

**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
PYNE & MARLES
SKY NEWS LIVE
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SUBJECTS: *High Court; \$122 million marriage survey; union legislation; energy prices; North Korea; parliamentary behaviour*

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: Good afternoon and welcome to *Pyne & Marles* here on Sky News Live on Friday 11 August. I'm Christopher Pyne and I'm here in Adelaide, and my colleague is Richard Marles, and I find you in Canberra this afternoon, Richard. How come you're still in Canberra when everybody else is out of there?

RICHARD MARLES: Well, I wish I was at home like you, Christopher, but the Labor Party's national executive has kept me in Canberra today after a busy week – busy for us, but busy, it also seems, for the High Court, who are meeting this afternoon.

This week saw a reference of Malcolm Roberts immigration status to the High Court. This follows Larissa Waters, Scott Ludlum, Matt Canavan; there's a directions hearing, I think, in relation to whether the plebiscite is going on. We're going to be accused of running a make-work program for eminent Australian jurists.

PYNE: I'm not sure that the seven justices of the High Court will be thanking the parliament right now for making their already incredibly onerous job that much harder, and of course for all of us waiting on these decisions about whether the plebiscite goes ahead, which I believe it will, and of course the issues for those four senators, we want them decided as quickly as possible, but they have to take as long as it takes, really, and there's not much we can do about it, so it's a tricky time for the High Court and for the parliament.

MARLES: Well, there'll be much cursing and cussing about Capital Hill in High Court justices' chambers this afternoon, I think.

We should get on with the program. Of course the big news, really, this week is that having submitted the plebiscite bill to the Senate again and that failing, the Government has announced that there will be a postal vote in relation to marriage equality later in the year. We're going to have a chat about that.

The Government's legislation in relation to the regulation of trade unions passed the House of Representatives during the week. We're going to have a chat about that.

The other issue that happened during the week was the Government called in the CEOs of energy retailers to talk about the ongoing issue of energy policy and electricity prices in this country. We're going to chat about that.

I suppose the other huge news this week was North Korea. Our guest today is Professor Joe Siracusa, expert in global security from RMIT. We're going to talk to Professor Siracusa about the situation in North Korea.

But let's start with the big domestic issue of the week, and that was the same-sex marriage plebiscite. Take a look at this.

MALCOLM TURNBULL [CLIP]: If that bill is rejected by the Senate again, then we will hold a postal vote.

TURNBULL [CLIP]: I will be encouraging Australians to vote yes.

TONY ABBOTT [CLIP]: If you don't like political correctness, vote no.

JOURNALIST [CLIP]: Will you personally campaign for the yes vote?

TURNBULL [CLIP]: I have many other calls on my time as Prime Minister.

PENNY WONG [CLIP]: The Australian Christian Lobby described our children as the stolen generation. You talk about unifying moments?

BILL SHORTEN [CLIP]: I want you to know you are not alone. You are not alone in this fight ahead.

MARLES: So, Christopher, doesn't the fact that we are about to spend \$122 million of public money on this plebiscite speak to the fact that the Prime Minister has no authority within your party room?

PYNE: Well, Richard, the Labor Party wants to spend a great deal more on a plebiscite on the republic, and then a second plebiscite on the republic, a referendum on four-year terms, so in fact the Labor Party has proposed three lots of \$120 million being spent on asking the public for their opinions. Now, what that shows is the Labor Party thinks it's a good thing to ask the public for their opinion, and what more important reason than a major social change like same-sex marriage to ask the public about their views?

So I very strongly support the plebiscite, and it's a great pity that the Labor Party has dragged it out for as long as it has.

MARLES: But there's a big difference here, because what Bill Shorten has proposed in relation to each of those measures requires constitutional change, which has to happen via a referendum.

What we're talking with the Marriage Act is legislation. We could change this and give effect to marriage equality next week by simply a bill through the parliament, so it feels to me like what the parliament is doing, what the Government is doing, is shirking the responsibility of this place by not actually making the decision here.

