



[Australia news live: Labor MPs air clashing views over Israel-Hamas conflict](#)

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Byline: Henry Belot (now) and Jordyn Beazley and Rafqa Touma (earlier)

Highlight: McNamara MP Josh Burns says Palestinians are not being 'collectively punished' as Ed Husic argued earlier this week. Follow the day's news live Israel-Hamas war: live coverage Get our morning and afternoon news emails, free app or daily news podcast

Body

block-time published-time 8.11am BST

What we learned today, Friday 20 October

Time to wrap up the blog – but before we do, let's look back on what made news today:

An Aboriginal teenager [has died in a Perth hospital](#) a week after being found unresponsive inside a maximum security prison that is holding more than a dozen young detainees. **Australia** is moving to [repair ties with China](#) ahead of Anthony Albanese's trip to Beijing, ruling out cancelling a Chinese company's lease over the strategically important Port of Darwin. More than a hundred First Nations advocacy groups and organisations have banded together to oppose Peter Dutton's [calls for a royal commission](#) into the abuse of Indigenous children. The Australian government has [fast-tracked the citizenship of three athletes](#) from South Africa, Russia and the US, in an effort to boost the nation's chances of winning gold medals at the 2024 Olympics in Paris. **Australia's** financial watchdog has issued [an eight-year ban to a former PwC partner](#) at the heart of a confidentiality scandal that triggered a reputation crisis at the firm and a costly sell-off. Meta has apologised after [inserting the word "terrorist"](#) into the profile bios of some Palestinian Instagram users, in what the company says was a bug in auto-translation.

Have a safe and enjoyable Friday night!

block-time updated-time Updated at 8.16am BST

block-time published-time 8.03am BST

Urgent recall issued for faulty solar panel batteries

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Homeowners with solar panels are being asked to check if they have LG branded batteries installed in their systems after the company issued an urgent safety recall.

As AAP reports, the recall includes 13 battery models at risk of overheating, catching fire and causing damage to property, serious injury or death.

The defective batteries could be installed in LG branded solar systems or non-LG systems such as SolaX Power Station, Opal Storage and Eguana Evolve.

NSW Fair Trading commissioner, Natasha Mann, said the defective batteries had been sold by several companies across **Australia** since 2017.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.07am BST

block-time published-time 7.54am BST

Victorian Liberals to run in byelection for Daniel Andrews' old seat

The Victorian opposition leader, John Pesutto, has announced the Liberal party will run a candidate in the byelection in Daniel Andrews' seat of Mulgrave.

Yesterday it was confirmed the byelection for the safe Labor seat, which takes in the suburb of Mulgrave as well as Wheelers Hill, Springvale, Noble Park and Dandenong North, will be held on 18 November.

In a statement on Friday afternoon, Pesutto said the party wanted to give voters a "choice":

On November 18 the people of Mulgrave will have a choice between a tired Labor government or a new direction for Victoria.

Greater Dandenong mayor, Eden Foster, has been endorsed to run as Labor's candidate, while the Greens have endorsed local councillor Rhonda Garad.

The Liberals are yet to preselect a candidate but Pesutto has previously confirmed it won't be the party's candidate from the 2022 election, Michael Piastrino. The local hairdresser apologised during the campaign after declaring that an elected Liberal government would get rid of "all the dodgy policies that Daniel Andrews has put through and he will be brought to justice for the murder of 800 people".

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.01am BST

block-time published-time 7.36am BST

ABC racism review to be led by Indigenous cultural leader Terri Janke

The ABC's review into racism, announced in May in the wake of Stan Grant's complaints about his treatment at the ABC, will be led by lawyer and cultural leader Dr Terri Janke, a Wuthathi, Yathaighana and Meriam woman, the ABC has announced.

ABC managing director David Anderson said Janke, an international authority on Indigenous cultural and intellectual property, will begin work on the review immediately and it is open to all current and former ABC staff.

The corporation's annual report, which was tabled in parliament today, has revealed the ABC's budget of \$937m this financial year represents a 34% reduction in real funding since 1985/86 financial year.

The comparative revenue from government chart said this represents a decrease in real funding of \$482m.

The ABC spent \$21m on redundancy and \$48m on contractors last financial year, and the wage bill jumped by \$32m due to the pay rise won by the union.

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In the October budget, the newly elected Labor government allocated additional funding of \$83.7m split evenly over four years to offset the previous Coalition government indexation pause.

block-time updated-time Updated at 7.45am BST

block-time published-time 7.23am BST

Victorian Liberal MP, James Newbury, says calls by teal MPs for the federal government to legislate national road-user charges “will only replicate Victoria’s failure across the nation”.

