THE HON ANGUS TAYLOR MP

SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH TOM CONNELL, SKY NEWS

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Topics: Hostage return, Gaza peace deal, Labor’s super tax backflip, ISIS Brides, polls.

TOM CONNELL:

Let's go live and get some reaction from the Shadow Defence Minister, Angus Taylor, on this. So a momentous day. You can just imagine the families, where we believe 20 hostages are still alive, and they won’t believe that until they can grasp them and hold them in their arms?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

I’m sure that’s right, Tom. A truly historic day. Great joy, I’m sure, for the families. We all want to see it actually happen — and hopefully it will in the minutes ahead. This is the best

possible pathway we can see for a peace agreement. I think everyone should get behind and rally around this agreement and the pathway forward. Of course, much credit must go to the President of the United States, Donald Trump. No credit to our Prime Minister, frankly, who was prepared to reward Hamas by recognising Palestine. But what we all have to do now is get in behind this agreement and do everything we possibly can to make it work. I’ll be over in Israel at the end of this week and I’m looking forward to getting over there and seeing how this is unfolding — and, importantly, making sure Australia can do everything it can to make sure the agreement works.

TOM CONNELL:

And your message to Israel, will that also be about making sure, unless there’s major reason to, that on their side the ceasefire holds?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Well, we want everyone to hold to the agreement, and that includes the Arab states, who play an important part in this — Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan. And it’s crucial that everyone gets behind this. It’s the best chance we’ve seen for a sustained and lasting peace for a long, long time, Tom. So, we’ve all got to do our bit to make sure it works.

TOM CONNELL:

In terms of doing our bit, we’ve already had reports and pictures of Hamas fighters back out on the streets in Gaza. In the short term, in these sorts of circumstances in the past, you need a big international cohort to make sure Hamas, or a similar group doesn’t gain control again. Should Australia become part of that, some form of peacekeeping force?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Well, there’s no proposal for that to be the case right now. The proposal, of course, is to be led by the United States and the Arab states. The IDF will remain in parts of Gaza for an ongoing period, but we do need to make sure that the new governance goes into place, that peacekeeping is happening, and that Hamas does not re-emerge. I mean, Hamas is the enemy here. It is a brutal terrorist organisation that kills in the most unseemly ways, and we want to see the end of Hamas, and no future role for Hamas in Gaza.

TOM CONNELL:

Alright, we’ll sort of go from fourth gear into second here — a bit of a clunky change — but we’ll talk about superannuation changes. We’re calling it the backdown on our straps. What do you make of what’s been unveiled today?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Well, the segway here is that it’s a historic day for a second reason. Which is an enormous backflip by the Treasurer, Jim Chalmers. Unrealised capital gains were always a bridge too far. This is taxing income that is not there, Tom, and they have backed down, rightly. It’s taken way too long for them to work out that this is completely unacceptable. They’re also backing down on indexation. You know, what makes this so important is that these are investments being put away for decades, and indexation erodes those investments at a reasonable level. So, we’re pleased with that backdown. Obviously, we’ll look at the details of what else is being proposed. We’ve only just seen it, and no doubt we’ll work through that in the usual way.

TOM CONNELL:

Would you be comfortable, though, if you like, with the extra tax onus shift onto those with $10 million-plus in super accounts?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Well, can I say there’s a lot of detail here that we’ll work our way through. There was a lot of detail the last time around as well. And this is a dirty deal that’s been done with the Greens. Whilst we’re happy to see the end of the unrealised capital gains tax, and they’re happy to see the end of the failure to index these long-dated investments. The Greens have clearly been part of this agreement. And who knows what we’re going to find lurking in that.

TOM CONNELL:

And what about that principle?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Well, the details do matter. The details matter. And the thing I’ve learned about superannuation is that it’s an area where detail really counts. So, we’ll work through that. Our starting point, though, in terms of principle, is that we believe in lower, simpler, fairer taxes — and we’ll do everything we can to always push in that direction.

TOM CONNELL:

Meaning you wouldn’t support this because there’s an overall increase in tax?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Well, you’re drawing that conclusion, Tom. I know what you’re like — you’ll always have a go. But that’s the principle. We’ll work through the detail, and we’re not going to prematurely come out until we’ve...

TOM CONNELL:

And I’m not saying agree to this now and sign here, apart from the fact that I’ve got nothing to do with it, so I wouldn’t say that anyway. But on $10 million-plus — I mean, it’s a pretty high bar, right, in terms of...

