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**E&EO TRANSCRIPT  
TELEVISION INTERVIEW  
ABC - AFTERNOON BRIEFING  
WEDNESDAY, 23 OCTOBER 2019**

***SUBJECT/S: John Setka; Huang Xiangmo; ISIS Brides; Drought; Monash University research agreement.***

**PATRICIA KARVELAS:** I want to bring in the Deputy Labor Leader, Richard Marles now.

**RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY:** Good afternoon Patricia, how are you?

**KARVELAS:** Good. Labor has been trying to expel John Setka, but he says he's making this decision now. He's leaving you. You haven't expelled him. What do you make of that?

**MARLES:** Well, I think you summed it up pretty well in your introduction. The actions that John Setka has taken today are obviously in the face of what he sees as being the inevitable outcome of the process which Anthony Albanese put in place, and which would have seen a National Executive meet this Friday to consider John Setka's situation. I think this is a really significant moment. It's a significant moment in terms of defining the Labor Party as a values-based Labor Party, which stands up for values in respect of women, making sure that domestic violence has absolutely no place in what Labor is about. And Anthony Albanese, you know, he acted in relation to John Setka within the first two weeks of his leadership. It was a courageous step to take, it carried some risk, but he has pursued the course and it has resulted in Mr Setka's decision today. And the fact that he is no

longer in the Labor Party is fundamentally a great thing for the Labor Party and the message that we send to the Australian public as being a values-based party. I think it's also a very significant win for Anthony Albanese and his leadership and the character of that leadership.

**KARVELAS:** John Setka says the catalyst for resigning was Labor's decision to support free trade agreements with Hong Kong, Indonesia and Peru. Do you accept that there is real anger across the union movement over this and that he's expressing this?

**MARLES:** I don't think for a second that John Setka's move today has the slightest thing to do with the free trade agreements that Australia is entering into with Indonesia, Hong Kong and Peru. I think it has everything to do with the fact that the National Executive was going to be considering his situation this Friday. And the fact that he has made this decision, says what he saw as being the inevitable result of that, given his own conduct, and also what he saw his prospects ultimately as being in the courts. That's why John Setka has made his decision today, and that's what everybody completely understands in respect of all of this.

**KARVELAS:** Well John Setka says nothing has damaged the Party's reputation more than Anthony Albanese's leadership and his trashing the traditional values of Labor and the union movement. Has that view become a prevalent view in the Party? Because he's not the only one articulating this view.

**MARLES:** I think respect for women, making it absolutely clear that as a Party we abhor any form of domestic violence is completely central to Labor's message. And what Anthony did, within the first two weeks of his leadership, is make clear that the Party he would lead would be one which had values at its core, and those values at its core. Now, it was a difficult and courageous decision to take the steps, and Anthony Albanese did in relation to John Setka. But he has pursued the course, and it has led to the outcome today. And that is a great thing for the Labor Party which Anthony leads. And I think it sends a message that; we present ourselves to the Australian people as a Party based on values. And if there are difficult steps that we need to do, to manifest those values and to give expression to them, we're not going to be shy about doing that, and that's certainly what Anthony did in pursuing the course that he did.

**KARVELAS:** The Minister, Christian Porter has put out a statement saying will Mr Albanese and Labor continue to take funds from the CFMMEU. Will you?

**MARLES:** Ultimately, this was about one individual in relation to the matters that I have described. And it was about making very clear where Labor stood in relation to values about respect for women, values in respect of domestic violence. Now, Christian Porter—

**KARVELAS:** But you're still going to take money from the CFMEU aren't you?

**MARLES:** Christian Porter will want to make this about a whole lot of other issues. And it's ultimately not about the union, it is about the behaviour of John Setka, and that's the - that is the issue that Anthony has pursued and that is the outcome that we have today. And really, what Christian Porter is doing is trying to put a red herring in this, which doesn't surprise me given how significant a moment this is, in the way in which Labor is present itself to the Australian people.

**KARVELAS:** You say that, but the union hasn't removed him as leader, the membership hasn't removed him as leader of the Victorian CFMEU. So by taking funds you're taking funds from a union that continues to put him in this position of power, don't you?

**MARLES:** Well, ultimately John Setka's relationship to the CFMEU is a matter for it. What we get to determine, as the Australian Labor Party is John Setka's relationship to the ALP. And it has been about his behaviour and his conduct and the sense of it being inconsistent with the values of the Labor Party. Now, the CFMEU is a much bigger organisation than just one person, and so, too, you know, slate home to the CFMEU - you know, to define it in terms of John Setka would not be correct. And that obviously is what Christian Porter is seeking to do. But let's get back to the main point here, Patricia; Anthony Albanese saw that there was a wrong and a problem here in terms in the way in which John Setka was behaving and what that did in terms of its potential to affect the way in which the Labor Party was perceived within the Australian community. The fact that this was conduct inconsistent with values which are dearly held by the Labor Party in the face of a difficult situation, he stayed the course with courage and we get to this outcome today- and that is a big win.

