aged care. I don't want to fight about this issue. I want to fix it.

PYNE: Richard, aged care is a very important issue in Australia. It affects every family. It's a great concern to many people.

Of course, people also have great experiences in aged care. Both my mother and mother-in-law are in aged care and they are both having perfectly a high-quality experiences, but I know there are too many examples where that's not the case and the royal commission into quality and safe aged care is a response to that, supported by the Labor Party. It shows that the Government is getting on with the job.

I expect that we'll have the terms of reference in the not too distant future, and the royal commissioner, whomever that might be, can get on with the job, but I think it's a good response to the concerns of families and more importantly the protecting of older, vulnerable people in aged care settings.

MARLES: Well, look, we support the royal commission. It is a good step, but I guess we all know that you did it because the *Four Corners* report was coming up and you want to get out ahead.

PYNE: Well, that's churlish.

MARLES: It's not. It's the truth. Why did it take a TV show to get you to act?

PYNE: Well, it didn't. We've been talking about a royal commission for some time.

MARLES: We had only heard about it this week, and if you were acting you-

PYNE: -You haven't been paying attention.

MARLES: -you wouldn't have cut \$1.2 billion out of the aged care system. It's actually taken a TV show to get you to do anything

PYNE: Well, there's a massive increase in funding for aged care over the next four years-

MARLES: -That's just not true.

PYNE: Every year the aged care funding increases as was outlined by Ken Wyatt this week in Question Time, and the freeze on indexation of aged care was started under the Labor Party and the one that you're talking about now in the budget a few years ago was supported and voted for by the Labor Party, so you can't have it both ways, you know, Richard. It just doesn't work that way.

MARLES: It's a \$1.2 billion cut that Scott Morrison put in place-

PYNE: -But you voted for it. You voted for the indexation freeze-

MARLES: -as the Treasurer. There's more than 100,00 people out there waiting for home care packages. So, you know, it's all well and good to be talking about an aged care royal commission and I think it is important-

PYNE: -Well, we have massively increased the number of home care packages. We've hugely increased the number in last year's budget.

MARLES: Yeah, but relative to what was being planned to be done, if you look at what was planned to occur over the forward estimates, you've cut extensively into aged care and people in the sector know it, and ultimately that's the issue here.

It's all well and good to have the royal commission. I think it is going to be an important royal commission. There was a comment in that package that we should be bracing ourselves for some pretty extraordinary information to come out. I suspect that is true, and so it's important that the spotlight is being put on the area, but really it shouldn't have taken a TV show to actually get the Government to act.

PYNE: I think you're getting dangerously close to playing politics on every single subject except strawberries, in this show at least, and I think you're playing old politics. The public is sick of it. They want to get on and see solutions and that's what the Morrison Government is doing well.

MARLES: Well, we'll see what you do in response to the Royal Commission, but I do think it will be a landmark inquiry and one which is very much needed, and like you I have got family in aged care right now, and indeed my mother's having a good experience, but with a bigger and older community obviously aged care is very important, but we will talk about that with Everal Compton, the founding director of National Seniors Australia, after the break when we have our interview.

[AD BREAK]

PYNE: Welcome back to *Pyne & Marles* here on Sky News Live. Our guest this afternoon is someone I've known for a very long time, in fact for all of my political career he has been campaigning for a better deal for older Australians, throughout the last quarter of a century and longer, and this week good progress has been made in terms of the Government's announcement of a

royal commission into quality and safety in aged care, but there are a lot of issues around ageing and not just aged care which we'd like to talk about this afternoon, and so welcome to the founding director of National Seniors, Everal Compton. Thanks for joining us, Everal.

EVERAL COMPTON: G'day, Christopher and Richard. Good to be here.

PYNE: So what's your response or take out to the announcement of the royal commission into aged care? How do you feel that that will play out over the coming months and maybe even years?

COMPTON: Well, it's necessary. I've been talking to my friend Ken Wyatt about the need for an inquiry for about two years now and I'm pleased that it is advanced from an inquiry into a royal commission.

It's quite clear that in nursing homes and nursing facilities across Australia there are a whole range of problems, both from terms of not good treatment to elder abuse to financial issues and there are issues generally about how people should be cared for in their old age.

Now, I believe the Royal Commission will find a lot of things that will disturb us. I think they'll find lots of things that can be remedied. The big issue will be that whoever is in power at the time the royal commission report comes out, it's important that action be taken because there's been enormous amount of discussion about this for a fair while. The time is now and I think the need is very urgent, Christopher.

