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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT**  
**TELEVISION INTERVIEW**  
**SKY NEWS**  
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***SUBJECTS: The US backing Australia; Trade with China; Government's Technology Roadmap.***

**TOM CONNELL, HOST:** Joining me live now is Deputy Labor Leader Richard Marles. Thanks very much for your time. Just to start off with, does it feel good to have the backing of the US in this particular argument?

**RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY:** Well it's important Tom, that we do get to the origins of the outbreak of the coronavirus and for me, I think that's less about an issue of blame as it is about understanding. We really need to know as a global community how this virus jumped into humanity and its origins so that we can understand it better and hopefully deal with this in the future because the sorts of pandemics that we've seen in the last few decades and what will threaten us going forward is those transmissions from animals to humans. And it really matters to understand exactly how it's occurred, when, who patient zero is- getting the early virus material. That's what researchers need. So this inquiry really is very important. It's important for China actually but it's very important for the world in understanding this so that it doesn't happen again.

**CONNELL:** The China trade spat that has resulted though, does it highlight- are we too reliant, too interlinked with China in an economic sense?

**MARLES:** I think what COVID has done is highlighted a whole lot of frailties in our economy and the need for us to be thinking about how we make ourselves a more resilient economy in the future. And I think that applies in terms of our trading relationships with China, but not just with China- around the world. But it also applies to the kinds of economic activity that we undertake in Australia and perhaps more significantly, the economic activity that we no longer undertake in Australia. Since 2013 we've seen a really significant deindustrialization in this country. We don't make cars here anymore. And that is because of this Government- that's what this Government has done. The failure to maintain significant manufacturing in that way, I think, has been exposed by COVID in terms of a whole lot of areas around the resilience of our economy and making sure that we are able to be self-reliant in a moment of crisis, such as this.

**CONNELL:** Yeah, well I know, the car industry of course was a big one for your particular region. Just had reaction coming in from one of your colleagues, Joel Fitzgibbon though, broadly on this debate, accusing the Morrison Government of demonising China. Do you agree with that?

**MARLES:** The relationship with China has been going in a bad direction way before COVID-19 turned up. So let's be clear; the call for an independent inquiry into the origins of coronavirus is quite right and we support it. It's what should be happening. But well before that, this relationship has been going in the wrong direction. And I think it's been hard to really get a clear sense of direction from the Government about what the underlying principles that guide philosophies in terms of how they are relating to China. And too often we don't see or hear from our Foreign Minister or even our Prime Minister in relation to the rise of China- there is real leadership missing at the highest level. And instead the relationship seems to be defined by the fringes of the Government and the Governments MPs. And I think that is certainly not helping the issue. It's a very complex; it's a very serious relationship. It's one where we clearly have a significant engagement economically. It's one where if you want to walk down the path and try and put a black or a white hat on China, you are going to get the answer wrong. This is complex. And what it means is that you've got to build relationships and you've got to have some ballast in there so that you can deal with the difficult moments- and this is one of them. And it's really important that that relationship is deep so that we can give difficult messages when that's required- and it's being required in other areas, such as South China Sea. But in a moment such as this, when we're calling for an independent inquiry we need the ballast in the relationship in order to do that. I think that's one of the issues that has played out right now.

**CONNELL:** The Victorian Government of course has signed up to the Belt and Road Initiative that's being rolled out by the Chinese Government despite plenty of concerns, not just from the Federal Government but from security experts about what really is behind that particular initiative. Are you comfortable with that Victorian action?

**MARLES:** Well, I'm not going to give Victoria advice. They can manage the State themselves. From our point of view, we've always thought that the Belt and Road Initiative needs to be taken on a case-by-case basis and we do need to be proceeding with some caution in terms of how we approach this. But there may be particular projects that stack up and so Chinese investment makes sense. But it is a case of looking at each case on its merits-

**CONNELL:** But aren't you either in or out? You're either part of it or you're not? Yes, you don't have to be part of every single project. But Australia is not. The Victorian Government is. Isn't it just a question of whether that's the right decision?

**MARLES:** I think in terms of how the nation goes forward, in relation to Belt and Road, it's completely possible to do this on a case-by-case basis and to look at the Chinese investment in infrastructure in that way. And we've actually been critical of the Federal Government in relation to some of the decisions they have made; if it was us, we wouldn't have been selling the Port of Darwin to Chinese interests in the way that the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Government allowed to happen. So we've been concerned about some of the decisions that the Government's made in that respect. And it really- it's a good example of the way in which we need to be approaching this. And that is on a case-by-case basis. States have always had an interest in promoting their own trade and investment. I mean, a number of States maintain missions around the world around trade and investment. So what they're going to do is, is what they are going to do. But what is important from a national point of view, we believe in relation to the Belt and Road initiative, is that we take this on a case-by-case basis and we proceed with caution.

**CONNELL:** Okay, but the Victorian Government though yesterday, refused to answer questions about whether any of the State's \$ 24 billion coronavirus rescue package would be borrowed from China, or assisted by China. Should that be transparent?

**MARLES:** Well again it's a matter for the Victorian Government. It is obviously-

**CONNELL:** But you can have a view on whether transparency is a good idea.

**MARLES:** Sure. And transparency is a good idea. And it's always best to be as transparent as one can be in terms of the way in which Government occurs and we very much support that principle. But I'll ultimately leave the answer to those questions to the State of Victoria.

**CONNELL:** The Government has released its 'Technology Roadmap' on reducing emissions. It seems like no new coal support for existing coal though. Is this a good approach?

**MARLES:** Well we haven't seen the document. We'll obviously give it due consideration when we're given the opportunity of having a look at it. To be honest, it makes me sad, Tom. It makes me sad because a lot of the ideas which seem to be in this maze of ideas that are in this morning's press, are the sorts of things that we were talking about a decade ago. And back in 2008, after the election of the Rudd Government, we were looking at carbon capture and storage back then. We were looking at renewable energy technologies back then. And the fact that it's now ten- more than ten years down the track and Angus Taylor has only just managed to stumble across these ideas now, really speaks to the fact that the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison Government have been a lost decade really in relation to Australia's energy trajectory. And that's a decade that's a critical moment in terms of the emissions story of this country- and the world. Now we'll have a good look at what they come forward with. There are a whole lot of ideas in here. Who knows whether they'll be able to land them. It is literally their nineteenth energy policy that they're having a crack at. So I don't think any of us can stand here with any sense of confidence that this is going to be any different to the last 18-

**CONNELL:** Okay, but if you look at what's been sketched out; big focus on hydrogen, gas as a sort of transition fuel, renewables obviously and as I said, coal. No indication here of new HELE coal fired power plants but existing ones, able to go on to reach possibly a full lifespan with some help as well. These broad parameters, we always talk about- you talk about the lost decade and maybe the Climate Wars. Could this be a few things that the Government agrees with Labor on?

**MARLES:** Well it is fair to say that all of those things that you've just articulated then which are reported in this morning's media are the kinds of things we were talking about back in 2008, when Labor came to power back then. So, you know there is a whole lot in here that we're obviously happy to have a look at. But writing a discussion paper of this kind- doing a few interviews which are really hard to follow on the part of Angus Taylor and then actually

landing a coherent policy is a very different matter. But we have been upfront about the fact that we want to work with the Government to try and resolve this and to have an agreement around a future energy policy for our nation. That's something that's really important and we stand ready to have that conversation again.

**CONNELL:** Deputy Labor Leader Richard Marles, thanks for your time this morning.

**MARLES:** Thanks, Tom.

***ENDS***

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.