

**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE**

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION SHOW
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SUBJECT/S: Budget Repair, Marriage Equality Plebiscite, Olympic results, National Broadband Network, AFP raids.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Good afternoon. Welcome to Pyne & Marles here on Sky News Live. It's 1 o'clock on Friday, the 26th of August. My twins' birthdays. They are 16 years old so I am feeling even older today! I am joined, of course, by Richard Marles in Geelong. Welcome, Richard. How are things in Geelong today?

RICHARD MARLES: Things are good, Christopher. Given that we are the same age, let me compliment you on being a very, very young man!

(LAUGHTER)

RICHARD MARLES: But we are, of course, heading back to Parliament next week. So, have you bought your new Clarke's school shoes, sharpened your pencils, contacted all your books?

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: It is a bit like that, the first day of Parliament after an election. It is a bit like the return to Hogwarts. Of course, Tony Burke would be played by Peter Pettigrew, the offside of Voldemort. I don't think there is anybody quite as bad as Voldemort in the Parliament. So certainly, we'll leave his character out.

RICHARD MARLES: (LAUGHTER)

I think there are plenty of people sitting behind your executive who are vying for the role of Voldemort, let me assure you!

(LAUGHTER)

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: No, no! Not at all. In fact, Shorten - I couldn't even say that Bill Shorten was Voldemort. He reminds me of Lucius Malfoy.

RICHARD MARLES: Dear oh dear. We could do the whole show as an equivalence of Harry Potter. But we're not going to do that.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: It's true.

RICHARD MARLES: We have a great show lined up for you today. Budget repair has been talked about again during the week, and we are going to have a conversation about that. With the Parliament coming back next week, we are going to talk about whether there should be a plebiscite for legalising same-sex marriage, and on Wednesday there was another raid in relation to – the police raid - in relation to the NBN. We will have a chat about that. Our guest today is Gerard Whateley from Fox Footy, AFL 360, but Gerard was also in Rio, covering the Olympic Games for ABC Radio. And we're going to have a chat with Gerard about whether or not eight gold medals, 10th on the medal table, is a good or a bad result for our country. But once again, budget was the - budget repair was the big issue of the week. There was a lot of debate around partisanship or bipartisanship, how it should play out. Have a look at this.

RICHARD MARLES: So Christopher, we've had both the Foreign Minister and the Treasurer say wibble-wobble. I am hoping we get that from you this afternoon as well!

(LAUGHTER)

RICHARD MARLES: But what is the issue here. What is the issue? We have made it clear that we're at the table, we want to have a chat with you. We made some difficult decisions before the last election and we have made it very clear that we wanted those decisions during this term of Parliament. For all the world it seems like you are desperate to have a fight with us. We are at the table. Why aren't we having a chat?

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Well, 'cause you're not at the table. In the last Parliament you blocked \$18 billion worth of savings measures, a large number of which were your own savings measures from when you were last in Government, during that unhappy period. We're not putting up a \$6.5 billion omnibus savings bill and the Labor Party is still playing ducks and drakes. Because Mr Shorten is the wibbly-wobbly jelly man of Australian politics. He wants to be on both sides of the arguments every single time. He wants to be apparently in favour of budget repair, but when we put up a \$6.5 billion savings measure which are Labor's savings measures, he won't commit to passing that bill. It is quite extraordinary. So, Labor needs to get its act together. I mean, Mr Shorten is being found out to not be a person who tells the truth.

RICHARD MARLES: But, Christopher, we've made it clear what our position is. We detailed a whole range of cuts prior to the election and we have absolutely unambiguously said that we will honour that during this term of Government.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: So you'll vote for the bill?

RICHARD MARLES: We want to just have a look at what the legislation is that you are going to put before the Parliament.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: It sounds to me...

RICHARD MARLES: We just want to have a look at it. I mean, what is wrong with that? We've made our position completely clear. It seems to me - seems to me you are desperate to have a fight and I wonder whether that's because you do actually have a fight within your own party room around super, which you are desperate not to bring to light.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: No, that's nothing to do with it. The truth is if - you are basically saying, I think, today announcing that Labor will support that omnibus bill once they've had a look at the bill, and convinced themselves that it is their savings measures, which it is. So, that's good news. Now, the second big issue that we'll be dealing with over the next few weeks and probably months is the issue of same-sex marriage. And same-sex marriage, of course, I can guarantee, as a member of the Government, that if the plebiscite machinery bill passes the Parliament, that there will be a plebiscite on same-sex marriage. Labor, on the other hand, are holding out a false hope. Let's take a look at this grab.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Richard, I can guarantee that if Labor votes for the plebiscite machinery bill, there will be a plebiscite and people will get an equal chance to introduce same-sex marriage. Labor is pretending that if that bill is defeated, there will be a vote in the Parliament of - on same-sex marriage. But you can't guarantee that, can you?

