

**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
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SUBJECT/S: Shipbuilding, Future Submarines, Labor Party.

DAVID BEVAN: Richard Marles, Shadow Minister for Defence and Deputy Labor Leader, thank you for coming in.

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: Pleasure to be here David.

BEVAN: Can you tell our listeners is Federal Labor committed to keeping the full cycle maintenance of the Collins class submarines in Adelaide?

MARLES: Well we're committed to making sure that every job that is currently here stays here –

BEVAN: That's not the same is it?

MARLES: The question about full cycle docking is really one that's impossible to answer from Opposition because it's future, how it's managed in the context of the build-up of future subs, I mean that is all information which rests in the

hands of the Government and we don't have it.

BEVAN: Well hang on, Mark Butler, Penny Wong and Peter Malinauskas don't think so.

MARLES: Well the point here is really this, we're building the next generation of Australian submarines here in Adelaide. The single biggest risk to be able to do that on time is having the qualified people to do it and so everybody who's working on a submarine right now is absolutely precious and so the real point here is the Government has to be giving people a sense of certainty and I completely understand the anxiety that people working on the full cycle docking now in the Collins would feel about their future job security. The Government needs to be providing certainty to them but it's also critical in terms of the future of building submarines in this country and here in Adelaide that we have an assurance that we're not going to lose any skills and that's the question.

BEVAN: Richard Marles the question is this, is Federal Labor committed to keeping the full cycle maintenance of the Collins class submarines in Adelaide? And you can't give me a straight answer.

MARLES: Well it's impossible to answer that question with the information that we have as the Opposition but I come back to that –

BEVAN: So what are we to make of your colleagues your South Australian Federal Labor colleagues who say it is possible to give an answer.

MARLES: Well they are doing what they should do and that's advocating on behalf of jobs here and it's right to be doing that. I mean the way in which this Government has managed for all the hoopla, the way in which this Government has managed the flow of work through Osborne has been appalling. We're seeing people lose their jobs out there right now and through the course of this year, I can well understand the sense of anxiety that people who are working on the full cycle docking at the moment have about the future of their employment

and that's why the Government needs to be providing certainty in relation to this right now –

BEVAN: Are you saying it's possible that it is a better policy decision to shift that work to WA, that is a possibility?

MARLES: I'm saying I don't have the information in front of me, I don't have the question in relation to the timing that has been proposed by the Government because they're not being frank about that and I don't have and this is really the critical issue, that ultimately is going to determine the future of people's jobs here in Adelaide. I don't have a sense of how the future submarines are progressing, but let me just finish that point David, that future submarines have slipped by 10 years in the last six, that is of enormous concern when we're talking about the building of the 12 new submarines here in Adelaide we're talking about ultimately thousands of jobs but when will they emerge and it's in that context that a question around full cycle docking is being considered. If the truth of the matter is that the future submarine is going to continue to slip behind and full cycle docking would see a loss of jobs here in Adelaide, well then that's a bad thing, unquestionably that is a bad thing and so what needs to be provided right now by the Government is an assurance to everyone who is working on full cycle docking now that their jobs are secure and we support that, every single one and we need to know that they are building up the skills and the personnel here in Adelaide so that the job can be done in the future to construct Australia's 12 new submarines.

BEVAN: So Butler, Wong, Malinauskas they all say this full cycle work should be kept here because that's the best place to do it, they say it makes policy sense, there is a difference here. You Federal Labor's Defence spokesman say I don't have all the information, is that fair?

MARLES: Well I don't have all the information and what I don't know and what the country doesn't know –

BEVAN: See you don't agree with them, they're being parochial. You're saying to make a policy decision because you're the Federal spokesman, to make a policy decision, I need more information.

MARLES: I'm definitely saying that, but I'm saying more than that. There are some things you can see from where we sit in opposition right now. Point one, biggest constraint on whether or not we're going to be able to build the future submarines on time is the appropriate skills and having enough people who have them. Right now we've got people who work on submarines here in Adelaide, the idea that any of them would lose their job it makes absolutely no sense at all and I think that is one of the points that Mark and Penny and Peter are all making. They cannot lose their jobs, if those people are walking out the door because there's going to be a shift of work from here to WA that makes no sense at all. But the question on that is ultimately determined by; when are we talking about in terms of a shift and we don't know the answer yet.

BEVAN: And you've got an open mind about whether it should be done in WA?

MARLES: But I don't have an open mind on the question of whether or not jobs, but let me finish. I don't have an open mind on the question of whether or not assurances should be given to everybody who is currently working here on a submarine that their job is secure because those skills and those people are absolutely precious and if we lose any of them then what that says to me is that we're not going to be able to build our future submarines on time.

BEVAN: You don't want anybody to lose their job but you're open on the question of whether the work should be done in WA?

MARLES: Well it flows from the question of whether or not future submarines are on time and right now they are not. But here's the other point to make, these are ultimately, the people who do have possession of this information are the Government and they need to be giving assurances to people here in Adelaide and Osborne that their jobs are secure and right now that's not

happening and I completely understand the sense of anxiety that people at Osborne have.

CLARKE: Richard Marles, you're also the Deputy Labor Leader, we will put to you in just a moment we've cleared it with your minders out there to keep you for a little while. We've got to get to the news now but the front page of The Australian is saying well one Labor veteran thinks that your party is losing touch with voters; we'll talk to you about that in just a moment.

(BREAK)

BEVAN: Richard Marles, thanks for sticking around.

MARLES: It's a pleasure David, good to be here.

