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CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Well, good afternoon and welcome to Pyne & Marles here on Sky News Like. It's 1 o'clock Eastern Standard Time. I'm Christopher Pyne here in Adelaide, and my colleague, Richard Marles, is in Geelong. Good afternoon, Richard. How are things in Geelong today?

RICHARD MARLES: It's an absolutely stunning day here, Christopher. And as you expect sometimes – or not all the time during the Spring Carnival week, I was going to ask you whether you managed to pick Almandin in the Melbourne Cup on Tuesday.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: No, I didn't, unfortunately. I was disappointed to see that Bill Shorten did pick Almandin but, happily, failed to put any money on the horse. So, he didn't get the benefit of his insight. I did draw Heartbreak City, however, in the office sweep and won \$30, which doesn't make up for all my losses over many years that I've been wasting money on the Melbourne Cup - but it was a great race, wasn't it?

RICHARD MARLES: It was. But in my books, that equals a good Melbourne Cup. I tend to always go with the winner of the Geelong Cup, who gets a start in the Melbourne Cup, who this year was Qewy, who managed to come fourth. In the past, I think Americain and Media Puzzle they've have won it. But that's how Geelong flies its flag in the Melbourne Cup.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Well, the Geelong Cup is often a good guide for the Melbourne Cup, but that's a rather painful memory for one my friends, who suggested to her partner that he put Qewy in a first four, and he agreed to do so but, when he went away to place the bet, he didn't do it. If he had, he would have won \$40,000! So, that would have paid a bit of the mortgage. That's horseracing, exactly. We're always remembered for the bets we didn't put on! He'll go nameless - I don't want to embarrass him on national television.

RICHARD MARLES: I don't know whether that friend was a colleague in the Parliament, but you've set me on the trail! Look, today, it is all about the American elections, we're, I think, five days out, and we'll be having a chat about what is likely to occur there. This week, the Government also announced proposed changes to immigration laws - a lifetime visa ban for people who have come here by boat who are now on Manus and Nauru. We'll chat about that, as we will about the Senate - remarkable events this week, with both Senator Culleton and Senator Day. Our guest this week, having only had him partially last week, is David Speers. He's tried to run away, Christopher, from our hard-hitting questions, but we're going to get him in full, I hope, this week, and we'll be talking to him live from the US about the elections, as this is our last show before the US elections. But that really has been the big issue in the political world - as, of course, it should be - on the Friday before an American election. I've got to say, Christopher, I find the polls hard to read in the US. I think it's to do with it being a voluntary voting system, but whilst it does seem like the pathway to victory is much clearer for Hillary Clinton than it is for Donald Trump, I've got to say, as we're sitting here today on Friday afternoon, I'm honestly not sure who's going to win.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: No, Richard, it looks like it's going to be a cliffhanger, although sometimes these elections, as we both know, shape up as cliffhangers and then, on Election Day, they don't turn out that way. And of course, the United States' system is different to ours. They have an Electoral College and a popular vote. As people would remember, George W. Bush won the Electoral College and lost the popular vote a few years ago, and on the analyses that's done by very many pundits across the US, while Donald Trump appears to be gaining in terms of the national opinion polls, he doesn't appear to be gaining in the Electoral College votes. So, while it looks to us like a close vote, at the end of the day, he might still do quite well in the national vote, but Hillary will win in the states where it matters – like places like Florida, North Carolina, potentially even Ohio. So it's... it'll be a fascinating day next Tuesday.

RICHARD MARLES: Yes, and I suppose it'll play out Wednesday for us, as we watch the results come in on what will be Tuesday night in America. I think, in a policy sense, from an Australian national interest point of view, the issue coming out of the election, at least for me, is America's place in the world. That's often something which is framed during an American election. But in this election, we've seen, I think, a question raised about a potential reduction in global affairs on the part of the US. Of course, Donald Trump's been raising the question of US alliances, and even Hillary Clinton's taken a different view in relation to the TPP. I think the challenge for us, from an alliance partner point of view, is whoever wins this election - the day after it, we've got to make sure that we are using all our energies to encourage, through the alliance, America to maintain its presence in East Asia – and over the next few months all those bilateral connections through personal relationships, but also forums like AUSMIN, I think, need to be used and are going to be important in terms of making sure the alliance is very much there in the eyes of the US.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Richard, I agree with all of that, and I'm looking forward to exploring it with David Speers when he's on later in the show, as long as he doesn't try to pull the plug again. Obviously this is one of the most important elections

that Australia has observed in recent times, because there is a very clear difference between the isolationist rhetoric of Donald Trump versus the much more engaged - especially in Asia - of Hillary Clinton. So the outcome does mean something for Australia, but whatever the outcome, we've got to make sure that we engage both sides. But we're out of time, and moving on to the second issue of the week, which has been the migration debate about the visas for those people on Nauru and Manus Island. Let's have a look at this clip.

