



## TRANSCRIPT

### THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION MEMBER FOR CORIO

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TV INTERVIEW  
SKYS NEW AM AGENDA  
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***SUBJECT/S: Stuart Robert; Medicare privatisation***

**KIERAN GILBERT:** With me now is the Shadow Immigration Minister Richard Marles. Richard, you've heard a bit of what Sussan Ley has had to say on the Medicare issue, she is saying it's about modernising a system that is out of date. If it is just the back office process of payments, facilitating payments without the medical detail, why not consider a privatisation if it's going to mean, like she says, there is going to be more money on the frontline?

**RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION:** Well there are two issues here Kieran, in terms of modernising the way in which Medicare operates we've got no problems with looking at how you do that and of course Medicare needs to keep up to date with payment systems and how that can be done more efficiently and more electronically. But what we are talking about here is a proposal not just to do that but in fact to outsource that, to privatise that part of it. Now that puts a whole lot of people's most personal records in the hands of the private sector, what security is around them, who knows and of course it also means you have a for profit entity brought into what is intended to be something which is there for the public good.

**GILBERT:** But if the Government puts in appropriate rules and governance of it, if it is just facilitating the payment side, a lot of people would think that makes sense.

**MARLES:** Updating the process is one thing, and we're completely up for that, a privatisation or a part privatisation of Medicare, I think is an entirely different question again. If you put a for profit entity in there, at the end of the day the degree to which this is there for the public good has to be impacted and let's not forget Kieran, the conservatives, the Liberal party from day one, really from the beginning of Medibank have always been against the universal health insurance scheme in this country.

**GILBERT:** You know the Prime Minister is not against it, he argued very strongly in favour of it yesterday, saying that we support it, that this is about modernising the system and they haven't even confirmed that they are going to go down this direction of privatisation.

**MARLES:** Sure, but there is no doubt they're out there scoping it and they are out there looking at it.

**GILBERT:** Which makes sense doesn't it?

**MARLES:** But if what you're talking about is actually a partial privatisation of Medicare that doesn't strike me as a vote of support from this Government in universal health insurance in this country and I think that's the thing that's going to concern a lot of Australians, I think many Australians would be deeply concerned about where their most sensitive, private information around there -

**GILBERT:** But if there were rules blocking that element, the medical side and there is a line drawn between that and the back office detail of the payments, that not all medical detail is provided, is held by the facilitator of those payments, then why would Labor oppose that?

**MARLES:** And we are not opposing the idea of updating processes and making sure that they are brought into being made as modern as possible of course we are not opposing that, but why in doing that do you then need to walk down the path of partly privatising or going down the path of privatising Medicare and that's going to be of enormous concern and I can tell you this, Labor has always supported a public universal health system, that is what we are going to continue to support and we will be campaigning very hard against any kind of privatisation of Medicare.

**GILBERT:** This argument against Stuart Robert, his trip in 2014, do you believe now he should be sacked? Has he really breached ministerial standards to that extent that he should lose his job?

**MARLES:** Well Stuart obviously has a whole lot of question to answer and clearly he's not seeking to answer them. I mean he has gone to China as the Assistant Minister of Defence on one hand but he is going there, he says in a private capacity. He is helping a friend in a meeting which is a signing ceremony and we all know when you're there as a Minister at a signing ceremony of that kind we all know what capacity you're there in, the idea that you can say you're there in a private capacity I think beggars belief. Turns out this personal friend is a really significant donor to the Liberal party -

**GILBERT:** So what's the smoking gun here? What's the key problem?

**MARLES:** I'll get there, then Stuart introduces representatives of that company to the Chinese Government, now in all of that there is the appearance of an Australian Minister of the crown moonlighting on behalf of a personal friend, introductions to the Chinese Government, a friend who also happens to be a major donor to the Liberal

Party. Now in all of that there is an enormous explanation that we have not yet heard.

**GILBERT:** Bill Shorten says he should be sacked, do you think he should be sacked?

**MARLES:** Until Malcolm Turnbull acts on this, until Malcolm Turnbull dismissed Stuart Robert and this is inevitably it seems to me where it's going to go; this is going to hang around the Government's neck.

**GILBERT:** Why not leave it to Martin Parkinson? You think he is a respected public servant?

**MARLES:** Of course he is a respected public servant.

**GILBERT:** Why not let him carry out his investigation and let him be done with it?

**MARLES:** But what we need to be hearing from to be honest is the Minister himself in the Parliament about exactly what happened. The basis on which he was there, which he is not giving an answer to, he needs to explain what information he provided to our Department of Defence before he went there, he needs to explain who paid for his trip, all of these questions need to be answered by Stuart Robert himself and to the Australian people through the Parliament. I mean the thing here Kieran is we do have very strict ministerial standards and for good reason, Ministers of the Crown, the executive, carry enormous power, it is an incredible privilege, no one makes you be that position, you go there by choice and you are making decisions on the part of thousands of Australians and impacting their lives. It is so important that we have a strict separation between your public duties and any private interests and this is not just a question of blurred lines here, if there is a reasonable explanation we certainly have not heard it, we deserve that explanation from the Minister himself, we haven't got it and until we get it this issue is not going away for the Prime Minister.

**GILBERT:** Richard Marles thanks for your time I appreciate it.

**MARLES:** Thanks Kieran.

**ENDS**