BEVAN: Just to explore this, the Treasury spokesman for Labor Jim Chalmers, is going to help launch this book later on in the week which has been written by Nick Dyrenfurth, I hope I pronounced his name correctly. He's Executive Director of the John Curtin Research Centre. Now his book comes at a time when Labor is examining the disaster of the last Federal Election and one of the things he is calling for is a working class quota system to weed out staffers, union officials and apparatchiks from ALP parliamentary teams. Do you think he's onto something?

MARLES: Well the way you describe it firstly is correct, May 18 was a disaster by any estimation and we are going through a process of thinking about where the party is at and we've got a review which is coming down in the next couple of weeks and it, I assure you will be searingly honest and we will look at all the lessons that we need to take from May 18 to put us in a position to contest the next election. I think what is right is that somehow at the last election we found ourselves speaking to a much narrower group of people than we need to be and you know a couple of weeks after the election actually there was the memorial service for Bob Hawke and it was an incredible event at the Sydney

Opera House but it really reminded us of what Labor looked like and how we went about things at our very best and one of the clear messages to me at least that came across looking at those old pictures of Bob was he spoke to the broadest range of Australians. After the election I did go to a place called Moranbah which was a couple of hours west of Mackay in Queensland in the heart of the coal mining district and there's no doubt that there was a real sense amongst the people there that we were not talking to them and that that we had in our messaging and in a way in which I guess we identified that the people who had been third generation coal miners who saw themselves as Labor through and through nevertheless didn't see us being on their side at that moment. So I think it really is important that we look at how we make sure that we are broadening our message as much as possible.

BEVAN: Using an example of Bob Hawke, is that a case of look he had enough credit in the bank with ordinary working class Australians so that if he wanted to go out on a particular issue they would wear it from him. To give you an example, I can imagine it's a bit presumptuous of me to speak on behalf of the dead but I imagine Bob Hawke would have had pretty strong views about climbing up Uluru, but if he came out and took a stand on something like that a lot of the people who were climbing up that rock might have listened to Bob Hawke because they would've thought look he's looked after us previously. Do you see where I'm coming?

MARLES: Yeah no, I think -

BEVAN: Is that what you're saying?

MARLES: Well I think, I say a few things I think Bob, people who saw themselves as being working class people who got up every day put on high-vis got dirty came home they identified with him and identified with the Labor Party and our party was built on those people. Right now a number still do, but it's clear that a number don't and it was very clear about that in both WA and Queensland. But I think when Bob was leading us at our peak you know that we

got all of that vote and you make a point though in terms of that the example that you give, one of the features I think of the Hawke Keating Government was they made arguments you know, from the position that they are in, they made the case for a better Australia. Now I think we were trying to do that during the last election as well But we do need to work out how we go about this in a way which is just speaking to the broadest range of people that we can and which very much includes people who identify themselves as being working class voting for us. I might say you know this has been a perennial issue, you know the kind of call that you see on the front page of The Australian today you know really ever since Whitlam who was cut from a different cloth you know a child of a public servant university educated went on to lead the party ever since then we've had calls of a similar nature. It's important that the gene pool in parliament is as broad as it can be within our Federal Caucus, I'd make the observation right now I think it's as broad as it's been since I've been around.

BEVAN: So you don't think there is a need for a working class quota system to weed out staffers, Union Officials and apparatchiks from the ALP parliamentary team.

MARLES: Well as somebody who's got a background in the union movement I'd at least for me it form part of a very broad education especially the most broadening experience I've had I'd say that, but I think it is important that we continue to make sure that we've got the broadest gene pool possible, but when I look at, when I look at our Leader Anthony Albanese I think that this is a person who grew up in public housing son of a single mother he did not come from well-to-do means at all, went to the local Catholic school and you know he is the person leading us right.

BEVAN: But I'm not sure this guy's talking about Anthony Albanese, I think he might be talking about staffers and apparatchiks. For instance we all know that you would expect that Union Officials who make their way into ALP and into parliament would represent the working class, but we all know that the top echelons of the Union Movement are filled by university graduates. Somebody

who's working for people in a Union where people get their hands dirty it's probably done a law degree hasn't actually cleaned the toilets or worked on the factory floor. Now we know that that's the case and I think that's what this guy's talking about.

MARLES: Yeah I think we can get hung up on people's histories, again you know it is important that there is diversity but that point the specific point about who's running the Union Movement again is one that's been made since Bob Hawke was the president of the ACTU. I mean Bob's alternative career other than going through the Union Movement was to become an academic –

BEVAN: He was a Rhodes Scholar –

MARLES: He came off a Rhodes scholarship going into the Union Movement, and from my story is I went through university I did a law degree I became a legal officer at a union, but in the process I spent a lot of time at the Transport Workers Union with truck drivers I got to know -

BEVAN: So you never drove a truck

MARLES: No I didn't drive a truck, my background is in Law. But I learned a lot about what it is to drive a truck and I'm not saying it's the same thing as doing it by any means but it was a very broadening experience, and you know I think those things were very important for me. But what matters is that we you know we do actually have truck drivers in the Parliament I mean Glenn Sterle who's a Senator from Western Australia he drove trucks from Perth to Darwin so we've actually got those people, Alex Gallagher who's a Senator from this state, same deal. There is a broad range of experience but I think what matters is that as we go to elections we are representing the interests of working people and middle class people obviously as well and the people who are in a working class situation and identify in that way also identify with the Labor Party, now I think it is right to say that we need to be doing that better and we had an issue with that at the last election and we will be looking at ways in which we can do that better

going forward and it's really important that we solve that issue and the review is going to be really important in relation to that.

BEVAN: Richard Marles thanks for your time.

MARLES: Thanks David.

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.