



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

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
TELEVISION INTERVIEW  
ABC BREAKFAST  
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***SUBJECT/S: China.***

**MICHAEL ROWLAND:** And for more on the story, we're joined by Deputy Opposition Leader, Richard Marles from Canberra. Richard Marles, good morning. What do you make of this?

**RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY:** Well, I think it is a very serious allegation. I think it's very important that we actually hear from the Government today in relation to this. For our part, Anthony Albanese has sought a briefing from the relevant agencies as soon as possible. We obviously want to understand everything that we can know about this. But on the face of it, and what's in the public domain now, this is a very, very serious matter.

**ROWLAND: Okay,** what does it say to you about the extent of Chinese attempts to interfere in our democracy?

**MARLES:** It's hard to answer that without getting the full briefings, and I'd prefer to do that before walking down that path. But it's obviously very important that we have a democracy which is free from foreign interference. Where we're able to assert our own sovereignty in the context of our democracy, and that's what we need to be assured of, and that's what the Australian people need to be made confident about, and that's why it's really important that the Government make some statement in respect of this as soon as possible.

**ROWLAND:** ASIO has spoken in a rare public statement. The spy agency has said, and I quote, "Hostile foreign interference is posing a real threat to national security." Do you agree with that?

**MARLES:** Well, I mean, that's ASIO speaking, and so, I accept what ASIO is saying. And that's a very significant statement indeed, that's been made by ASIO in relation to these allegations. But we actually need to hear from the Government itself. It's important that the Prime Minister and the relevant Ministers are making a statement in relation to this. There will be limits to what they can say, of course, but they need to be giving the Australian people a sense of confidence that

we do have a democracy that is free from foreign interference. Now, I'm sure that that is the case. But given that the allegations here are so significant, given that ASIO has felt the need, as you said, to make a very rare statement, it's very important that we're hearing from the Government today. And as I said earlier, we'll be seeking a relevant briefing from the relevant agencies as soon as possible.

**ROWLAND:** Another part of the Nine story was from Wang Liqiang, the former Chinese spy, who has revealed the various ways the Chinese regime interferes in countries like Australia. He's now seeking asylum here in Australia. Should he get it, in your view?

**MARLES:** Well, he's made an asylum claim, and Australia has clear laws around that. What ought to happen now is that his asylum request should be assessed against those laws, and that obviously goes to the question of whether or not he would be the subject of persecution were he to return to his home. That's the basis on which asylum is given or not given. And so, now that he's made that claim, it's important that that plays through in accordance with the rule of law in Australia.

**ROWLAND:** The Chinese Government insists this gentleman is nothing more than a convicted fraudster. Should the Australian Government investigate those claims?

**MARLES:** It's important that we understand everything that we need to in relation to him. That's what occurs when someone makes a claim for asylum. Their claim and their position and their story is tested. But Australia is a rule of law country. There are laws around how asylum is assessed and how claims for asylum are assessed, and that's what should now occur in relation to him.

**ROWLAND:** So there's clearly something of concern here. You're waiting for a statement from the Government, and given all of that and given the explosive revelations, when former Prime Minister Paul Keating says, as he said last week, that the media is being hysterical about China, that security agencies have phobias about China, is he slightly off the mark?

**MARLES:** In my experience, the advice that I've received in the past from security agencies in relation to China has been good advice. I might also say that the advice I've received from other parts of government about our relationship with China, and in many respects, the opportunity that they present in respect of China, is also good advice. I think what's important here is that all that advice is brought together in a reconciled way, and I actually think that has been the issue in terms of how the Government has managed the relationship, and I think how Governments have actually managed the relationship over a long period of time now. You get good advice from security agencies. You get good advice from other quarters as well. The relationship is a big relationship. What's required is a reconciled plan in the context of that advice.

**ROWLAND:** What's the best step forward now for Australia's relationship with China? It's vitally important to us, economically. You for instance in a recent speech to Beijing's Foreign Studies University called for "closer military cooperation with the Chinese". Do you still think that that is a good idea?

**MARLES:** What I think that we need to be doing is, we're engaging with China. We clearly need to continue to engage with China, and as long as that is the case, then there is a space to try and build whatever trust we can from whatever base we have. Right now, there are already military operations or exercises, I should say, which exist between Australia and China. And the purpose

of those is to try and build trust. It's actually one place across the breadth of the relationship where there is a little bit of trust, and that's why I feel that that is something that should be leveraged. But we're obviously going to continue to have a relationship with China. It's very important to our nation. But what we need to do is actually have a way forward. And the Government needs to be able to articulate, if you like, what's the guiding philosophy which underpins our relationship with China? And right now, I struggle to see what that is in terms of the way in which the Government behaves.

**ROWLAND:** Alright, those are questions to the Trade Minister, Simon Birmingham when he joins us on the show a bit later on. Richard Marles, thank you for joining us this morning.

**MARLES:** Thanks, Michael.

**ENDS**

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.