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Sure. But look, we want to make sure that Australians invest in our country and are able to get a return on that investment. That's important for the future of our country, for higher wages and a more productive economy. All those things come from investment, so we don't want to discourage it. We believe in lower, simpler, fairer taxes. But we'll work through this. And no doubt, if the Greens are involved — which they were — there will be all sorts of nasty things we'll have to work through.

TOM CONNELL:

Labor says they weren’t. You’re allowed to say they were.

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Well, I mean, I don’t know. Honestly, we know Jim Chalmers told us the last person he spoke to on this was a Green. So, let’s see.

TOM CONNELL:

From what I heard today, they were saying they’d informed the Greens rather than tell the, the whole way along. Anyway, you’ve had it for hours.

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Pretty hard to have a one-way conversation with the Greens, but I’ll take your word for it for now, Tom.

TOM CONNELL:

Sure. Okay, let’s talk about ISIS brides returning to Australia — big story last week. I just want to step through this from what we know and correct me if you believe I’m wrong. So: the women and children smuggled themselves out of Syria, they were detained in Lebanon, they were then issued Australian passports after passing ID and DNA checks. Those processes, would the Coalition sought to have done anything different if you were in power?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Well, I don’t know all the details of each of those cases, and it’s impossible for us to. What I will say is that looks to me like they’ve played a role in helping these brides back. They will say they’re bound by the law. I would say Labor can always change the law — they’re the government. But they’ve chosen not to. Look, at the end of the day, I think Australians would say these are not people we want back in the country. They are people who have supported a terrorist organisation. ISIS is a terrorist organisation, just like Hamas is. And I think it’s unacceptable for Australians that these people come back into the country. Has the government done everything it can to prevent them coming back into the country? I think that’s a good question, and I think there are a lot of unanswered questions in all of this...

TOM CONNELL:

So, the assistance wasn’t in getting them out, but by saying they could have changed the law, as the law stands, it was simply applied as normal?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Well, that’s what they tell us, and I’m sure there’ll be a lot more investigation into of that, Tom.

TOM CONNELL:

If it’s the case they got those passports, once they were detained in Lebanon and Australian authorities were involved — that is the normal process.

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Well, there are a lot of “ifs” in this. You see, this is how Labor puts it. And the problem with Labor’s approach to this, is that I don’t think their heart was ever in keeping these people out of the country. That’s the problem.

TOM CONNELL:

If those things happened, would you have sought to change the law to keep them out?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

You know, ministers have a lot of powers in these areas. And the question is whether the minister has exercised whatever power he can to keep these people out of the counry. Frankly, I think there are a lot of unanswered questions here, Tom.

TOM CONNELL:

But that would have been... You think the best approach would have been trying to keep them out in whatever means possible?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Well, I think it's unacceptable to Australians that people have left this country to support a terrorist organisation, been given a free pass to come back — and that is exactly what's happened. They've clearly have been assisted by the government.

TOM CONNELL:

I just wanted to get your view on Sussan Ley. Does she need time? Any day that she's out there and being undermined in any way, she loses the day on the job to try to hold Labor to account.

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Look, I have done and will continue to do everything I can to make sure we get our policies out there and get ourselves in a position where we can win the next election. That includes supporting Sussan in the role she's playing. That is my job, and I'll do it every single day. Look, I, first and foremost, I see a bad Labor government that is making Australians worse off, that’s not keeping Australians safe, that wants to tax unrealised capital gains — and is only not doing so because they couldn't get it through Parliament. We have to do everything we can to provide an alternative. In my own portfolio, I'm going to continue to fight for properly funding our military at a time which is more dangerous than any since the Second World War.

TOM CONNELL:

And part of the reason I ask is, you know, for a side hustle, I combed through the odd Newspoll. For a whole year after 2022, Labor was soaring in the polls, and they were really bad for the Coalition. You need time in opposition, don't you? You can't just get it done in three months or six months.

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Well, of course. But what matters is what happens at the next election. That's why we've got to get our policies worked through, out there, argued for — and that's what I'm doing, Tom. 3% of GDP, we'll see what the President and the Prime Minister talk about when that long-awaited meeting finally happens — if it does indeed. I certainly hope it does. But we need to have a government...

TOM CONNELL:

Do you hope a little bit that it doesn't? That'd be good for you, wouldn't it?

ANGUS TAYLOR:

I hope that we get proper funding of our Defence Force, a strong alliance with the United States, an effective AUKUS agreement, and a pathway forward against the most dangerous situation we've faced since the Second World War.

TOM CONNELL:

Angus Taylor, appreciate your time.

ANGUS TAYLOR:

Thank you. Good to be with you.

ENDS.