



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

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
TELEVISION INTERVIEW  
SKY NEWS LIVE  
THURSDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2017**

***SUBJECTS: Mexico earthquake; after hours doctors; Australian naval exercises***

**HOST:** And joining me now to discuss what Australia can do to help and other political issues of the day is the Shadow Defence Minister, Richard Marles. Richard, what do you think Australia should do in terms of aid to assist at this stage? Is there anything that we can do?

**RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE:** I think there are roles that we can play here, Sam. It's important that we are playing our part as a member of the international community when there are events such as these, even though it's obviously in a part of the world which is a long way from us here. I recall the earthquake in Haiti, where we did contribute I think something like \$14 million towards that, and a critical part of it was to make sure that we were partnering with countries closer to the event, so that you're not kind of getting in the way but you are making your contribution. In that even we were partnering with Cuba for the provision of medical assistance into Haiti, and I think there are ways in which a country like Australia can make a contribution in this moment.

You just wait with bated breath, because there is a sense that this toll is going to go much higher, and this is a very big tragedy.

**HOST:** Do you have any updates from DFAT in terms of any Australians that might be caught up, either visiting family or tourists in the area?

**MARLES:** No, I don't, but DFAT in occasions like this will always be setting up hotlines so that people who feel that they might have relatives who are in the region can ring and get confirmation that their relatives are safe, so there is always a service of that kind provided and I'm sure that's occurring now.

**HOST:** I wanted to ask you quickly, as well, because I know that we may have to interrupt shortly to go to the Prime Minister, about this story on the front page of *The Daily Telegraph* in relation to after hours GP services. They're very popular,

particularly with people with young children who don't necessarily want to drag them to see a doctor, or can't get to see a doctor if they're working full time. What do you think needs to be done about this? The Government seems to be pretty keen to crack down on the service. Presumably that may be one of the reasons why they're briefing this story out, but do you think that there are concerns about the levels of experience of the GPs that have been sent out to family homes?

**MARLES:** What's reported in *The Daily Telegraph* obviously is concerning, but this is the result of what happens when you cut back on after hours GP services, which is what this Government's done. You put enormous pressure on other services such as this. They are popular, as you rightly say, for families with young kids.

As it turned out, our family was in exactly this situation last night, trying to use this service, and not with success, I'm afraid to report. It's what happens when you cut back on after hours GP services: you put an enormous pressure on this. This is something which needs to be resolved.

**HOST:** The story, though, in *The Daily Telegraph* was basically suggesting that these doctors are unqualified. Surely Labor wouldn't want to see unqualified doctors go out to treat families and people who are unwell in the family home?

**MARLES:** Of course not, and that's absolutely right, we wouldn't, and that's why I say what's been reported in *The Daily Telegraph* today is concerning.

The root cause here is proper funding of after hours GP services by the government, and that's funding which this Government has cut.

**HOST:** But is it, though, because I wonder about that. I mean, I've got to be honest, as a parent I would much rather have, if you could afford it, a doctor come to the family home if you have a sick child at 9 o'clock at night. I don't know the situation in other states but I do know where I live that sometimes they do have GPs you can sort of visit almost like a normal GP in a hospital setting to take the pressure off emergency services and people going in there, but when you say that they've cut after hours services, I mean, I don't have a problem, necessarily, with these people coming to the home, but you'd hope that they were qualified.

**MARLES:** And nor do I, and it's not about saying that home services of this kind shouldn't exist. That's not my point.

What I am saying is that be it attending after hours services or using a service of this kind it is meeting a demand for the provision of medical services not during normal work hours. If after hours services are being cut it leaves no options but for people to be able to use this service.

The experience that our family had this week, last night, was a service that was completely over run, and that's the issue here.

**HOST:** OK, we are going to go to the Prime Minister, as I mentioned, shortly, but these reports, as well, that the Australian Navy is following through with long-planned military exercises in the Pacific region. However, it has triggered a reaction from

China. Do you think we should have held off, given how sensitive everything is in the region and what's going on with North Korea?

**MARLES:** No, I think it's important that we continue our exercises as planned. This is *HMAS Adelaide*, which is the second of the LHDs, the large landing helicopter dock aircraft that we have. They need to do their exercises. They're doing invaluable work, working with other nations-

**HOST:** -OK, alright, we're just going to have to, I apologise, Richard, we're just going to have to interrupt you for a moment just to go to the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull.

**ENDS**