**KARVELAS:** Let's change the topic to something very much in your area, although you're the Deputy Leader, so kind of everything is in your area. Should the Department of Defence be forced to release these reports into the culture of the armed forces that have been essentially kept under wraps by the Government?

**MARLES:** Well, I think - ultimately what is really important here is that the Australian public

has confidence in our Defence Force; in the way it runs and absolutely in terms of the culture which underpins it. And when there are questions which are raised publicly about that, it is incumbent on the Defence Force- but the Government to make sure that it is doing everything within its power to make sure that the Australian public can have a sense of confidence about the way in which the ADF operates and the culture which underpins it. So ultimately that is a matter for the Government, but it is critically important that the Government is doing everything it can- and transparency should be the mantra which guides its behaviour to make sure that the Australian public can have the sense of confidence that we all want to have in the Australian Defence Force and the culture which underpins it.

**KARVELAS:** Do you see the failure to disclose these reports as evidence of the creeping culture of secrecy within the Government?

**MARLES:** I think there is a creeping culture of secrecy- I think it's more than creeping. I think from day one, you know, this secrecy has characterised the way in which this Government has gone about its business, and I think the way in which the Prime Minister actually has gone about his business both as a Minister and now as Prime Minister, and it is a concern. You know, the way in which we build confidence in the ADF, but in Government action and in the institutions of Government is actually to have transparency and allow people to see for themselves, and I definitely think that really- going right back to 2013, you know, when we all remember the on water matters, being the way in which this Government went about its engagement with that issue; that secrecy has been the characteristic of how this Government has gone about its business.

**KARVELAS:** Chinese billionaire, Huang Xiangmo's visa was cancelled on the advice of ASIO, as you know, says the decision by the Australian Taxation Office to seek freezing orders for his Australian assets is politically motivated. What do you make of that?

**MARLES:** Ultimately it's impossible for me to comment. I mean, Huang Xiangmo and his relationship to the ATO in respect of his taxes is precisely that, it's a relationship between him and the ATO. And this is where, you know, those processes should play out- properly- but it's impossible for me to comment on that.

**KARVELAS:** Just on this ISIS brides issue; there's really toughening rhetoric by the Government in relation to the women- well, not so much the children but the women- the fact that some women could be radicalised and pose a threat if they're brought back. What

do you make on what Peter Dutton has said on this?

**MARLES:** What's important here, I think, is we have a very sober assessment of the situation, which absolutely takes into account the circumstances- the horrendous circumstances- which the children particularly find themselves in; in terms of being taken to this place in the first instance and now being in these camps and facilities in northern Syria now. But it also needs to be a sober assessment based on the safety of the Australian public. That sober assessment is best provided by our national security agencies and ultimately that's our view. The Government has been furnished because of a lot of cooperation from Labor with a whole range of tools which the national security agencies say they need, including temporary exclusion orders, to deal with people in these circumstances. The advice about the individual concerned, the precise situation that they are in, is the advice which should be listened to and in a way the less rhetoric that surrounds it the better, I think.

**KARVELAS:** Just finally, and I know drought isn't your portfolio but Labor's been putting intense pressure on the Government on the issue of drought. The National Farmers' Federation talking about exit payments for farmers that really have long-term sustainability issues continuing to be farmers. Why has Labor rejected this proposal? I mean, isn't it just a realistic, sober analysis of the long-term prospects for some of these farmers?

**MARLES:** I think Joel Fitzgibbon has made an important point today in relation to the NFF's proposal about actually the need to be coming up with plans which enable people to keep pursuing farming and that really goes to the heart of this issue. The Government has been frankly sitting idly by in my view whilst one of the worst droughts on record has played out. And their response to the drought, in terms of coming up with a coherent drought plan, has been absolutely woeful and completely pathetic. And that has been the view held by a number of groups within this area who are crying out for some kind of drought plan from the Government. And the fact that we sit here today, in October, with the prospect that Tenterfield is going to run out of water by Christmas and the Government really has no answer at all as to what to do with that, I think is a really big concern.

**KARVELAS:** I acknowledge that this is a question that you may not know a lot about but it's just breaking right now; and it's exclusive in the Nine papers, and it's a report that Monash University has struck a \$10 million research agreement with a Chinese state-owned aerospace company that was last week linked to a global espionage campaign. On face value is that something you'd be concerned about?

**MARELS:** I mean, you were right in the introduction, I don't know about the specifics of that, and the detail here matters. You know, there is a lot of research now which is undertaken between universities in Australia and entities within China and indeed I think it is right to say today; China is the largest research partner by volume of papers published that Australian universities have. But it is important that all of this is being done within proper constraints and within ultimately constraints which deal with questions of our own national security and our own sovereignty. Now, I don't know the specifics of this particular issue, but it's important that the way in which universities go about that are consistent with those principles.

**KARVELAS:** Richard Marles, thank you so much for joining us.

**MARLES:** Thanks, Patricia.

***ENDS***

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.