



**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP  
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE  
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**COALITION'S DEFENCE CREDIBILITY HAS LEFT THE BUILDING**

The Coalition will go to the next election offering their fifth defence minister in six years.

There is no doubt any credibility the Government has on national security leaves with Christopher Pyne.

There is also no doubt that people who take our national security seriously know Defence is a portfolio where long-term thinking and relationship-building are at a premium. Offering five Defence ministers in six years shows the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Government has utterly failed.

There is no doubt this Government has made bad defence industry choices. That's why the first Liberal Defence Minister said he didn't trust the Australian Government shipbuilder to build a canoe, and the Second Liberal Defence Minister sent our supply ships to be built overseas. That decision has led to at least 420 direct job losses in the shipbuilding industry, and Defence says there are as many as 300 more to come.

There is no doubt this is a Government that, even when they have made reasonable choices, has done so only after putting its internal politics first. That's why even though the Third Liberal Defence Minister chose a world-class partner to build Australia's submarines, they only did so after the decision was tossed around the Liberal party room as part of a leadership challenge.

There is no doubt this is a Government that has found ways to dud Australian industry even after they've managed to make a reasonable choice. That's why the Fourth Liberal Defence Minister, after promising before the 2016 election that more than 90 of the submarine work would be done in Australia, said after the election that only 60 per cent would be done here, eventually signed an agreement that provided no guarantee of Australian work at all.

There is no doubt this is a Government that sacrifices Australia's international relationships to bolster their own political interests. That's why their Foreign Minister said she wouldn't be able to work with New Zealand's government if Labour won an election; why their second Prime Minister damaged our relationship with China when

he was desperate to win the Bennelong by-election; and why their third Prime Minister did the same thing by raising the prospect of moving an embassy during the Wentworth by-election.

There is no doubt this is a government which has never taken Australia's national security seriously; has never put the country's interest ahead of their own political interest; and whose sorry time in government can't come to an end soon enough, even for their own ministers.

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Authorised by Noah Carroll, ALP, Canberra.