PETER DUTTON: I do want to get people off Nauru and Manus. I've been very clear about that. I'm not going to have any outcome that we put in place undermined by people coming back to our country through a separate visa process.

BILL SHORTEN: During the election, Mr Turnbull told everybody that they had people-smuggling under control. So, why now have they come up with this latest ridiculous thought-bubble on first appearance?

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Well Richard, it just seems so remarkable to me that the Labor Party still cannot get their act together on border protection. For years and years and years, Labor has been walking both sides of the street, and this week it was totally on display. So, Kevin Rudd decided to write an op-ed piece - which Bill Shorten must have really welcomed - pointing out that the policy Labor took to the 2013 election was not one that they ever intended to implement. In fact, when he said that these people on Nauru and Manus would never come to Australia, he didn't really mean it. But unfortunately, Richard, we have to just interrupt our program briefly to go to Malcolm Turnbull, who is holding a press conference in Hobart.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Well that was Malcolm Turnbull in Hobart talking about issues like the ABCC and also the migration laws, as well as announcing \$20.5 million for breast cancer research as part of the fight to try and improve women's health. And Richard, I have to say, it's very rare that you're saved by Malcolm Turnbull and Will Hodgman but, given the towelling-up I was giving you over the migration laws, you must be very glad to have had that life raft thrown to you! But I think David Speers is standing...

RICHARD MARLES: You wish.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Please! You were beaten and almost bowed. I think David Speers is standing by in the US, and we're gonna get the chance to cross to him and have a proper chat to David Speers. So, David Speers, are you there?

DAVID SPEERS: I am here, listening to that lengthy segue to Malcolm Turnbull there, but glued to every one of your words. I thought your take on how things are looking over here in the US earlier on was actually pretty good - I'll try to add to that if I can.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: What a relief that you haven't pulled out this week! Because a lot of our viewers - or viewer, as I sometimes say - were quite disappointed that you pulled the plug when we needed to you last week! So we've decided to get you back and talk about what is the subject of so many people's lips around the world - the election of the leader of the Free World next week in the United States. We've looked at it in lots of different directions. Is it narrowing in the way that the polls are

indicating? Do you feel that on the ground? And what do you think is happening in the battleground states in terms of the Electoral College split?

DAVID SPEERS: Look, it's definitely narrowed this week and particularly in the first part of this week, it really tightened up. That's probably a couple of factors there. One, undoubtedly, was the FBI's announcement on Friday - the end of last week - they're looking into to this new batch of emails that may be linked to Hillary Clinton, it may be really problematic for her. That went straight to the heart of a big concern a lot of people have about Hillary Clinton here. I get the sense a lot of people in Australia don't really understand just how unpopular Hillary Clinton is here. She is the second-most unpopular candidate in living memory here in a presidential race - the fortunate thing for Hillary Clinton is the most unpopular is Donald Trump! So there's a big concern about her trustworthiness. That went right to the heart of it. And that hurt her. I also think, though, a lot of Republicans, after Trump's low point a few weeks ago after the awful things that he was caught on tape saying, a lot of them have come home to the Republican base, to the Republican candidate. So there was a natural tightening of the race under way anyway. But I would say this - in the last couple of days, the last 48 hours maybe, things do seem to have stabilised. See whether Trump has maybe peaked, hit the ceiling of support that he's going to hit - it's still very, very close, but you've still got to say Hillary Clinton is still just in front. In the battleground states, as you mention - there are really four you've got to keep an eye on. You did mention them earlier on, Christopher. Ohio is one - Trump's ahead there. Florida is another, and it's neck and neck there. North Carolina - it's pretty tight there as well. And Pennsylvania - and that's where Clinton's got a lead of about three points. So, look, Trump needs to win all of them. If she can sandbag just one of them, like Pennsylvania - which it looks like she will - it's very hard to see how he gets there. He then has to look for other Democrat states, like Michigan, Wisconsin - he's going to have a much harder time picking up one of them. So at this stage, his path is still harder than Hillary Clinton's to get to the 270 Electoral College votes.

RICHARD MARLES: So, given that, David, the thing that I find curious now is that that assessment seems to be right - we therefore appear to be likely on the verge of the first female elected to the presidency of the United States. And yet, in the midst of how, I guess, low this particular contest has got, that historic moment - at least from this side of the Pacific - seems to be lost. Has it been lost? Or is there kind of any excitement at all about the idea of the first female being elected to the presidency?