Independent MPs Zoe Daniel, Allegra Spender, Monique Ryan and Kylea Tink have all called for road use charges to apply fairly to all vehicles, with a nationally consistent scheme that does not target electric vehicles, after [the high court ruled Victoria’s tax invalid](#).

Newbury - the Victorian Liberals spokesperson for the environment and climate change said this would be a mistake.

He said:

What the failed Labor experiment of an Electric Vehicle Tax in Victoria has shown, is that great big taxes kill demand for electric vehicles. Despite the Victorian government setting a target of 50% of new vehicles being electric by 2030, it currently stands at a meagre 6.65. Victoria is the Australian laggard on electric vehicle policy.

Newbury said a national tax would strip away state’s like NSW’s power to pause road user charges for electric vehicle owners:

States like New South Wales got it right, when they paused imposing road user charges for electric vehicles drivers until 2027, to nurture electric vehicle take up. Talk of blanketing new national taxes on the electric vehicle sector, which would strip away state pauses on a charge, will only replicate Victoria’s failure across the nation.

Here’s my colleague Paul Karp ’s piece on the teal MPs proposal:

Related: [Teal MPs call for national road-user charges after high court shuts down Victoria’s EV tax](#)

block-time published-time 7.12am BST

Amazon reveals plans for drone deliveries to begin this year in US, UK and Italy

Amazon, the world’s largest retailer, has announced plans to grow its drone delivery program – and it has its eyes on Australian skies.

At its Delivering the Future event in the US, Prime Air vice-president David Carbon – an Australian expat – revealed six months of testing its new drone model had given the company greater confidence to expand.

Amazon revealed plans to fly goods to suburban back yards in America, the United Kingdom and Italy by the end of next year. **Australia** was not added to the launch schedule yet, however Carbon said he was committed to see it expand here.

It comes as Wing Aviation, a subsidiary of Google parent company Alphabet, ramps up its own, flying coffee, food and grocery deliveries in Queensland. It’s one of only two companies that have been approved by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority ; the other is Swoop Aero, which focuses on medical equipment and supplies.

This week, the Civil Aviation and Safety Authority started consultations on relaxing some Australian drone restrictions.

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But some, like Julia Powles, an associate professor and the director of the Tech & Policy Lab at the University of Western Australia, are cautious. She said drones imposed a cost on people and the environment, so should only be used for necessities such as medical supplies or in emergency contexts, and “not for indulgence”.

- with AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.22am BST

block-time published-time 6.59am BST

Chinese company Landbridge issues statement on Port of Darwin lease

Landbridge has issued a statement in response to the federal government confirming it will not vary or cancel the Chinese company's lease over the Port of Darwin :

The outcomes reaffirm our position that there is no basis for security concerns given the Port is operated as a commercial enterprise in accordance with Australian Law and the Port transaction documents.

Landbridge is hopeful that the outcome of this review, which is consistent with the findings of the reviews conducted in both 2015 and 2021, will now bring this matter to a close. Landbridge is focused on operating the Port to grow business and trade for the Territory.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.02am BST

block-time published-time 6.51am BST

'We already know so much': Pocock says another child abuse inquiry would take years

David Pocock has [offered his reasons](#) behind why he didn't back a Coalition push for a royal commission into child sexual abuse in Indigenous communities.

The ACT senator said he had received “a lot of angry tweets” after Coalition senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price blamed Pocock for her motion failing to pass.

Nampijinpa Price and the opposition leader, Peter Dutton, pushed this week for the royal commission and an audit of government spending on Indigenous communities after the outcome of the referendum last weekend.

The Senate vote was knocked down 26 votes to 31. A motion by Dutton to suspend the standing orders also failed on Thursday.

Pocock on Friday said he had consulted First Nations people in the ACT and decided not to support a royal commission, noting it “would take years to tell us what we already know from 42 inquiries and reports”:

I agree that we need more urgent action and will continue to push the government on this.

After consulting and looking further into this issue, I do not believe that a royal commission is the way to deal with an issue we already know so much about, especially given the major parties' record of implementing recommendations is patchy at best. Australians deserve action not another report.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.01am BST

block-time published-time 6.43am BST

Israeli response to Hamas attack not collective punishment, says Labor's Josh Burns

The Labor MP Josh Burns has told the ABC he does not agree that Palestinians are being “collectively punished for Hamas's barbarism”, as argued by senior federal minister Ed Husic earlier this week.

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Husic's position was supported by fellow Labor frontbencher **Anne Aly**.

Here's what Burns, a member of **Australia**'s Jewish community, told Afternoon Briefing's Matthew Doran when asked about Husic's comment:

That phrase is not one I would use. It is not my view.

