

Australian
Labor



TRANSCRIPT

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PROTECTION
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
DOORSTOP
PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA
TUESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2015**

SUBJECT/S: Christmas Island; asylum seekers.

REPORTER: Are you happy with how long it has taken for forces to get into this compound and what do you think is a reasonable time for this situation to be resolved?

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION: Well, we are not happy with the explanation that we have been provided and that the Australian people have been provided, we need to have a sense of assurance that people are safe within this facility, both the detainees and those working within the facility. We actually need to have an explanation as to how this all began in the first place and none of that have we heard from the Minister. That is what the Minister needs to assure us of today and it is only until we get that sort of information that we can make any assessment about whether this has been appropriately handled.

REPORTER: The Minister did not rule out the use of rubber bullets, nor did he rule out them being on the table as a potential use if rioting continues, what do you make of that, and would you agree with his assessment that they may be needed?

MARLES: Well if we are really talking about a situation which has got to the point of using rubber bullets then we absolutely need to have an explanation from the Minister about how events have got to this point in the first place and we need to have an explanation from the Minister about how he intends to provide an assurance to the Australian people that everybody here concerned is safe, both the detainees and those working within the facility. And it is not good enough that we have been over the last few days relying on second hand accounts of what is going on here. I mean this is a Government which is very happy to go out and front the media all the time when it comes to talking about news it wants to but on this issue the

Government has been very shy in explaining exactly what has occurred here and how everybody is safe and that is not good enough.

REPORTER: The Minister has indicated a number of the people who were involved are detainees that have had their visas cancelled and are awaiting deportation, do you agree with that policy because speaking with these detainees following the disturbance, they are fed up with the fact that they are still locked up and their appeal process is taking so long.

MARLES: Well, firstly we supported a strengthening of the character test, we supported that with the Government which enables more cases to be put in front of the Minister for their visas to be cancelled as a result of failing the character test, and we understand that there are a number of persons inside this facility who fit into that category. It is difficult to think about individual cases because obviously I don't have those in front of me, that is the information the Minister has before him. What is important though, is that we now need to understand is how everybody is being managed and housed within the Christmas Island facility and it is fair to say that this is a policy which has not been carried out particularly in the open, there are different sorts of people within the facility, somebody who has spent a considerable time in the Australian prison network and who now is the subject of being deported is a very different kettle of fish to an asylum seeker who may not have necessarily done anything wrong at all. We need to have an understanding about where those people are located within the facility, how they are being separated I suppose, but all of that goes to the question of the safety of everyone concerned and they are answers which this Government is not providing.

REPORTER: Just to confirm have you requested a briefing from the Government?

MARLES: Yes we have and that meeting is happening later today.

REPORTER: So you are going to get answers?

MARLES: Well I hope so. That obviously depends on the briefing I get, but we will certainly be asking the questions I can assure you of that. We sought a briefing pretty well as soon as this became a matter of, in the public domain and that briefing will be occurring around lunch time today.

REPORTER: What do you make of the security arrangements, you mentioned this a little bit, about the separation in the compound between the asylum seekers and the 501 cancellations, what do you make of the security conditions as they stand? Do they need to be strengthened? Will you be seeking to visit to see how those arrangements are going?

MARLES: Well, all good questions and we need to get a proper answer from the Government, they are questions which absolutely go to the issue of the safety of those who are concerned, it stands to reason that when you have got different types of people in these facilities you need the capacity to house them in different parts of the facility, now the Christmas Island facility is a large one, but we don't have an explanation in relation to that. The issue of the level of security for those involved - we need to understand how this began in the first place. How could this set of

circumstances have arisen and the answer to that question we have not heard from the Minister, that is the critical issue here. How did it get to this point and the Government needs to give an explanation on this and look, when instances have occurred in the past, the Coalition have not been short on very sensational criticism of the way in which Labor handled these events, criticism ultimately is important in order for us to learn and to do better and this Government ought to welcome criticism and ought to invite it and ought to be transparent in the way in which it goes about the way it does its business, but it is in fact completely the opposite.

REPORTER: Will you be seeking to visit, just to clarify in the wake of this in order to check out security arrangements?

MARLES: Well look we will be having a briefing today, the answer to that question in part depends on the sorts of answers and information that we are able to obtain in speaking with the Government and they are questions that I will be considering later on. Thank you.

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