RICHARD MARLES: Well, isn't it as simple as this, Christopher - you have an opinion as to whether or not same-sex marriage should be the law of the land, I have an opinion as to whether it should be the law of the land. We've been elected to the House of Representatives to give voice to our opinion in votes of Parliament. Why don't we just put a bill to the Parliament to legalise this and have a vote on it? What I don't get is why we are walking down the path of the plebiscite, which is an extravagant opinion poll, at the end of the day, which seeks to judge a whole sector of our community, in a way that our relationships - your relationship with your wife, Christopher, my relationship with mine - we're not being judged, but we are asking a whole sector of our community to be judged by an opinion poll of this kind and for what purpose? If we all...

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: We took the plebiscite -

RICHARD MARLES: Why aren't we putting it before the Parliament?

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: We took the plebiscite to the election as our policy, and we won. And the public want to have a say on a social issue that is of quite important significance to a large percentage of them, but my point is that if Labor votes against the machinery bill, and you haven't said what you're going to do yet, you can't guarantee that same-sex marriage will be dealt with in this Parliament. So you are effectively saying to people you might have to wait three or four years longer for same-sex marriage than you would otherwise have to under the plebiscite way of

going forward. And I think that is Labor quite – quite dishonestly holding out false hope to people and encouraging people to believe the plebiscite should be defeated, when you can't guarantee that there will be a vote in the Parliament on same-sex marriage.

RICHARD MARLES: Look, all we're doing is giving expression to what we said prior to the election as well. And those...

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Can you guarantee there will be a vote?

RICHARD MARLES: No, no, those of us who have been elected to the House of Representatives also have a mandate, and that is that if - we want a vote to occur within the Parliament. That's what should happen and we can get to same-sex marriage within five minutes, if we do that. But we need to move on. On Wednesday of this week the Federal Police raided a number of offices within the Parliament in relation to the NBN. Have a look at this.

-This is about Malcolm Turnbull and Mitch Fifield covering up by using the police and the NBN board dragging the police into covering up the Government's humiliation and a massive cost blow-out and overruns in delays in the roll-out of their National Broadband Network.

-The Australian Federal Police act independently of Government. I - I have been very disappointed not for the first time to hear Senator Conroy this morning attack the integrity of the Australian Federal Police.

RICHARD MARLES: The starting point here, Christopher, is the handling of the NBN has been a disaster by your Government, and by the now Prime Minister when he was the Communications Minister. Blow-outs from \$29 billion to \$50 billion, blow-outs in the time of the roll-out from 2016 to 2020 and with much slower speeds. All of this is about whether or not that information should come to light. Now, it's not a question of the independence of the Australian Federal Police, or indeed any criticism of them. But at the end of the day the NBN is an entity of Government. You are a shareholder in it, and you have sought the process of a police investigation here and you cannot...

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: That's not true. So, number 2 - number 1, the start – the so-called starting point isn't the starting point. We saved the NBN from the catastrophic and incompetent management by Stephen Conroy, and we have now actually connected 3 million homes to the NBN, over 50,000 a month, when Steve Conroy connected 51,000 in four years. Number 2 - we didn't seek an AFP investigation, the NBN sought an AFP investigation because of industrial espionage that they suspected within their operation, and now the Labor Party, the real issue here is that the Labor Party is actually frustrating an Australian Federal Police investigation by pretending that they can make these documents - the so-called documents - professionally privileged, Parliamentary privileged and, therefore, stop them being used. I think that is an extraordinary thing. I can't believe that you would justify that.

RICHARD MARLES: All we're doing is asserting the right of Parliamentary privilege. Again, I would have thought you would be in support of that, certainly Malcolm Turnbull was in support of the rights of Parliamentary privilege, back in 2009 when we had the whole Godwin Grech affair. His tune has changed somewhat since then. You cannot separate yourself from the NBN. At the end of the day it is a Government entity. If it has been the spectacular success that you say it has been, why is there this sensitivity about these facts being brought to light?

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: I don't understand why Stephen Conroy is so desperate to protect these so-called whistle-blowers who are not whistle-blowers and I think the truth will come out eventually, Richard. It will be interesting to see what happens next.

