

**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW
PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA
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SUBJECTS: Federal ICAC; Welfare reform; the Government is more focused on wedging Labor than stimulating the economy.

JOURNALIST: The Greens are reportedly presenting a vote today in regards to an anti-corruption body. Does Labor support this motion or the idea more broadly?

MARLES: We have made it clear for a long time that we support an anti-corruption body at a federal level.

JOURNALIST: Welfare. It looks as though the Government has got the support of One Nation and Jacqui Lambie to pass legislation which would see a trial of welfare recipients drug tested. Where does Labor sit on that? And also the other issue which now escapes my mind, there are two welfare issues, but anyway welfare is becoming an issue this sitting week.

MARLES: I think about people in my electorate who've worked at Ford who have worked at Alcoa; both of whom have stopped their operations in the last few years. You're over 55 you now find yourself on Newstart and that's a large component for people on Newstart. The indignity that having worked your entire

life, you're now at the age of 55 being asked to pee in a cup in order to get Newstart, it seems to me to be really unfair. We want to see what the evidence is that this proposition, that it actually results in- some benefit. But let's be clear about all of this. As we walk into the next parliamentary sitting week, we've seen the Government spend a lot of time thinking about how it can wedge Labor. How it can come up with distractions from the elephant in the room which is that we have a sluggish economy, the slowest growth since the Global Financial Crisis, only there is no financial crisis now and there is not a government who has an actual plan to do something about the economy. And I think that's what Australians would expect this government to be focusing upon.

JOURNALIST: The other issue is the cashless welfare card being rolled out nationally, where does Labor sit on that?

MARLES: Again, the Auditor-General has been scathing about its effectiveness in the sites where it's being trialled. The evidence that the Government is relying upon to do an extension of this is pretty skinny. Once again, though, what we see here is the Government doing everything it can to try and wedge Labor and distract from the real issue here, which is that we have an economy growing at the slowest rate since the global financial crisis. Record low wage growth. That's what people are talking about out there in Australia. And that's what people expect this government to focus on.

JOURNALIST: But isn't this the bottom line here, that the Government is actually getting stuff through with the independents?

MARLES: Well what the Government is doing is focusing on how it can wedge Labor and not focusing on the critical issue which is facing Australians today and that is that we had an economy growing at the slowest rate since the Global Financial Crisis and wage stagnation which is the standout step in the economy today. Thank you.

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Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.