

**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY
SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
TELEVISION INTERVIEW
SKY NEWS
THURSDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2019**

SUBJECT/S: ALP Election Review

TOM CONNELL, HOST: Richard Marles, so Labor seemingly had no plan for Scott Morrison took over from Malcolm Turnbull. No election campaign committee and seemingly a lot of people had no idea what was coming. Was the party complacent?

RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY: I don't think we were complacent. I think what is clear coming out of the review though is that there were a lot of messages, they were not communicating a clear message. There was many policies and they caused a sense of anxiety amongst a number about the way in which we might handle the economy. And so, a clear lesson that comes from the review going forward is you can have ambitious policy- and we should and it can be bold- but it needs to be simple and needs to be clear, and it needs to seek the confidence of the Australian people about our handling of the economy and that's certainly the lesson that we take out of this.

CONNELL: So the review as you mentioned said, yes you can get bold policies but you need fewer of them. Are we talking about a smaller target at the next election? That's what Labor's going to have.

MARLES: I think actually it's less about being big or small in terms of target, and clearer in terms of message. We need to be able to tell a story about who we are and about the way in which we would seek to run the country and I think in the midst of all the policies that we put forward at the last election, it was difficult to tell that story clearly, and as a result have a very clear strategic focus about how we conducted the campaign. I mean, that really is the message going forward and we need to win in a sense, the confidence and an economic licence from the Australian people around their confidence about us handling the economy- and that's a critical ingredient in terms of winning a federal election and to do that you need to have a very clear, simple message and that's what we've got to have going forward.

CONNELL: But the more policies you've got the bigger you are as a target. Doesn't it make sense that if you're having fewer policies in an agenda you still call bold but fewer policies, that's a smaller target even if it's not a small target.

MARLES: Well I understand the frame that you're trying to construct. I don't actually think that is the frame through which we see it. I think what it's about is being able to tell a story and having a very clear narrative of what we're about. The number of policies that we had got in the way of us being out to tell that story.

CONNELL: Any particular policies you think got in the way, in a big way?

MARLES: Look, we've got to go through that process and we've made it clear that all the policies are now up for review. But what is clear is that we need to have the confidence of the Australian people and of working people. I mean one of the things that's really comes through in the review is that we had people on lower incomes who were swinging against us and they are the ones who are most susceptible to economic downturns. They're the ones who feel the pinch first and understandably they're the ones who are probably most sensitive to their perception of how any given government is going to be handling the economy, and they're our people in a way. They're the people whose confidence we must win. And so, things seem to be a safe pair of hands when it comes to the economy is actually a very Labor thing to be. And it's what successful Labor Governments past have been and that's what we need to make sure that we project at the next election- and you do that by having a very simple and a very clear message and I think that's the critical lesson that comes out of this review.

CONNELL: Okay, the review talks about climate change. It shy's away from specific policy recommendations but clearly talks about holding the line on climate change. What would that mean in the emissions target realm? Not a huge paring back as some such as Joel Fitzgibbon has suggested.

MARLES: Well again, the specifics of that we will work through. What the review says and I think it's right; climate change remains a critical challenge for the global economy but for the Australian economy as well. We have had a consistent view for a long time and it's very much part of our values- that we are going to be a party that will act on climate change; that accepts the science behind it; and forms the basis upon which we will develop reason and rational policy. But equally- and this is an important part of it; coal and fossil fuel will continue to play a part in the Australian economy for a long time to come. Even in a context of climate change policy. And people who work within those industries must be valued and must see us valuing them. That has got to be a clear message that we give going forward and one which the review makes clear during the last election was a message that was not clear and that was not heard by many within the community and so that is something that we've got to make sure that we get right going forward and that we value and we identify with-

CONNELL: But what does that actually mean?

MARLES: Let me say I -

CONNELL: What did you want to- yeah. Let's look at Liddell, that it was closed down. What does actually mean in the sense of, what are you saying there? What would you say about the imminent closure of the Liddell?