PYNE: Don't you think it's important for the Australian public to actually feel they're part of the decision-making process?

MARLES: They're absolutely a part of it, and we all stand accountable to them and if there is a conscience vote here, if we exercise that vote in a way that people don't like they absolutely get the chance to make their judgement about us and the importance of this issue come the next election, but we're elected to make hard decisions. This is one of them. Instead we're shirking it by putting it onto a plebiscite, and in a sense asking Australians to stand in judgement of their neighbour based on whatever personal behaviour, personal choices people have made which have hurt no other people.

I know you support same-sex marriage-

PYNE: -12 months ago-

MARLES: -but we should be making this decision here.

PYNE: I do.

12 months ago we promised that we would have a plebiscite of the Australian public, and you remained silent about that. In fact, Bill Shorten's only public comment on it, Richard, was that he supported the plebiscite to the Australian Christian Lobby, so once again saying one thing to one audience and one thing to another.

But let's move on to another important initiative that we've been discussing now for a long time, and this week in particular, and that is the Labor Party's relationship with the union movement and trying to bring law and order to the construction industry. Let's take a look at this.

TURNBULL [CLIP]: Last night, once again, the Government has stood up for Australian workers.

MICHALEA CASH [CLIP]: The passing of the corrupting benefits legislation.

TURNBULL [CLIP]: Conduct of Mr Shorten-

CASH [CLIP]: -if it were repeated-

TURNBULL [CLIP]: -if it were repeated under these laws would attract criminal sanctions.

CHRIS BOWEN [CLIP]: Australians are seeing through Malcolm Turnbull's disgusting smear campaign against Bill Shorten, and as I said, it says more about Malcolm Turnbull than it does about Bill Shorten.

PYNE: Richard, I don't understand, having been around parliament for almost a quarter of a century, why the Labor Party cannot cut their umbilical-like connection to the union movement, particularly unions like the CFMEU. Now, there's good unions out there, but why do you hang on to the CFMEU?

MARLES: Well, just to start with: don't admit to the quarter of a century thing too often.

PYNE: That's true!

MARLES: I'm not counting the years.

PYNE: I'm feeling it today.

MARLES: But in answer to your question, this isn't a serious play by the Government in relation to dealing with corruption. The Labor Party took a raft of propositions to the last election which increased penalties in terms of the regulation of unions, added obligations on auditors, empowering ASIC to get involved. There is a whole suite of legislation dealing with the issue.

This is about trying to run a specific smear campaign on Bill Shorten-

PYNE: -Rubbish.

MARLES: -and if corruption was really your issue- No, if it was really your issue you wouldn't be limiting it to unions. What about company-to-company behaviour? Or what about what's going in your own ranks?

I mean, the Victorian director of the Liberal Party is currently in jail for stealing money-

PYNE: -Oh come on. Don't try and run a smokescreen. Don't throw up a smokescreen.

MARLES: But that's true. And what about the Victorian opposition leader having dinner-

PYNE: -Oh, come on. We're talking about the unions.

MARLES: -at the lobster joint with- well, that's what you ought to talk about. Are you talking about unions, or are you talking about corruption?

PYNE: Now listen, you've got to give me a turn.

So far you've voted against the Australian Building and Construction Commission; you've voted against the Registered Organisations Commission; you've voted

against supporting the Victorian CFA volunteers, the Country Fire Association; you voted against the owner-operator truck legislation; and now you've voted against the corrupting benefits legislation this week, which applied to employers as well as union officials.

Next week you'll get the chance to vote for legislation to make it illegal for union officials who routinely break the law to hold office in those unions. Will you vote for it?

MARLES: What we've made clear, and we have a raft of amendments in the House of Representatives around, you know, you make this focussed on dishonest conduct: that's fine. But you voted against those amendments, and as a result a whole lot of arrangements which are completely innocent get caught up in this.

But we need to move on.

