



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

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT**

**RADIO INTERVIEW**

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***MORNINGS***

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***SUBJECTS: Wentworth by-election; asylum seekers***

**HOST:** Richard Marles is Shadow Minister for Defence. He's the member for the seat of Corio, based around suburban Geelong and one of the key strategists in the Federal Opposition, in the Labor Party. Mr Marles, good morning to you.

**RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE:** Good morning, Jon. How are you?

**HOST:** Well. First up, on that issue a moment ago, is the Labor Party intending to try again to have Peter Dutton referred to the High Court?

**MARLES:** Oh look, I'm not in a position to flag what particular resolutions or issues we're going to be putting forward on any given day in Parliament, but our position in relation to Peter Dutton and a referral to the High Court has been clear. We put that previously and it is our view that Peter Dutton should be referred to the High Court, but exactly how that plays out in the parliament we'll have to wait and see.

**HOST:** So the answer is yes?

**MARLES:** No, no, that's not the answer. The answer is you'll have to wait and see.

**HOST:** It seems that it would be irresistible. You, it would seem now, do have the numbers and it further weakens the Morrison Government. What's not to like about that from your point of view?

**MARLES:** Well, look, our focus is about presenting ourselves as an alternative government. The side of politics which is completely broken here is the side of politics which is the Government. I think that's what we saw in Wentworth on the weekend, but in truth it's what we've been seeing over the last few months and really the last few years.

Our focus is actually not about the specifics of what happens on this day or the next in parliament, but it's about making sure that we prepare ourselves as a potential alternative government for Australia and that we present that to the people as soon as we can.

**HOST:** Does the Labor Party prefer to become the government through a vote of no confidence and having the numbers on the floor of the parliament, or would you prefer there be a general election?

**MARLES:** Well, we don't have the numbers on the floor.

**HOST:** No, but with the crossbenches, in particular if Peter Dutton is absent, you would.

**MARLES:** I don't think we should get ahead of ourselves in relation to all of that. Ultimately, it's not us who's been making that point. It's been the Prime Minister himself. It was Scott Morrison who, in the lead up to Saturday, was saying that if the Liberals didn't win Wentworth that that would create a position of instability for his Government. He's the one who needs to live with those words and demonstrate that he can maintain stable government from here on in.

From our point of view we are we are simply readying ourselves to be an alternative government and present that to the people as soon as we get the opportunity.

Speaking personally, it feels to me like the Government is broken and I would love there to be an election tomorrow and I think every person I speak to out in the street feels exactly the same way, but I'm not holding my breath and if the next election is not until May, well, then it's not until May. That's fine. We'll be ready whenever it is and trying to put a position to the Australian people where we can offer some stability in government going forward.

**HOST:** It's not as if, and I know the Labor Party tactically ran dead, but your vote in Wentworth was hardly a vote of support for Bill Shorten, was it?

**MARLES:** To read that outcome into the Wentworth by-election is to draw a heroically long bow. We all know that Wentworth was about this Government and about Prime Minister Scott Morrison, and it was an enormous repudiation for the Government and I think an enormous repudiation for the Prime Minister himself.

We saw that in the way in which he ran events during last week, in the week leading up to the election. I mean, the idea of determining foreign policy based on a by-election in suburban Australia is an absolute disgrace. It has done our national image enormous harm and I think the voters of Wentworth made the appropriate judgment as a result.

**HOST:** You've been deeply embedded in the immigration portfolio for many years, even though you're now Shadow Minister for Defence. Would you recommend the Labor Party agree to a lifetime ban for anyone from Nauru or Manus that finds permanent residence in New Zealand, but be lifetime banned from coming to Australia?

**MARLES:** No, I wouldn't.

**HOST:** Would you recommend a 10-year window where they can't come to Australia, just as a benchmark?

**MARLES:** Well, that's the first time I've heard that idea. Off the cuff it doesn't appeal to me. I don't like the idea of making arbitrary decisions in respect of that.

I mean, the lifetime ban for people who have been on Nauru or Manus makes no sense at all and is incredibly harsh – again, would be just appallingly by the rest of the world. What we'd be talking about there is that someone settles in another country, perhaps New Zealand, perhaps America, gets a job, an academic, whatever, seeks to come to a conference in Australia and cannot. It's ridiculous and there's not a version of legislation of that kind anywhere in the world and it would be an appalling thing for us to move down that path.

We need to be getting people of Manus and Nauru. Let's make no mistake. But the answer to that is the Government should have - and we would, if we were the Government - get its skates on, get around the world and actually find alternative third-country resettlement. It's completely doable, Jon. It really is, and if this Government had a focus about doing it people wouldn't be on Manus and Nauru now, five years down the track. The fact that people have been left to languish is a disgrace, and whilst the agreement with the United States is good it doesn't resolve the situation for everybody and there will be many hundred left after that has washed through who are still in a situation of being

unresolved and it's incumbent on the Australian Government to find resolution and this Government as patently failed. I can tell you, we would do that.

**HOST:** All right. Thank you, indeed, for your answers to all of my questions. Richard Marles, Member for Corio for the Labor Party, Shadow Minister for Defence.

***ENDS***

Authorised by Noah Carroll, ALP, Canberra.