

**TRANSCRIPT** | WE'LL PUT  
PEOPLE FIRST



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

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
RADIO INTERVIEW  
ABC MELBOURNE  
MONDAY, 17 JULY 2017**

**SUBJECTS: ADF's role combatting terrorism; homeland security**

**HOST:** To speak about the changes, Labor's Shadow Defence Minister and Member for Corio for the ALP, Richard Marles, joins us. Good afternoon, Richard.

**RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE:** Good afternoon, Raf. How are you?

**HOST:** I'm OK. Do you think it will make a difference? If there's more training from the special forces soldiers, and it's easier to call them out, is it going to make a difference?

**MARLES:** Firstly, we've asked for a brief on this from the Government. We want to understand the detail of what they're talking about. We're aware of what's been said today, clearly, but there's often a lot of detail in this. I think providing more training to State police forces makes sense. Part of the announcement also talked about imbedded liaison officers and different pre-posturing of Defence Force assets for potential domestic terrorism events. Subject to getting a briefing on all of that, I think all of that makes sense and is pretty uncontroversial.

Our attitude to this is we have a reflex and an instinct in this space to act in a bipartisan way. We do want to know what's being proposed. I think what is critical is that whatever is the most potent capability that Australia has, be it within a State police force, the Federal Police or indeed the ADF, ought to be able to be deployed in whatever crisis or whatever moment arises, and that our legal framework should be flexible enough to allow that to occur.

What it should also do is ensure that there is the greatest degree of coordination between those agencies possible, so we'll be working with the government to try, in a bipartisan way, to come up with an outcome which realises that.

**HOST:** Do you think because you can call the military in more easily, do you think that because you can they will be called in, they'll be more likely to play a role?

**MARLES:** It is obviously going to depend on the circumstance. At one level, theoretically, the answer to that question has to be yes, in as much as if you can imagine a situation where you might have a capability in the ADF which legally can't be deployed, well then obviously a barrier might be removed, but that's exactly the kind of detail where we do need to get briefings from government on this stuff to understand what is being proposed. The announcement today, for example, didn't contain the legislation which is going to be put before the parliament.

We actually want to see that so that we can understand what it is they seek to do, but if it makes sense then we're absolutely willing to have a look at that.

Indeed, we've been asking the question for a year now about whether or not call-out processes are strong enough within our legal regime right now to meet the sort of terrorist challenges we're facing as a country.

**HOST:** So you're likely to say yes, once you get a briefing.

**MARLES:** The way I like to put it is our instinct and our reflex on this is to do this in a bipartisan way. Ultimately, I have a sense of confidence that's where we'll end up. If you look at what's happened in the past, we've supported a whole range of pieces of legislation which have made our legislation more robust, but the process by which we've gone through and doing that has often seen changes to that legislation, and that's what will happen here as well, so there may well be detail where we seek to have it changed, and we have actually worked in a pretty bipartisan way with the government over the past four years from opposition, which has put us in a position where we have been able to support legislative change, but often after it has, in turn, gone through a whole lot of revision and alteration once they've started talking with us, so I think that's the kind of process you can expect to see play out in relation to these proposals as well.

**HOST:** So Richard Marles, as Labor's Shadow Defence Minister, are you comfortable with the Prime Minister's press conference today? He was surrounded by soldiers with gas masks on, ways of concealing their identity, which is clearly what they wish and need. Are you comfortable having the Prime Minister using them as a backdrop?

**MARLES:** Ultimately, I will leave that judgement to the Australian people. I hasten to say I haven't seen the image myself, but I think we need to be very careful in this space, and if, as politicians, we walk down a path of openly politicising the ADF it doesn't matter what our political opponents say, the Australian people will be the first to judge us and we will be judged very harshly in that event.

**HOST:** 1300222774 is the phone number. You're listening to the ABC across Victoria. You can hear Richard Marles, Labor's defence spokesman. If I can ask you about some speculation, Richard Marles – forgive me – the speculation is growing that Peter Dutton as Immigration Minister will head a new portfolio to not only, will he, in some sort of home office or homeland security, have Immigration and Border

Force, he will also have ASIO and the Australian Federal Police. Both of them currently report to other ministers. It's not a bureaucratic change, but it is a political or portfolio change. Do you support that?

**MARLES:** Let's see what ultimately is proposed. There's been a whole lot of speculation and scuttlebutt about this now for months, or actually years, really. This has been talked about over the last couple of years by the Government-

**HOST:** -But this was a Kim Beazley idea at one stage, wasn't it, a homeland security sort of reorganisation?

**MARLES:** Homeland security is a term. It can come in a whole of different guises. It's a matter of seeing what is actually proposed, if indeed the government ultimately proposes anything. Where this has come to the fore in the media previously it's been shot down pretty quickly, but who knows. Let's see what they do.

**HOST:** But as a blue sky thinking principle, having all those agencies reporting to one minister: good idea or not?

**MARLES:** Here's the issue, in terms of answering that question: what is the problem that is sought to be fixed? What is it that the Government is trying to do? What is the rationale for doing it? They're the questions that we want to ask and we want to get an answer to.

What is not an appropriate answer to those questions is to ultimately do something on the basis of the internal politics of the Cabinet of the moment. This shouldn't be about Peter Dutton's career or George Brandis' career, and the promotion of-

**HOST:** -Do you think that's all it's about?

**MARLES:** Well, I'm pretty suspicious about the way in which decisions are made within the Government, and how could you not be, given the circus they have demonstrated across the whole way in which they go about government over the last few years. It is a lot more about the internal politics of that show than it is about good public policy.

It has to be rationalised not in the sense of what's good for Peter Dutton but what's best for the national security of the Australian people. That's basis on which we'll assess this.

We haven't ultimately heard an argument put forward by the Government for why this is necessary and why this needs to be done. We will listen to an argument of that kind. To come back to what I said earlier, our instinct has always been, with national security matters, to try and place this above politics, and to act in a bipartisan way, but we want to understand exactly what it is which is being proposed here, and we want know that the reason for it, the ultimate objective, is the Australian people and not Peter Dutton's career. That's actually what we need to hear about, if indeed anything is ultimately announced. It is speculation. There's been speculation in this space before and up until now it's come to nought, so who knows. Let's see what happens.

**HOST:** Richard Marles is Labor's defence spokesman. Thanks very much for your time.

**MARLES:** Thanks, Raf.

***ENDS***