

**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
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SUBJECTS: Border protection; future submarines

HOST: Joining us now on ABC News Channel is Richard Marles. Now Richard, you fought a long and hard battle in the ALP National Conference in 2015 to get Labor's support for turn backs and for offshore processing. Why stick with that policy?

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: Well, what we were seeking to do back then, and in the lead up to the Conference, and indeed ever since, is really to try and get our position in relation to this issue on a values basis, values around fairness, generosity, compassion. There is nothing fair or compassionate about having people die on our borders.

It was a difficult issue to deal with but we needed to be very clear-eyed about what was going on and making the decisions that we needed to make to ensure that Australia's contribution is reducing the sum of global human misery, and with so many people dying on our borders I don't know whether we could say, hand on heart, that was the case, so that was really important that we gave-

HOST: -Let's go to the hardline border policies. Do you believe that having such

policies - turn backs, offshore processing - that it's a precondition to government?

MARLES: What I think is that the right politics here is actually the right policy and the right policy is making sure that we do this based on values. I'll leave the Government to deal with this in the political terms in which it does, but from our point of view we're just seeking to get what is a really difficult question answered correctly. That's why there is nothing compassionate and compassionate about having a situation where that journey between Java and Christmas Island was allowed to proceed and so many people were perishing as a result.

Equally, Andrew, what we also sought to do at the last National Conference and is being repeated here again, and indeed enhanced, is to make sure that a future Labor government would provide the single biggest offering to the world's displaced and to the issue of global displacement that any Australian Government has ever made and we're very proud to be a part of doing that.

HOST: Well, let's look at those elements. Half a billion dollars would be given to UNHCR should Labor win the next election. Where would that be spent?

MARLES: Firstly, the UNHCR faces the most difficult set of circumstances that it's really faced since its creation, or at least since the Second World War, in terms of the number of people displaced globally. They are the entity with the helicopter view and it is right in terms of our engagement we should be following them.

Where Australia is at right now under this government is we are contributing far below our weight in terms of a financial contribution to the UNHCR. This half a billion dollars will mean that we are contributing much greater than our weight.

HOST: But where does it get spent?

MARLES: I think it's important that there be a focus regionally. We've got regional issues. There have always been regional issues in terms of displaced people in cities like KL, but also in Jakarta, and we know that the displaced in Jakarta and in Indonesia forms part of the issue for Australia because there remains a market for people smugglers in that country-

HOST: -So faster processing in Indonesia, Malaysia?

MARLES: Faster processing, but also making sure that people in those circumstances are properly resourced, that we do everything we can to work with those governments around issues such as work rights so that people are able to sustain themselves.

The other really big issue that has occurred in our region since 2015 is obviously the Rohingya and the number of displaced in Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh. That, now, is one of the great issues of displacement globally and we need to be assisting there, too.

HOST: Now, Bill Shorten's has also proposed increasing the community-sponsored refugee program from an existing 1,000 to 5,000. What period would that be done over?

MARLES: A specific period hasn't been announced, but that's done in the context of increasing our humanitarian intake up to 27,000 by 2025.

HOST: This is on top of the humanitarian intake?

HOST: Indeed, on top of the humanitarian intake, but it is part of the humanitarian stream but it is community sponsored, so this is where various communities who are already here provide the funding for the settlement of those people coming to Australia. That actually is a significant amount of money, but it's been a really successful program and there are people within the community who are willing to put those funds up to get people settled into

Australia and it's something we can do.

HOST: Now the third leg of what Bill Shorten has announced today is the tripling of AFP offices overseas. Now, this is to upset, annoy, the people smugglers, interrupt their business. In your experience, how important is that?

MARLES: It's critically important. One of the things that people don't necessarily understand is that the experience of being displaced in 2018 is inextricably linked to being vulnerable and then preyed upon by people smugglers. I think one of the tasks here is to empower the global governance system and governments to enable them to be the ones who are providing the care for those who are displaced rather than having people in the hands of people smugglers. That's why tripling the police contribution is really important to disrupting people smuggling.

There's nothing virtuous about these people smuggling networks. They treat people like cattle and we see appalling situations arise where people are dying in large number and it's really critical that in providing generosity to those who are displaced we are also doing everything we can to empower governments, as opposed to people smugglers, to be the ones to look after it.

HOST: Lastly, and I know that we've concentrated on your old portfolio but on defence - this is your portfolio - we are hearing that there might be concerns with the submarine contract with the French Naval Group. What will you do in terms of due diligence when you come into power, if you come into power?

MARLES: If we're fortunate enough to be elected next year obviously we will take a look at exactly where the program is up to, how it measures against the original aspirations, how it's proceeding both in terms of being on time but also on budget, what it means that contracts have taken some time to be finalised. That's a natural thing for a new government to do.

What might I say in saying that, and I've been quite critical of the process that

the government has gone through up until now - I mean the decision to down-select to one tenderer back in 2016 and not to contest the design phase of the future submarine is an epic fail that Australian governments will be paying for for a long time to come, but that said, it's in the past. Naval Group are a very good company. They make great submarines. We're not about to rip up any contracts. We are going to make 12 submarines in Australia and we absolutely acknowledge the need for long-range submarines as part of Australia's defence capability, but sure, we'll be having a look at that program and doing everything we can to get it back on track.

HOST: Richard Marles, thanks for your time and his chat.

MARLES: Thanks, Andrew.

ENDS

Authorised by Noah Carroll, ALP, Canberra.