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SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
THE BOLT REPORT
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SUBJECT/S: Sam Dastyari, Foreign donations, Foreign ownership, Submarines, ISIS threats.

ANDREW BOLT: Joining me now is Labor's Defence spokesperson Richard Marles, Richard it's great to see you but I'm sorry you drew the raw straw on the day Sam Dastyari quits to have to front the media. Although I appreciate you turning up.

Yesterday he was not going to resign for taking China's money and taking China's side as well. Today he did. What changed his mind overnight? Or more to the point who changed it?

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE: Well, firstly I think Sam has made a very hard decision, what is the hardest decision to make in politics really. To fall on your own sword. He explained it very well in his press conference this evening, when he said that having considered; after having given the press conference yesterday and seeing how it's all played out: it was a distraction to Labor getting out it's message; highlighting the fact that this is a government with no agenda and is divided.

I guess that is right. When you think about our Prime Minister at the G20, one of the most important gathering of important leaders in any year, devoting a press conference to Sam Dastyari; it says everything about how this government has nothing to say; it is doing absolutely nothing; Sam didn't want to be a distraction from pointing that out.

BOLT: But it also does show how serious this was that it could be used like that; I don't blame Malcolm Turnbull at all for doing the same. The point is why did it take him, Sam Dastyari, for seeing it as being so important. Did you get together as say? 'Now listen Sam, time to walk'

MARLES: Look, Sam's come to this conclusion on his own terms. He's obviously been speaking with Bill Shorten this afternoon, he made that clear in his statement. We need to remember here a couple of things; that nothing here is being hidden. We know about all of this because Sam declared his donation from the outset. The second point is that Bill Shorten made clear from the very outset, that this became an issue in the last few weeks that Sam's decisions are both in terms of, accepting that donation, but also the position that he took in relation to the South China Sea, were not consistent with

Labor's position and also did not meet Bill's expectations in terms of standards of behaviour of his front bench.

I think it's important in these matters that you don't act precipitately, it's come to the point that it has today. So from my point of view, knowing Sam well, what's he's contributed, it's a very sad moment.

BOLT: Did you advise him to quit.

MARLES: No I didn't. I didn't advise him to quit. At the end of the day I think it has be his decision. And a matter between him and the leader. I think it's really important that in a case such as this there isn't precipitant action. I think it's really very important that we work these issues through. It has got to where it has now. Sam's made a very difficult decision and you've got to take your hat off today for Sam taking the decision that he has this evening.

BOLT: You're quite right. It wasn't precipitant. That was one of the big problems here. The fact that he wouldn't have resigned yesterday.

MARLES: I don't think that is a problem. It is important that there isn't precipitant action in terms of how you deal with people on the front bench.

BOLT: I thought it was obvious though, I thought it was obvious he had to go. But why no resignation yesterday and one today. Is there more information. Did you learn is there more information to come out about donations from Chinese interests to Sam Dastyari.

MARLES: I'm not aware of there being any new information. But I think in your comment just then that these are matters that, you know, unfold. And the point that Sam's made today is that he felt that it has become too much of a distraction. He's become the story when we need to prosecuting the case around Medicare, around education, around the governments lack of an agenda and their internal division. Now he doesn't want to be the story.

Now they are assessments you make over time. It may have been obvious to you a couple of days ago. This is an issue that has been running in the media for some time now. I think it's important, I think Bill has acted absolutely appropriately here. Having made his position clear at the outset; he was providing support and counsel to a member of his front bench. He was working with a member of his team. We've got to the point we are now. Sam's made his hard call. You act precipitantly in these matters and it doesn't help build stability and confidence within your team.

I think this has actually played out, I think Bill has actually handled himself very well in the way in which this matter has been dealt with.

BOLT: Just in general how worrying is it to you that the idea of China's soft power, spending money to influence opinion here. I'll give you one example; there's plenty to have.

How worrying is it to you. Huang Xiangmo, the Chairman of the Yuhu Group who that gave Dastyari was it five thousand bucks? He also gave, what was it, dwarfing it; \$1.8 million dollars to the Bob Carr led Australia-China Relations Institutes' University of Technology Sydney.

Now, should a University really be accepting money from a non-democratic communist regime when that money's clearly aimed at influencing our students.

MARLES: I feel less confident about commenting about donations to institutions of the kind that you've described. But I do basically agree with your point. And the revelations that came out through the ABC investigation about the amount that had been donated by Chinese government connected companies during the election really surprised me. I think it is disturbing.

That's why we've taken a position about banning political donations from foreign entities. I think that's a really important step. I was genuinely surprised by the amount of money that had been donated by Chinese government related interests in the context of the election. I think the general point is right. It's very important that we are able to maintain our independence in the way in which our democracy plays out.

I think it's time now for the government to party in terms of our call. It's our call to ban foreign donations in the context of elections.

BOLT: Doesn't it worry you that you've got now Bob Carr, former Foreign Minister. You were a colleague of his. He leads this Australia China Institute that got \$1.8M of Chinese money. Same pattern, same pattern. Sam Dastyari, back in June was saying, 'don't challenge China in the South China Sea, and don't join ship patrols, boat patrols 'with America cause that'll cause economic relationship. This link between Chinese money and pro Chinese commentary by Labor's figures. Bob Carr. Is that a worry?