MARLES: Well, without going into that I suppose the point I make is this; I'm guilty of saying some pretty clumsy comments myself during the course of this year. And they were tone deaf in terms of their valuing the work that people within the coal industry do. Now, I don't think we can afford to make that mistake going forward. I think we need to say to people who work within the coal industry you're playing a really important part in the Australian economy, that we value the work that you do, that even in a context of dealing with climate change you will be a valued part of the economy for a long time to come. Talking about metallurgical coal for example, it's an input to steel which will be there for you know, for the foreseeable future.

CONNELL: How does that marry into talking about climate change? Because all the reports we're getting suggest we need to leave coal in the ground. You're saying we need to not be afraid of talking about coal was a positive. How do you marry those two up? Would it be good if coal in Australia including in the Galilee Basin was ultimately not all mined?

MARLES: Coal forms a critical part of the Australian economy and it will do for a very long time to come. When you're talking about metallurgical coal what it is as an input to steel. It's actually an input to a whole lot of products which are central to actually dealing with climate change. Wind turbines are made from the product of metallurgical coal.

CONNELL: What about thermal coal? And for example, those reserves in Galilee Basin? Beyond Adani, would it be good if all of that were mined? Good for Australian jobs, good for the economy- full stop.

MARLES: Even in respect of thermal coal and thermal coal exports, they will continue to play a critical part in the Australian economy for decades to come and the path that they play needs to be valued by us- and we do. And we need to make sure that we're clear about that and you can be clear about that in a context where we are consistent about seeking to deal with the issue of climate change. You know after the election, one of the first things I did was actually go to coal mining districts in Central Queensland. I went to Moranbah; a coal mining town. And what was clear in visiting there is not so much the detail, people were so much concerned with the detail of the policy and the sorts of questions that you're asking, but it was simply a question of; did we as a party value them? And they had a feeling a sense that we had not valued them in the context that they were. But, can I just say Tom, that is a really important point. And the answer is we do value them and we need to. And that's got to be central to our message going forward.

CONNELL: But how do you respond then to the fact that yes if all the coal in the Galilee was exploited that would be great for Australian jobs and the economy but it all would also go against some of the warnings about whether or not we should leave coal in the ground.

MARLES: Well, I come back to what I've said; coal even in the context of dealing with climate change and from reducing Australia's emissions, coal- and thermal coal- will continue to be a part of the economy for a long time to come. While it remains a part of the economy it is something that we must value and indeed those who work in it, we need to celebrate. And that's an important part of how we deal with this going forward. As Anthony Albanese said last week, in his speech in Perth, the resources sector, mining is actually central to our response to climate change. There are a whole lot of-

CONNELL: Yes on one hand here it can be-

MARLES: Our products that we develop-

Inaudible

CONNELL: Yes okay. I want to get one more question before we go. Bill Shorten's unpopularity was singled out, not the whole reason, but a factor does that make it very hard for him to ever lead the party again in the future?

MARLES: Well, for the record I think we could have won the election with Bill as Leader. But what the review makes clear is that this was a complex landscape. There were many factors. I actually think that there is a degree to which at the last election we've been a very unified team and we were going to win that election or lose that election.

CONNELL: So he's not unelectable?

MARLES: Well it is to Bill's credit that we had that unity and we've been really going about things since the election, I think genuinely not from the point of view of trying to apportion individual blame but rather accepting collective responsibility, which I accept my part of. I made my point that I think we could have won the election with Bill. But I also think going forward if the conclusions in respect to Bill, you know, fall part of this review. But if we're looking at the lessons that we need to take out of the review going forward obviously you know this is the least significant part of the report. I actually think the main game is in relation to how we message going forward how we present our policies and how we tell a story which will enable us to be elected at the next election in 2022.

CONNELL: Not an easy day for Labor. We appreciate your time on this day, Richard Marles. Thank you.

MARLES: Thanks.

ENDS

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.