

**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
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E&OE TRANSCRIPT

TV INTERVIEW

SKY NEWS - AM AGENDA

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***SUBJECTS: Future Submarine program; National Energy Guarantee;
national security legislation***

HOST: Let's go to the Shadow Defence Minister, Richard Marles, now.

Are you satisfied with this reassurance by the Government that, well, first of all Scott Morrison says he met with Macron and that that's almost going to be finalized, the deal, and that Mr Pyne just said there that there is no cost blowout and no delay despite the reports this morning in terms of the subs?

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: Obviously I hope I Christopher is right and I hope the Government is right. In the nation's interest this needs to happen as quickly as possible.

There has actually already been a delay in the signing of the strategic partnership agreement, so it's not right to say there's been no delay. There's already been a delay.

We all want what's in the nation's interests and that is for this to be signed as quickly as possible.

I'd make this observation, though, Kieran: we're in this situation because back in 2016 the Government down selected to one tenderer for the submarine project way too early. I've said previously that it has been an epic mistake - an epic mistake. In the context of a 50 thousand million dollar spend, the idea that you don't compete the 200 million dollar design is absolutely and patently ridiculous and that's why the government doesn't have any bargaining power right now, or doesn't have the bargaining power it should have in the context of these negotiations.

But, you know, that is in the past. This is the situation they've got themselves into. The sooner this is done the better.

I do note that what Christopher Pyne has said is that he'd like this done by the election. I certainly hope that that's the case, but political timelines actually got us into this mess in the first place back in 2016. It's important that this be done on its own time, but that should be done as quickly as possible.

HOST: With a project of this size and scale, though, Richard Marles, is it realistic to think there wouldn't be some kind of cost blow out or time delay?

MARLES: I suppose the point in that question, Laura, is that we are talking about a very big project which goes over a very long period of time and we're right at the beginning of it, really. It's an easy call for Christopher to make right now, but there has already been delays right now and we're really only at the very beginning of this. The last of the Future Submarines comes out of the water in 2082, so that gives you a sense of the duration of this project. What also is implied in your question, Laura, is, if that's right, then it's really important that we're making decisions along the way which maximise our position in relation to this, and that's why the mistake back in 2016 to down select before the design was done was an epic mistake and put us in a very difficult position right now.

We've got to work this through as best we can from here, but it is absolutely

very much in the nation's interests that the Government gets on and signs this as quickly as possible. Look, I'm being told they're close, but I've been told that for a while.

HOST: It's interesting, it's such a long timeline as you've mentioned there, 2082, but some experts, as you know, think that submarines are going to be obsolete well before them. This is a big gamble.

MARLES: I think that's also a very good observation and one I've made previously as well. What then therefore matters is that in terms of the way we structure this arrangement we do have the flexibility over the course of this century to be able to adapt this procurement to wherever technology takes us. That's going to be really important because even if it's not as significant as what you've described, that submarines are obsolete, you can almost say with certainty that the way in which submarining will be done through this century will be very different to how it's done now and we need to make sure that this is fit for purpose over that period of time. That's also a very important consideration in how these deals are structured.

Let me also say this: Naval Group are an excellent company and they make great submarines and they can be a really good partner for Australia and we've been clear about that, too.

HOST: Richard Marles, do you find it interesting that Malcolm Turnbull and Bill Shorten apparently had some conversations about the national energy guarantee in recent weeks but there was no such discussion when it was actually on the table when Malcolm Turnbull was Prime Minister?

MARLES: Well, now this is where Christopher and I do agree. There is no collusion between Bill Shorten and Malcolm Turnbull

Might I say when the NEG was on the table when Malcolm Turnbull was the Prime Minister we were seeking to work with the Government to come up with a bipartisan position. That's been our situation, really, all through this term of

government. We get that what this nation needs is a settled energy policy and you get that by having bipartisanship in respect of it.

Our problem is we don't have a partner here in the form of the Coalition who is in any sense reliable about being able to agree to anything, because even the construct that they themselves developed, went through their party room a number of times, they are now walking away from. That's the issue.

We've been very upfront about where we stand on this. There's no collusion between Bill Shorten and Malcolm Turnbull.

We actually do need the Government to remove itself from being hostage to that component of it, the coal ideologues, so we actually see-

HOST: So Bill Shorten was just extending a hand of friendship and just making sure the former PM was OK. Is that right?

MARLES: Well, I think, Kieran, Bill was showing the courtesy and the grace that you would expect a leader to show, which he has shown to Tony Abbott when he left the role of being prime minister. You know, this is a difficult business but it is a business where there is a place for grace and Bill has shown that. All he's done is what he did in relation to Tony Abbott and that is extend a hand of friendship to a foe who is now departed, and that's a good thing to be doing.

HOST: Mr Marles, it looks like the encryption laws will pass today. Are you confident there are enough safeguards in place to protect our cyber capabilities?

MARLES: Firstly, I think it's great that we've got an agreement, Laura, and it shows that the process is working. The Government will attempt to do the sort of national security sabre rattling but at the end of the day what we've seen through the Joint Intelligence Committee is a willingness on both sides to actually work through legislation in a detailed way, make compromises and

come up with a solution which deals with our national security concerns but in this case balances that against people's legitimate right to privacy. I think that the outcome that's been achieved here is a good one which meets that balance.

HOST: Obviously you're of that inclination within the Labor Party, as well, and certainly some of your colleagues not so much. Have they been placated in terms of their concerns about privacy, civil liberties and so on?

MARLES: I absolutely think national security is fundamentally important here and I get the issues that encryption presents to our national security agencies. I completely understand that. But I also understand the civil liberties arguments here as well and have sympathy with those who make those arguments and it's important that this balance is achieved.

I think that this has been a committee which over the last five years has worked very productively across the aisle to make sure that a whole range of national security legislation is properly balancing the rights of citizens with what the national security needs of our nation are, and I think this is an example where that's occurred. I think people feel very comfortable that.

HOST: OK, Mr Marles, we'll talk to you very soon. Thanks so much. Appreciate it.

MARLES: Thanks, Kieran. Thanks, Laura.

[ENDS]

Authorised by Noah Carroll, ALP, Canberra.