This week the Government brought in a number of CEOs, bosses of the energy companies, to talk to them about energy policy and prices in this country. Have a listen to this.

TURNBULL [CLIP]: Millions of Australian families are paying too much for their electricity.

FRYDENBURG [CLIP]: We want to get better information, more comparable information, and a better deal for Australian consumers.

ED HUSIC [CLIP]: I think in many respects, too, the Government, it's convenient for them to turn the energy chiefs into a scapegoat for an inability of the Coalition to get its energy policy together.

SCOTT MORRISON [CLIP]: If the customer is being snowed over then it's very hard for them to get the best deal, and what we're seeking to do is clear the blizzard.

MARLES: OK, so, dealing with national energy market rules to put the consumer ahead of the companies, that's a good thing that's been done here. Well done. We've actually been on that for a long time, took that to the last election.

PYNE: Of course you have.

MARLES: We're glad that you've caught up, but really, Christopher, the issue here is when are you going to do something around the policy uncertainty around a renewable energy target? That's what's driving electricity prices up, isn't it?

PYNE: What's driving electricity prices up has been the price of gas. Now, we have taken action. Since 1 July the gas companies need to be able to guarantee that there's enough domestic supply of gas before they're allowed to export LNG around the world. Now, that's a pretty interventionist action on behalf of a Coalition government, but we did it because the price of gas was artificially high and was pushing up the price of electricity, which went up 100 per cent the six years that you were in office, and this week, as you say, we've taken further action.

Now, we expect the Labor Party to support the Coalition in making these decisions, because we need a suite of policies that support consumers, because electricity prices are just too high.

MARLES: It's great that we're backing in consumers. As I say, we took that to the last election. Really happy that you've caught up, and the idea of intervening in the gas market, I mean, you've had to be dragged kicking and screaming to that issue, but-

PYNE: -Well, you didn't do it.

MARLES –but the elephant in the room here, no, no, the elephant in the room here, Christopher, is that there is total policy uncertainty around what you're doing in relation to a renewable energy target, pricing carbon, and as a result we're seeing electricity prices go through the roof, and that's the issue here. You've got to actually bite the bullet on that.

PYNE: Richard, we would know what would happen under Labor, because it's happened here in South Australia under the Wetherill Government under Labor, because they had such a massive reliance on renewable energy that we have, sadly, the world's highest electricity prices and most unstable electricity supply, which has been a complete catastrophe, so if you want to know what your policies will deliver, look no further than the state of South Australia.

But we have to take a break now, and we'll come back after the break and talk to our guest.

[AD BREAK]

PYNE: Good afternoon and welcome back to *Pyne & Marles* here on Sky News Live. Obviously one of the major issues of the week, which has had the world holding its breath to an extent, is the issue in North Asia around North Korea, so our guest this afternoon is an expert on these kinds of matters. He's from the RMIT University in Melbourne, Professor Joe Siracusa. Welcome, Joe, and thank you very much for coming on the show.

JOSEPH SIRACUSA: Thank you. Good afternoon.

PYNE: So, Joe, the question that I want to ask right from the get go is why would Kim Jong-un take on the United States? What is in it for him to keep this bellicose language and this threatening behaviour towards the US?

SIRACUSA: Well, Chairman Kim doesn't really want war. What he wants is the fruits of war. He wants to decouple the United States from the peninsula and from its South Korean allies, and he wants the Americans to go home and he wants an open road for the reunification of the whole of the Korean peninsula under his regime.

I mean he's not just in it for North Korea. He is in it for the whole of the regime. This has been his tactic for the past several years and he thinks he can make a lot of noise and then we'll treat back and forth, and you know American presidents have

threatened this guy for 15 years and nothing seems to work. The only problem this time is that he has the ability to hit back.

Now, our old friend Henry Kissinger said years ago there are only two things you can do with the North Koreans: you can eliminate their nuclear weapons or you can learn how to manage them. That is learning how to love, how to accept them and manage them through nuclear diplomacy. That's the stage we entered now, but we've entered a very dangerous stage right now because there is the possibility, the potential, here for misunderstanding or miscalculation is very high.

