

Australian
Labor



TRANSCRIPT

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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
RADIO INTERVIEW
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SUBJECT/S: Leaked national security documents; Turnbull Government dysfunction;

MARIUS BENSON: Richard Marles, good morning.

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION: Good morning Marius, how are you?

BENSON: I'm well, can I begin by clarifying what we're dealing with here, because the Minister, Peter Dutton, has issued a statement on this draft and he says that's what it is, it's a draft, it's from the department, nothing to do with him, he in fact hasn't seen it, it hasn't come from his staff, it doesn't have his imprimatur so it's far from official.

MARLES: Well this is the Government MO when it comes to leaked documents which are becoming all too frequent here, at the end of the day this is a document marked at the top 'sensitive', 'cabinet' – it is a document which is part of the Turnbull Government's cabinet processes and indeed when you look at it, it deals with a period of time since Malcolm Turnbull has been Prime Minister and dealing with policy in the first half of this year, so this is clearly a document of the Government and I simply do not accept what the Minister is saying in relation to that and what it portrays is a Government which is deeply divided. This is a document intended for the National Security Committee and it has found its way into the public domain, that only happens if you have members of your own Government who are out there leaking, it only happens if you're a Government that's divided.

BENSON: So is this a product of internal treachery in your assessment or kite flying?

MARLES: This is unquestionably an issue, I would think, of internal division but I tell you what, if it's kite flying that ought to be of greater concern to the Australian people

because the substance of this document is deeply worrying. We all understand the need to deal with questions of national security and we have been working with the Government throughout this entire term in a bi-partisan way when it comes to strengthening the character test, dealing with citizenship legislation and the like but this verges dangerously down the path of putting in place a discriminatory immigration policy. Now for decades it has been a bi-partisan issue between both Labor and Liberal that we don't have a discriminatory immigration policy in this country, if this is where the Government wants to take us, we are returning to a very dark path indeed.

BENSON: It's not clear who drafted this document but whoever it was, they've got a fine Orwellian turn of phrase, what do you make of a description like, a suggestion that *an enforceable integration framework to assess aspiring migrants' suitability for living in Australia* be established?

MARLES: I think this harks back to a very dark period in our own past when those sorts of phrases were used to underpin discriminatory immigration policy which we had in the 50's and prior to that. And it would be an enormously regressive step if that's where we're going, but for decades now, since the end of the white Australia policy we have had a bi-partisan position in Australian, which is about having a non-discriminatory immigration policy and I think to single out individual groups within Australia is really concerning. We do understand that terrorism in its modern form is linked to Islamic extremism, it's important to be able to say that, but if we then take the leap that every Sunni Muslim is a potential terrorist that is an appalling step to take. There are thousands of Sunni Muslims in Australia, who are law abiding citizens, who are loyal Australians, who in many respects are victims of Islamic extremist terrorism just as everyone else is, and I think this is a very dangerous document indeed.

BENSON: Do you think the public appetite though for a different approach to be taken to say refugees coming from a place as troubled as Syria now?

MARLES: I don't think there ought to be a different approach to the question of national security in terms of anyone coming to Australia and that means we need to do thorough checks, security and identity checks on anyone who's coming to Australia, no matter where they are coming from. That's why we have been working with the Government to make sure that all of that is in place so that Australians can feel safe and are indeed safe, so that we are thoroughly checking anybody who comes here, that's absolutely critical to do that, but to walk down a path of a discriminatory immigration policy is very concerning. Another point in this Marius, which also concerns me, is this notion that there would be a reduction in the question of whether or not people become permanent residents and ultimately Australian citizens. When we have our humanitarian intake, when we made that offer to the world - what we are saying is we are providing refuge in a way which ultimately leads to people becoming Australian, that is a very important principle indeed. If we don't have that in place we are inviting a marginalised group in our society to evolve and it's very important that we don't do that, of course the Government is walking down that path already with Temporary Protection Visas, if this is what they intend with the whole humanitarian program, again, it's very concerning, so I think we need to hear from the Prime Minister today, if this is really where this Government is, it puts a total

light on the idea that we've got some enlightened egalitarian in the top job, he needs to come out today, Malcolm Turnbull, and totally disavow this piece of work.

BENSON: Richard Marles thank you very much.

MARLES: Thank you Marius.