



**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER
PROTECTION
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

**E&EO TRANSCRIPT
RADIO INTERVIEW
ABC NEWS RADIO WITH MARIUS BENSON
MONDAY, 31 AUGUST 2015**

SUBJECT/S: Peter Dutton's Border Farce; Cambodian refugee deal; Tony Abbott's royal commission; Abbott Government dysfunction

MARIUS BENSON: No confirmation or denial from the Government but would you be surprised if Cambodia was shutting the door?

RICHARD MARLES, SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION:

Well we have always heard consistently from Cambodia that they have never imagined that anything other than having a handful of people go to Cambodia and as was said in the introduction four people have gone at a price tag of \$40 million, this is an expensive joke and frankly we need to hear from the Minister today, our Minister about what is actually going on here and how does he reconcile the Australian Government ambitions for Cambodia with the comments which are coming out from Cambodia itself. Again Marius, one of our concerns here is we hear more from the Cambodian Government about what is going on with this plan than we have from our own and that is a massive problem.

REPORTER: Labor is often critical of the Government for not being forthcoming with information about its policy but do you differ on the policy itself? What would you be doing with the refugees in Nauru were you in power?

MARLES: Well our main concern with the circumstances of those who are in Nauru is precisely that the Government has failed to come up with an option for resolution of those people's fate. When we put in place the Regional Resettlement Arrangement we made it very clear and important that these people did not come to Australia, that there is no resettlement in Australia but we always accepted that Australia had an obligation to find resolution for these people. Now, if the best option that the Government can come up with is Cambodia then my concern is that they have basically given up in trying to find resolution for those people on Nauru and that is a massive problem indeed.

REPORTER: Do you have an alternative option? Does Labor have an alternative option for not leaving them forever in Nauru?

MARLES: We do have alternative plans, and they are hard Marius without being able to go into them in detail, is about engaging with the rest of the world and I mean, we are at a point in time when the rest of the world is experiencing its greatest humanitarian need since the Second World War and we have a Government who is effectively turned its back on the rest of the world, put a big wall around Australia and it shouldn't therefore be surprised that the rest of the world is turning its back on the Abbott Government and that is at the heart of why this Government is finding it so difficult to find a resolution for those people who are currently on Nauru.

REPORTER: Can I go to the issue of the Border Force and the press release that was issued on Friday which indicated that there might be random street checks of visa status, Peter Dutton has made it clear that that is not going to happen, that is not happening and will not happen and that is was a badly expressed press release, is that issue resolved?

MARLES: Well with the greatest of respect Marius, Peter Dutton hasn't made anything clear, in fact Peter Dutton has been missing in action, he has been in hiding and what we need to hear today is from the Minister himself, for him to come out of hiding and to actually explain what was the original intent of Operation Fortitude, who made the decision to abandon this operation and what other material is there in his office that he has not read? We see more reports today that in fact his office was informed twice ahead of time about Operation Fortitude and as every day goes by there are more questions that need to be answered in relation to this, again our concern is that you have got a Government who is really happy to stand up on the good days as they did when Australian Border Force had its first day with the Prime Minister and the Minister standing next to those in uniform but when there is a bad day, when there is a day to take responsibility, when there is a difficult day, what you have is the Minister going into hiding and throwing those in uniform under a bus and as every minute goes by with his silence, it only further erodes public confidence in this newest of Australia's national security agencies.

REPORTER: Can I go to a couple of other political issues in play today, Dyson Heydon will rule at 2pm eastern today on whether he should disqualify himself from continuing as the unions royal commissioner, should he?

MARLES: Well ultimately that is a matter for Dyson Heydon, but Marius it should never have got to this, Dyson Heydon is having to make a decision about himself because the Prime Minister has abrogated his responsibility to make a decision about Dyson Heydon. It is obvious that in what was always a political royal commission, when we have a situation where the royal commissioner himself has accepted an invitation to a Liberal Party fundraiser, that there is an air of compromise about the royal commissioner, I mean Blind Freddie can see that. Now what Dyson Heydon does in respect of himself today is a matter for him but it should never have got to this point.

REPORTER: Can I just ask you finally about Joe Hockey, there are reports in Fairfax newspapers today that Joe Hockey is on shaky ground with some minister's talking

about his removal as a way of improving the Government's stocks. Would you rather Joe stayed or went?

MARLES: Well there is no question that Joe Hockey's been a pretty ordinary treasurer and we have seen that from the two appalling Budget's that he has handed down but Marius this is not just a question of Joe Hockey, the real news that comes from this is that you have got two Cabinet Ministers going out there and leaking on a third. This is dysfunctionality and disunity at its height and we see a Government which is in chaos, a new debacle everyday, and really the only thing that unifies them is their own instinct for self preservation.

REPORTER: Richard Marles, thank you very much.

MARLES: Good to talk to you Marius.

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MEDIA CONTACT: LIDIJA IVANOVSKI 0427051563