I'm sure your viewers, a number of you viewers, remember that mistaken incident in the Gulf of Tonkin led the way to the Vietnam War, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, and so it all it takes is a small patrol boat to fire on an American or allied vessel and then we're off to the races.

MARLES: So, Joe, we've spoken a lot about the fact that America seems to have presented a harder edge to North Korea, that that's a good thing in light of what you just said about how American presidents have dealt with North Korea in the past, and also the need to engage China. The rhetoric on both sides has been at a different level this week to what we've seen. Do you think there is a limit to how hard an edge in terms of rhetoric that an American president can present?

SIRACUSA: Well no-one voted for Donald Trump for his subtlety did they? He says it pretty much like it is.

Look I've been a student of diplomacy for 40 years and I've really never seen anything like this. I mean, this is really the wrong way to go about it, even during the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Able Archer exercise in 1983 that almost went haywire. I mean people don't talk like this.

On the other hand Chairman Kim seems to have only one kind of a language, and keep in mind that these people don't use rhetoric. This is what they mean and they actually mean what they say.

I mean, with rhetoric we can parse the sentences and look between the lines and all those things we did during the Soviet era, but with these people they tend to mean what they say.

I had the privilege several weeks ago listening to Admiral Henry Harris in a private seminar he gave in Queensland at Customs House, and he made it very clear that the North Koreans are on the warpath and that he wants to bring them to their senses, not to their knees. We've made it very clear we don't want regime change, though some people in the administration say that.

I mean, there's still a way out of this, gentleman, and that is there has to be a grand solution in the end, and the grand solution would be that the Chinese Government would guarantee the sovereignty of North Korea; the United States would pledge not to invade the place and the North Koreans would pledge to behave themselves or begin talks on nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

Now, can we still do this? I think we can, but there is a reason why the Doomsday Clock is two and a half minutes to midnight. We have been expecting problems with rogue nations over the years and we finally got our problem, and course at the height of the Cold War we had 944 tactical nuclear weapons on South Korean soil, ready to use them against North Korea, so the North Koreans know what's at stake here and if they get off a shot I assure you it'll probably be their only shot.

PYNE: The Chinese are obviously critical and the question I want to go to Joe is the capability. Some of the analysts say that in spite of North Korea's tests with intercontinental ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan and so on that they highly doubt that North Korea has the capability to reach either the continental US or indeed northern Australia, and that therefore a lot of this rhetoric is just that. What is your take on that? How serious do you think they have developed their capabilities and are they seriously able to threaten the continental US?

SIRACUSA: Well, a lot of very credible scientists and defence analysts with the Union of Concerned Physicists and others reckon that North Korea can deliver an ICBM. I don't know if they go as far as Denver or Chicago, but I'm sure they can reach the West Coast. I'm sure they can reach Sydney or Melbourne or Seoul or other places and Guam. I think the credibility is true

You know, I tell you what bothers me is that the intelligence community has kind of let us down again. The intelligence community missed the Soviet blast in '49. They missed the Chinese blast, the Indian blast, the Pakistani blast, and of course they never tell us anything about the Israelis, so the intelligence community sort of making up for lost time now by conceding to top policymakers in the United States that yes, they do have this capability.

You know, I remember during the Cold War we just assume that Soviet capability equalled Soviet intentions and we're doing the same thing again. We've really brought into that sort of Cold War mentality.

Yes, I think they can hurt us, not just with nuclear weapons - they probably have about 25 of those - but they have 5,000 tons of biological and chemical weapons that they can pack into those warheads too. I mean, one of those warheads in Seoul or Sydney or any place else would bring a city to a halt for a month, so they can hurt us in a number of ways.