RICHARD MARLES: Well, we look forward to that truth coming out. There is no doubt about that.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: I don't think you do actually.

(LAUGHTER)

RICHARD MARLES: It is time to go to a break. Join us after the break when we will be having a chat with Gerard Whateley.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Welcome back to Pyne & Marles here on Sky News Live. Our guest this afternoon is Gerard Whateley who is the Fox Footy host of AFL 360, and during the Olympics was an ABC commentator and he is a very well-known sports expert. Gerard, thank you very much for coming on the show this afternoon. I've been watching the debate about how many medals we did or didn't win with increasing disbelief. I'm a happy spectator of sport, rather than a sports expert, but is this what it is all about now, how many gold medals we win or don't win? What happened to the spirit of just competing for competing's sake?

GERARD WHATELEY: Yeah. Christopher, that taps into a mode that very much exists in Australian society around this debate, is that old-school idea of competing with pride at the Olympics, and perhaps viewing the Games as something different to how we would mercenarily view our football codes, where winning is the only thing, but as a manner of national policy there was a change after London to adopt the Winning Edge which is a model that hunts medals, it does benchmark success, it puts quotas on winning and those quotas weren't met. That is why we have strayed into this debate and I think regrettably that is why we view Rio was a disappointment, and even a failure.

RICHARD MARLES: So Gerard, I'm perhaps more in the mercenary school, looking for gold medal success. On that basis, eight goals, coming 10th on the medal tally, medal table. Do you think that's a reasonable outcome for a country like Australia?

GERARD WHATELEY: I am in the minority here. I do! I think historically this is where Australia sits, eight goals put us in the range of London, Atlanta, Barcelona, Munich, Tokyo, and Rome. And I think the outliers are those spectacularly successful Games which were built on Sydney and flowed into Athens and then

Beijing. And probably built on generational athletes that were competing for the nation at those Games. This goes to the very heart of - we have taken a great deal of pride historically that we punch above our weight in sport. I think the reality now is that we punch at our weight. Sport is a priority in our society, it is well-funded but not as well funded as other countries of the world. Sport is a much broader proposition now when you get to the Olympics, there are more countries winning gold medals in sports they haven't done previously. I think Australia by virtue of geography, population and money sits about where it should in the top 10, but in 10th place.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Gerard, I'm of the view that what we are seeing really is the inevitable consequence of both the health and wealth of our competitor nations getting better. I mean, a lot of the countries that are winning gold medals today are much healthier, much more well-off, able to put money into sport and at times decades ago, when they didn't have the resources to put them into sport...

GERARD WHATELEY: Yep.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: More money to put into their population's health, and, therefore, they are essentially coming up to the level that Australia has been at for probably 100 years, and this is the inevitable consequence of the developing world becoming part of the developed world.

GERARD WHATELEY: Yes. I absolutely agree with that. I was at the pool and we watched Singapore win its first ever Olympic gold medal and Kazakhstan win its first gold medal in the pool. These didn't happen by accident or by one freak athlete arriving. Over a period of time - we are talking decades now - countries around the world have realised the participation in the Olympics is a priority, it's essential, it is part of the national esteem and part of the national aspiration, which is something that Australia got to very quickly and thus dominated events that had thin fields. I'm not a big believer that a radical increase in funding would increase Australia's prospects. I think Australia was funded to the point where it was right to target 17 gold medals, it was wrong to put that up as a quota, as a national expectation, and thus from about night 6 the Games seemed to descend into disappointment, which I think is hugely regrettable, but I think converting sort of eight of your gold medals from 17 chances is something like par.

RICHARD MARLES: I think that's the issue. For me, when I look at a footy season, I think what determines whether you have a good season or a bad is how reality matches up with expectation.

GERARD WHATELEY: Yep.

RICHARD MARLES: The expectation of these Olympics were enormous! Without going into the individuals, there were performances where we were expecting to win medals and we didn't. Did we get the expectation all wrong?

GERARD WHATELEY: Well, the expectation is benchmarked. I find it difficult to say that it was wrong, but equally, on your comparison, is there aren't many AFL coaches who come out at the start of the year and go, "We are going to win 17 games this year."

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: No! (LAUGHTER)

GERARD WHATELEY: That is a noose for your own neck. I think there is a degree of naivety that has gone into this, and as a matter of national policy, we need to rethink how we frame things for the Olympics. There were disappointments. No question. There were world champion swimmers who didn't reach their level and thus weren't able to convert world rankings into medals. The teams broadly, outside of the Boomers, desperately underachieved. A sport like hockey will have a pretty savage introspection period to work out why they didn't meet their own standards, and their own expectations. But I do think this pool of disappointment around the Games, that is supposed to be so joyful - and I think if you tapped into any primary school around the first week, there was that sense of awe and wonder and pride and wanting to be a part of something bigger.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Yes.