DAVID SPEERS: That's a good question, Richard. I'd say there's not really, in the media coverage, much focus on the very concept of having the first female president. I think it is still an issue, though, for - well, particularly a lot of women voters out there. This is a big deal. And you do see this coming through on social media a bit as well - people tweeting photos of themselves saying, "I have just voted for the first time for a female president" or for a female candidate, at least, for president - and that's a big deal, make no mistake about it. But look, I think the media have moved on from that narrative and have focussed on the various scandals that have dominated in recent weeks and the race call about just how tight the polls are and which way they're moving. But it is still a factor there. You look at what Hillary Clinton's focused on this last week or two - it's almost entirely about a negative attack on Donald Trump's awful things that he said about women, but she has absolutely focused on this now, and really, she's always led amongst women, but I think she needs to make sure they all turn out and vote, and shore up that vote.

The African-American vote where she's led as well - that's been a bit softer than she's hoped for. That's why Barack Obama has been in places like North Carolina, really trying to rally that vote as well. She just needs to make sure those who've supported her for months and months actively turn up and vote now and that's, I guess that's the big question.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: David, while you've been in the US, have you had the chance to examine the Clinton team and the Trump team that might be coming into their significant roles after the election in January next year, and what they mean for Australia? We know a lot about Hillary Clinton's background in politics - we know a lot less about Donald Trump, because she was the Secretary of State, of course, and part of the Clinton administration as well as the First Lady. Have you had the chance to examine both of those teams, and are they forming in a way that is clear for Australia?

DAVID SPEERS: Look, that's a good question too. I've spoken to quite a number of people in Washington about this. You're right - Hillary Clinton is a far more known quantity, as far as Australia is concerned. And I get the sense, correct me if I'm wrong, that both sides of politics - the major parties in Australia - would very much prefer to see Hillary Clinton there. As I say, she's a known quantity, she's a friend of Australia, the approach she would take on the Asia-Pacific is not going to be a surprise. If anything, it might even be an improvement on the Barack Obama approach to the Asia-Pacific - perhaps a little bit more hawkish towards China and perhaps a little bit more expectation on Australia to do more on the South China Sea. Donald Trump, though, there are very mixed views. Some - or one Republican I've spoken to who was the top Asia policy advisor in the Bush White House, is very worried about all the things Trump is saying, whether it's nuclear-arming Japan and South Korea and the prospect of a nuclear arms race in the region - basically retreating from America's leadership in the Asia-Pacific, putting up trade barriers with China, who he accuses of "raping" the American economy. But another Republican I've spoken to says, "Look, he's a real-estate guy. This is how he negotiates. He says all these things. It's part of a negotiation. He wouldn't do all of these things." But who knows, really? You would like to think Trump, if he gets there, would be reined in by public opinion and other Republicans in Congress and people around him. But that's not really the Trump style. He likes to run against the mainstream. He likes to be bold, be brash, and that's what a lot of his supporters want to see him do. If he didn't do that as president, well, he'd also pay a price for that.

RICHARD MARLES: Well, David, thank you for your insights. You've covered a number of US presidential elections now, and it really is fascinating to see it through your eyes, through an Australian's set of eyes, and we very much appreciate the opportunity of having an interview with you today, and we'll have more hard-hitting interviews, I'm sure, with you in episodes to come. But that brings us to the Question of the Week. Given that it is the Spring Racing Carnival and we are thinking about betting odds and we're also looking at the American election, the question this week is whether betting odds are a better guide to election outcomes than opinion polls. Christopher, what's your view about that?

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: You know, Richard, I think they are. I don't think they used to be when I first got elected but, in recent years, I pay a lot of attention to the betting odds on election campaigns. 'Cause I think that the bookies get a lot of different information from many different sources, and in politics, the Labor Party relies on its

polls, the Liberal Party relies on its polls, there are national opinion polls, but I find that the bookies get the results very right very often, and I do pay a lot of attention to them. And if I'm blowing out a bit, I start to get quite worried about it in Sturt.

RICHARD MARLES: Yeah, look, I agree with you. There's something visceral about people putting their money where their mouth is, and that's obviously what the odds ultimately reflect. I think the other issue, for us, is that opinion polls - the science of them has become much harder, with people using landlines less and less. Basically, opinion polls are based on ringing landlines. The art of getting an opinion poll right is that you are asking a representative sample of the community about the question that you want the answer to, and when so many people no longer have landlines in their home, getting that representative sample is much harder. I actually think opinion polls are getting less accurate going forward. And yeah, that kind of has us relying on people betting on the odds.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Indeed. I agree. And I think that's all we have time for today, Richard. We've, um, run out of time, and we're now going to cross to a break, and then Ashleigh Gillon will be back after the break with the latest news. Thank you very much for being there this afternoon in Geelong!

RICHARD MARLES: Thanks, Christopher, and look forward to speaking to you next week.