The thing that I can't understand yet, and I'm going to disagree with most of the analysts in the field, I don't think Chairman Kim is calling all the shots. I think he's beholden to his military who kept his daddy in power and keep him in power, and I think the military is pressuring him and he has to deal with them, so he's not delivering the weapons to the site and threatening to launch them themselves. He's dealing with the military with far more power and we don't really know how to deal with those people, but I think they are using him and he's using them, and of course everybody has to save face now. The United States of course is in a very difficult position because it has to protect its friends and allies.

I mean, we could continue to put the pressure on these people - diplomatic pressure, economic pressure, political pressure - but at the end of the day the United States is

going to have to figure a way to defend its friends and allies with all the ballistic missile systems, defence systems, they can think of, and by the way the road to Australia lay open. I mean there's nothing between North Korea and Australia to stop anything. I mean if they want to cause havoc they could just aim it in our direction start from there.

MARLES: Look, I think that final point is absolutely right. It is an interesting point about who's calling the shots in North Korea, and there's no question that the way that regime is set up there's a whole lot of obligations in terms of providing money and currency to his senior cadre that Kim Jong-un faces, so I think that's a really important point to properly understand.

I guess finally, Joe, the thing I'd be interested in hearing from you about is what's China's interest here? I mean we want to try and engage China more. They clearly do have a particular relationship, but at the end of the day what is their interest when it comes to North Korea?

SIRACUSA: Well, the standard answer is that we can't solve this problem without China. Now you both well know that if there is a conflict there that there would be millions of refugees in China and China doesn't want to deal with that. China doesn't want to put the place back together; doesn't want American allies on an 800-mile border. China doesn't want this kind of a problem.

I mean, China has enough of a problem in the South China Sea. There's a coming war in that neck of the woods for another occasion, but China realises it has to solve it and I think the reason that China and Russia both voted in that Security Council resolution over the weekend is they want to show the world that they've done everything they can. They wanted to wash their hands of what happens next. They showed that they've gone as far as they can go. I mean, hell, when's the last time China and Russia supported the United States in the Security Council? I can't think of it myself.

MARLES: Look, I think that's right. Joe, thanks so much for joining us this afternoon. It's obviously a very concerning, in some respects frightening, situation but it's great to hear your insights today.

SIRACUSA: Well thank you very much, sir.

MARLES: And that brings us to the question of the week, which after our first week back after the Winter break has had a number of lively question times, and that inspired this week's question, which is: how do our families react when we get thrown out of parliament? So, Christopher I know you've been thrown out of parliament in your earlier years. How did your family react to that? How did your mum feel about it?

PYNE: Well, the reason this has come up is that my daughter was in Canberra this week on Wednesday, and she came to question time and afterwards she said 'I liked your answer to your question, Dad', and then she scolded me and said 'you were told off two times', and I was really embarrassed and it reminded me that when I used to get thrown out of Parliament when I was Manager Opposition Business my

mother used to ring me after question time and say 'so I see you've been thrown out again today' as though I'd been suspended from school, so I guess that's a lesson to us. We get so inside the bubble sometimes in question time we forget what the public perception is. What about yourself, though? You've been thrown out a few times by Bronwyn Bishop.

MARLES: Yes, I went through a period there where Bronwyn had it out for me and threw me out a number of times, and I also was a little concerned about how my mother would react, but when my kids then extrapolated from this and said 'Does this mean that we're allowed to talk back to our teachers and is it okay if I get thrown out of class?' I then thought 'oh, what lessons are we actually teaching our children?', which of course is what I'm sure you hear as I do on many street stalls, you know, 'what example are we setting for our kids?' so we perhaps need to bear that in mind a little more.

PYNE: Indeed we do. Of course, it's a bit of theatre in question time as well as seriousness, and I think the public get that too, but we should try and behave better. You can behave better next week, Richard, and I'll keep an eye on you.

MARLES: And I've got an eye on you too as well during the pantomime of question time.

It's been great talking to you again this afternoon, Christopher. Join us again next week at 1 o'clock when we'll be on again on *Pyne & Marles* on Sky News. We'll see you then.

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