MARLES: So, Everal, we've got the baby boomers, which are the biggest demographic bubble in our population, who are now going through the process of retiring. People are living longer. We've got a bigger and an older population. Both in terms of public policy, but more in terms of how our society deals with the elderly, do you think we are a society which has our head around what's required for a bigger and an older ageing population?

COMPTON: I don't believe that we are, Richard. I think that Australians are largely unaware that we have an ageing of the population which is going to have economic and social consequences, such as Australia and the world has not seen before. We need to be having policies now being implemented to handle what's going to happen by 2050, when ageing will reach its peak.

We'll be getting older progressively. In numbers, there'll be 50,000 Australians who are 100. There'll be 5,000 who are 110. The largest single segment of the population will be between 85 and 100, and the second largest segment will be 70 to 85, so we'll have a situation where there's a lot of people out of the workforce.

There'll be a great need for younger people with skills. There'll be a great need for some of the people who've retired to come back into the workforce to fill the gap. I believe that if we plan now we can turn ageing into an asset rather than it

being a liability, but it's going to take 20 years of good planning and some difficult decisions to be made which will affect the lives of people, but the time is now to have to act on it and we need to coordinate at least a dozen different ways in which ageing will impact on Australian society. Australian society has to have an attitude towards ageing which is one of looking at it positively and not saying 'well, here's a real problem. Why have we got all these old guys around destroying the economy?' Big issue.

PYNE: Yeah, Everald, I would like to see ageing in the population as a strength not a weakness, as an asset not a burden, and I think we need to get our language out right about that as well. But before we leave the Royal Commission, and we might come back to demographics, there's been calls this week that the Royal Commission should be extended to disabilities in general, and I wanted to get your thoughts on whether you thought it should stay focused as it is on residential aged care and in-home aged care or whether you think it should be expanded to include disabilities or it might just be so large that point that it would be almost impossible to land it?

COMPTON: I think it would be not a smart step to include disability.

Now, I am I am very conscious and aware of the many issues that are involved in disability, but they are by and large different issues and you would have a situation where the royal commission would get clogged up. By all means, let's have another inquiry, at least, or a royal commission into people with disabilities, but I think it would make it all too large.

You can cover many subjects in an inquiry if you want to, and I think the terms of the royal commission need to be expanded into what's happening in private homes with ageing. There's lots of elder abuse going on in private homes away from nursing homes. There are young people who are trying to get their share of the estate long before Mum and Dad die and are trying to get it from them when they're not in the best of mental conditions, and that needs to have a very serious look at it because it's a growing crime in Australia.

So, I think we've got plenty of things that we can concentrate on getting the aging thing right, and I would certainly support a totally independent inquiry on the issue of handicapped people.

MARLES: Well, Everald, we really appreciate you joining us today and getting those insights. Certainly it's going to be a very important royal commission and this is an issue which as you rightly say we need to get our heads around more and do more about, not just in terms of public policy but but as a society. So, thank you for joining us today.

COMPTON: Good to be with you. Thank you both.

MARLES: And that brings us to the question of the week, which is about strawberries, having dealt with the issue during the week and feeling that we need to be doing everything we can to support our strawberry farmers. So,

Christopher, how do you best enjoy your strawberries?

PYNE: I must admit I do love strawberries, and strawberries, just fresh strawberries, are my favourite - perhaps with a little bit of sugar or one of those kinds of extra sweet things which are probably not a very good idea. I love them in a pav. Like the Prime Minister I think everyone should make a pav this weekend because we can use our strawberries.

I think by the time we've finished with this strawberry story we'll be looking for strawberries because so many Australians are responding so positively to the plight of our farmers and that would be a good problem to have. What about yourself? How do you like your strawberries, Richard?

MARLES: Well, as a kid I loved strawberry-flavoured milk, but I suspect there weren't any strawberries in that.

PYNE: No.

MARLES: Mostly I use strawberries for the kids' lunches, and they certainly enjoy that as a snack, and of course we cut them up.

But what we need to be doing, as you rightly say, is buying a punnet for the family and buying a pundit for the nation right now to get the strawberry farmers back-

PYNE: -And cut them up. Cut them up, don't cut them out, as they say.

MARLES: That's exactly what we need to do to get our strawberry farmers back on their feet.

That brings us to the end of the show. Great to talk to you again, Christopher, and we'll be doing that again next week at 1 o'clock on *Pyne & Marles* on Sky News. We'll see you then.

Authorised by Noah Carroll, ALP, Canberra.