GERARD WHATELEY: I think we risk losing sight of that, and that would be a tremendous pity.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Gerard, I think that I'm in heated agreement with everything you have said and while I have got you on the other side of the camera, rather than you interviewing other people, what is your prediction for the grand final for the AFL and can my Crows take away the trophy this year? What are their chances?

GERARD WHATELEY: Your Crows and my Cats are going to determine each other's fate in the first week of the finals. So, I think they're an excellent chance. Richard's got the Cats going as well. So, I do rather love the charm of this show. You will be at each other's throats in a fortnight's time ahead of that game.

(LAUGHTER)

GERARD WHATELEY: I think the winner will make the grand final and I think Sydney will be the other side of it. I view Sydney and Geelong for the time being through the heart, but if you want to view Sydney and the Crows, I couldn't disagree with you too much.

RICHARD MARLES: I can remember, Gerard, having a conversation with you outside the ABC, I think it was, couple of months ago, where you said Sydney was the team to beat. But the Cats were a chance. And that is how it has come to pass. I am actually feeling good about us beating Adelaide in Adelaide. We did it earlier in the year. I just am very excited about the notion of Danger rolling up on that night.

GERARD WHATELEY: Yes, that will be a spectacle, on his way to winning the Brownlow. I want to know - will the two of you sit together that night? I think that should happen and maybe I will come along and have a chat to you on radio beforehand.

(LAUGHTER)

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: You'd be very welcome!

RICHARD MARLES: We can work on that. Maybe - depending on where that game is held, one of us might make the interstate journey. Thank you very much for joining us again, Gerard. It's been fascinating to talk to you after the Olympics. We really appreciate your contribution.

GERARD WHATELEY: My pleasure. The politicians very much have a role in this, on the way to Tokyo, to reform our sports policy.

RICHARD MARLES: Beautiful. Thanks, Gerard. That brings us to the question of the week, which kind of harks back to our opening - is the first day of Parliament a bit like the first day back at school? Is that how it feels to you, Christopher?

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Well, if the budget day is Derby Day, then the first day back after an election is always like the opening of the school term. It is a very different day to every other day. We have the speech from the Governor-General, we all get re-sworn in again, this will be my ninth time to be sworn in, to the House of Representatives. That's done by the Chief Justice of the High Court. All the new members are there, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. This is their first swearing-in, of course, all thinking they are going to be Prime Minister, of course. Then all our spouses are often there. Our partners, our spouses, our children. So it's a very different day and always good fun.

RICHARD MARLES: Your ninth swearing-in. I did accuse you on TV recently of having been in Parliament 100 years, so I clearly wasn't far off!

(LAUGHTER)

It is a bit like that. You come back, there are sort of war stories from the holidays, in this case the election. Sadly there are people who have moved on who - I think that is always... It's a poignant and painful part of politics, which I actually didn't expect entering it, which was the - not seeing sort of fallen comrades after - after an election. But, of course, there are then new faces, and you get to know them as well. It is a day when families are there, it is basically a day of celebration and joy. For me, though, Christopher - I wonder whether you share this as well - it is a moment where you tend to reflect on how lucky and privileged we are to serve in that place and what an honour it is. I think that is more present on that day than any other in the Parliamentary calendar.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: I think that's definitely true. And it also reminds us that in Australia more than any other country in the world, we have changed government for 116 years without a shot being fired, with one side accepting that the other side won, and that they should have the keys to power, and you are very much reminded of it that day. The other thing people will be reminded of course is in spite of Bill Shorten's protestations that he is actually the winner, he'll be sitting on the wrong side of the House. We'll be on the right side of the House, and on Wednesday, we get back - straight back into it - legislation will be introduced and away we go again for another Parliament.

RICHARD MARLES: Yes. Look, I have to accept the fact that it is - there's nothing that beats sitting on the Treasury benches, and obviously we won't be there. But you're right in terms of what you have said about the peaceful way in which we change governments in this country. Two opposing MPs can even host a TV program! So, it does say a fair bit about our democracy. It is great to have chatted with you again this afternoon, Christopher. Look forward to doing so again a week from now, and we look forward to all of you joining us next week on Pyne & Marles on Sky News. We will see you then.

ENDS