

**RICHARD MARLES MP**  
**DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY**  
**SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE**  
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**E&OE TRANSCRIPT**  
**TELEVISION INTERVIEW**  
**SKY NEWS – AM AGENDA**  
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***SUBJECT/S: The Government's long awaited housing plan; Jobkeeper review; US Riots; Indigenous Australians; Donald Trump***

**TOM CONNELL, HOST:** Joining me live now, is Deputy Labor Leader Richard Marles. Thanks as ever for your time. We have just heard from your leader, not too happy with the Government's housing plan. I mean, you have always got to pick these parameters, why does Labor think the Government has got it so wrong on this?

**RICHARD MARLES, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY:** Good morning, Tom. Ultimately I think this is just a disappointment as you have just heard Albo and Jason say, there is a million people who work in this industry. It is one which is an industry which has been in crisis. 60,000 more homes were expected to be built in the country before COVID-19 struck and what this package that the government has announced today does, is only provide an additional 10,000 homes. So most of the problem is still unresolved and that means most of those working in the industry that have lost their jobs won't be getting them back. And in that sense, for all the hype that the Government has put forward about this package, it's not going to do the job that it's intended to do.

**CONNELL:** So that's your definitive statement on this, when we look down the track, there's going to be massive job losses in this sector on the Government's watch, you're pretty certain about that on the figures?

**MARLES:** Well, the figures speak for themselves. I mean, 160,000- 160,000 houses were expected to be built this year before COVID struck. And now the estimate is only 100,000. And by the Government's own admission, what this program is going to do, is see another 10,000 homes built. So it doesn't go anywhere near to meeting the gap, which has being created by COVID-19. And so, inevitably, we're going to see- well we're seeing significant job losses as a result of COVID-19. But the real point is that the package that the Government's announced is not going to cover that loss. And that's, that's really the problem here and there was a lot of hype that was going on and ultimately there is still going to be a whole lot of tradies who are unemployed after this package has come into being. I mean, I think the other point; it is very complex- as both Albo and Jason said, to do a renovation, you've got to stump up \$150,000 in the first instance, in terms of the value of the renovation, that you're looking at doing. And not a

single cent of this is ultimately going to social housing. So I don't think it's particularly well directed either. It's right for the Government to be in this space, and it is right for the Government to be looking at how it can do a stimulus in the homebuilding area, but this just doesn't cut the mustard.

**CONNELL:** All right, well, we'll see how it all unfolds- the Government saying it'll be short and targeted - we'll see how many jobs it does save. Turning to Jobkeeper; the Government also looking at reform here. Labor has been saying don't overpay people that are actually on usually less than the \$1,500 a fortnight. Would you be comfortable with a government scheme that gives more money to some people- it's a wage subsidy, but some get more, some get less- could that fail at a sort of fairness hurdle that Labor has often set.

**MARLES:** That's really been our point, that there's been a whole lot of people here who are actually getting more under this program than what we're getting in their employment prior to COVID arriving. And that obviously then speaks to a program which is not particularly well targeted. And then on the other hand there are those who have missed out completely, just because- if you look at the dnata workers because their company was sold to a particular owner a couple of years ago- had that sale not gone ahead, they'd be doing exactly the same work, that work would be diminished by exactly the same amount and they would be getting paid Jobkeeper but because of the sale they had nothing to do with, they miss out. So, you know, there are inequities in this system. And we've been pointing this out from the start. Again, it is right to have a wage subsidy and Labor was calling for that from the outset. In fact, the Government were resisting that initially. So we're pleased that Jobkeeper exists and it's important to make that point but from the get go, this has been poorly targeted. There have been a whole lot of inequities in it, and really, the schemes only been up and running a number of weeks now- the ink is barely dry and the Government is saying it needs a review. Well, they're right, it does need a review. But it-

**CONNELL:** There was always a review. Let's just clarify that; there was always this review- they had to get the program out really quickly. You're saying, well look, it's barely been going, they're reviewing it already. That was, that was built in?

**MARLES:** There's a whole lot of problems which they themselves are highlighting now. And before the ink is dry, which needs to be resolved and you know, our point all along is that; whilst it is right to be having a wage subsidy program, the program has been poorly targeted, and it needs fixing.

**CONNELL:** Alright, let's turn overseas. The former US Ambassador, Dennis Richardson, also prominent within our Public Service, says the riots in the US have been made worse by a President who relishes division. Do you agree?

**MARLES:** Well, Dennis is one of the smartest and most eminent people who have served Australian Governments over the years. So when Dennis speaks, I can assure you that everyone involved in government stops and listens. Look, I think as we look at what's been playing out in the US, it's impossible not to feel your heart breaking and a number of us have spent a bit of time in the US- visited it frequently. We've got many friends there. There's many- there's about 100,000 I think, American-Australians, it's a community which we don't speak a lot about, but they will have families back at home as well, who- and they'll be very worried. And you know, we just all hope that this goes in, in the right direction from here. I suppose what I see when I look at America, is a country which is wrestling with a whole lot of issues around race relations. And actually where my head ends up is that, you know, we have our own issues in this country which we need to be looking at. And as America wrestles with their issues, and we hope that's a step forward for them, actually, we need to take some lessons from that about making sure that we deal with our own issues in terms of indigenous Australia, closing the gap and making sure that we will ultimately get that done. It is 12 years since the Apology, the Stolen Generation, so many

of those gaps, including the levels of incarceration between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians remain stubbornly high. And it's really important that we deal with that.

**CONNELL:** Are you hoping that message then is sent to the Government via demonstration in Australia? That the people get out there and let the Australian Government know that there is an issue here too?

**MARLES:** I think this is a moment in America where they are calling out racism and seeking to improve race relations, you know that that is a laudable, very laudable objective. And it's been taken up, that voice around the world. And standing against racism is something that's important for people in this country to do as well. And we've, you know, we're not free from our own issues in relation to race relations -

**CONNELL:** Would that be important to do? Everyone remembers this moment on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Nobody wants what's happening now, obviously, in the US in Australia. But would it be a positive step, if people peacefully took to the streets in large numbers and sent a similar, much more peaceful message?

**MARLES:** I think if in a sense, we take inspiration, really from those peaceful protesters in the United States to stand against racism here and to be making the argument for better progress in the journey of providing equality between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, that would obviously be a very positive step. And I think that rather than kind of passing judgment on a country, which is clearly wrestling with very difficult issues, I think it's important that we, we look at what they're doing, look at our own problems and make sure we're addressing them here.

**CONNELL:** Surely it's good to look at the failures to. Has Donald Trump's leadership made the situation worse?

**MARLES:** I mean, Donald Trump is the democratically elected President in the United States. So I'll leave that commentary to people in the American system. As I say, what I look at is a country which is wrestling with the question of racism, and it's a question that needs to be wrestled with around the world and it needs to be wrestled here in Australia.

**CONNELL:** Deputy Labor Leader, Richard Marles. Thanks for your time today.

**MARLES:** Thanks, Tom.

**ENDS**

Authorised by Paul Erickson, ALP, Canberra.