MARLES: Bob Carr's not in the Parliament now he's a private citizen. Having been a Parliamentary Secretary and remembering his coming in to Parliament. He made it very clear you act with a different perspective in the Parliament than as you do as a private citizen. Let me make one thing clear about Labor's position and it actually echoes your opening.

We do see that the way in which China has constructed the group of islands in the South China Sea is utterly inappropriate. We see it against the international law that was found by the court of arbitration. We think that it is really important that we have an international rules based order that China adheres to. That those rules are asserted. That is done via freedom of navigation of operations of navigation. We believe the Australian Navy should be fully authorised to do those. Now that is Labor's position and that remains unequivocal.

BOLT: Can I just go back to something else I was saying at the top of the show. There was a time when we did need to point out what the Islamic State was doing. To justify beefing up our security we had to make the case. But now it's different. Do we get so scared about essentially a press release from the so-called Islamic State as we did yesterday and today. Don't we risk feeding the power fantasies of these jihadis and inspiring all of them to get famous.

MARLES: I thought your commentary at the opening was interesting. I think it highlights the difficult nature of this and I agree with a lot of the sentiment that you expressed. I think one of the interesting points that came out of what you said was; I think it's the Victorian Police Commissioner. And I do think that we need to be taking our lead in terms of the seriousness of threats from our National Security Institutions and intelligence agencies and from our police organisations. It was interesting to hear one of

their points you made and you rightly criticised those who committed appalling acts in Australia and you described them as low life's and that's fair enough. But ultimately of course they had significant consequence. One of the difficulties we're facing now is how you describe those people dealing with the damage and the very serious damage that they can inflict.

I think there's a balance between not feeding the beast as you rightly describe, whilst at the same time we are appropriately alert to all of this.

I think that Australian's should take comfort that we do have secure borders. I think that it is a different set of circumstances to what we see in Europe and we have some of the best national security agencies in the world. I do take some confidence in that. I think that how we react to these threats, we ought to take a leaf from those agencies when looking at this very very carefully.

BOLT: So the war on Iraq! Would you change any aspect on the way we conducted that.

MARLES: Well firstly our attitude to this is to work in a bipartisan manner with the government. We are comfortable with the way in which it is being undertaken in a global sense. But secondly in terms of Australia's contribution to this. Again you said in the opening to the show, which is right, we are seeing significant ground being won by the Allied forces against Islamic State in Iraq.

BOLT: Not so much in Syria though Richard, not so much in Syria?

MARLES: True. But Islamic State is losing this conflict and probably is right to say that in the face of that you're seeing more calls of this kind being made by Islamic State. But events are progressing in a good way and I think Australia is playing an appropriate part in.

BOLT: Well it's just been so slow the damage done in the meantime.

Richard can I move to the 12 new submarines that are going to be built in Adelaide by the French submarine builder DCNS. DCNS as we've known for a while has had a massive leak of 22,000 documents that detailed combat capabilities summaries. A different kind. True! But ones that DCNS is building for India. Now DCNS has cancelled, an order that it was thinking about for three more of those kind of subs because of this security concern.

Should Australia review it's own decision to order 12 subs from the same builder on the same grounds.

MARLES: It's obviously a worry when you see what has occurred in terms of the Indian reaction to it. The first thing I would like to see is some consistency on the part of the government in terms of it's reaction to set of events.

I mean, you've got Minister Pyne on the one hand saying there's nothing to worry about here; not a big deal. You've got the Prime Minister on the other saying this is a concerning set of events. From the Australian publics point of view we do need to hear a reassurance from our government that our purchase that we are making from this French company is not going to give rise to any compromise our National interest. We need to know that this is a safe procurement.

Now the government's in the position to give us that assurance or not and we need to hear it from them. Right now we're hearing mixed messages from the government about what all of this means.

BOLT: Should we consider cancelling the order?

MARLES: Well that's a big call that I'm not about to make now. But I think that I'm....

BOLT: Should that at least be on the table?

MARLES: Well we need to hear from the government what this all means from their perspective. There the one's who are in the position of knowledge; and we need to have a reassurance from the Australian Government that our National Security. That the vital information that is tied up in this particular procurement is safe in dealing with this company. I haven't heard that from the government and we need to. All we're hearing is mixed messages from a Prime Minister and a Defence Industry Minister who seem to be at odds with each other.

BOLT: Just quickly before I go, the data was stolen from DCNS by subcontractor bought to Australia. David Spears even heard that it was even held by someone that was even in Parliament House. Have you heard anything about that?

MARLES: I mean you hear all sorts of things and I don't pay a lot of regard to all of that. But again it's why we need to have an assurance from the government itself. They're the people who will know the answers to questions.

BOLT: Was that a yes? You have heard?

MARLES: I don't pay regard to all of this. What matters is what we hear from the government. What we're hearing now from the government is mixed messages.

BOLT: Richard Marles thanks for your time

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