When asked: "If it is not collective punishment, what is it?", Burns said:

It is a response to a terrorist organisation who killed 1,300 people and a terrorist organisation, which is described in **Australia** as a terrorist organisation, one that has not terrorised just Israeli people, but Palestinian people as well.

This is a terrorist organisation, funded by Iran, this is not a good faith actor nor one that you can make peace with.

If **Australia** had a terrorist attack where 1,300 of our people were attacked, then a similar response, I think, would be being considered by **Australia** right now.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.33am BST

block-time published-time 6.30am BST

Greens' Mehreen Faruqi welcomes Labor's expedited national racism strategy

Earlier today, we brought you news that [*the Albanese government is expediting a new national racism strategy*](#) amid rising community tensions triggered by the war between Israel and Hamas, as well as the defeat of the [*Indigenous voice to parliament*](#) referendum last Saturday.

That's been welcomed by the Greens senator Mehreen Faruqi, who is the party's spokesperson for anti-racism.

I welcome news that the government has finally seen the urgency of completing a national anti-racism strategy sooner rather than later. They must also commit to fully funding its implementation.

Australia has a racism blind spot. For too long, governments have chosen to pretend that we do not have a problem with racism in our society.

The reality is that racism is hurting and harming First Nations people and people of colour every single day. The last few months alone have exposed the extent of racism following the divisive campaign of misinformation, disinformation and fear run by conservative forces.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.34am BST

block-time published-time 6.13am BST

'Prison is no place for our children', commissioners say after 16-year-old Aboriginal boy's death in custody

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social justice commissioner, June Oscar, and the national children's commissioner, Anne Hollonds, say they are "distressed" by [*the death of a 16-year-old Aboriginal boy*](#) who had been incarcerated at an adult prison.

Last Thursday the boy, 16, was found unresponsive in his cell at a youth detention unit within the Casuarina prison by staff in the early hours of the morning.

The incident was suspected to have been an act of self-harm, and staff had rendered emergency first aid until paramedics arrived and the teenager was taken to hospital.

The maximum security prison is holding more than a dozen young detainees.

Here's the statement from Oscar:

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My thoughts are with the family and community of the 16-year-old boy who passed overnight after being found unresponsive in his cell at Casuarina Prison. This is incredibly sad.

Prison is no place for our children.

The evidence is clear, the recommendations for prevention have been made over and over again. Placing children in detention robs them of their childhood and deprives them from accessing the support they need.

And here's the statement from Hollonds:

As **Australia**'s National Children's Commissioner I am deeply distressed to learn that a 16-year-old boy has passed away following self-harm while incarcerated at an adult prison.

I extend my deepest sympathy and condolences to his family. This is a tragedy that should never happen.

Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which **Australia** is a signatory, we have an obligation to protect the human rights of children.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.22am BST

block-time published-time 6.02am BST

NSW regional centres under total fire ban tomorrow

A total fire ban has been declared for many major towns in regional NSW tomorrow, due to hot and windy conditions.

The total fire ban, commencing at midnight tonight, covers the following council areas:

Lower Central West Plains : Bland, Dubbo, Forbes, Lachlan, Narromine, Parkes, Temora, Weddin North Western : Moree Plains, Narrabri, Walgett, Warrumbungle Upper Central West Plains : Bogan, Coonamble, Gilgandra, Warren

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.06am BST

block-time published-time 5.48am BST

First Nations groups reject Peter Dutton's call for royal commission into child abuse

More than a hundred First Nations advocacy groups and organisations have banded together to oppose Peter Dutton 's calls for a royal commission into the abuse of Indigenous children, accusing the opposition of "political point-scoring" and "demonising" communities.

The opposition leader and his shadow Indigenous Australians minister, the senator [Jacinta Nampijinpa Price](#) , have repeatedly pushed for a royal commission into alleged child sexual abuse in Indigenous communities.

A joint statement backed by more than 100 community Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations calls for the safety of children to "not be politicised or used as a platform to advance a political position".

Related: [First Nations groups reject Peter Dutton's call for royal commission into child abuse](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.57am BST

block-time published-time 5.33am BST

Australian Christian Lobby claims proposed human rights law would weaken religious freedom protections

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The Australian Christian Lobby has warned [a proposed human rights law](#) would “water down” religious freedom protections.

A Senate inquiry, chaired by Labor MP Josh Burns, is looking at the country’s existing human rights framework and whether a human rights act should be passed into law to better enshrine protections.

This morning, the committee heard from the Law Council of [Australia](#) and Civil Liberties [Australia](#), which both expressed strong support for a new law.

In the law council’s submission, it said existing protections remained inadequate, warning “ many Australians believe their rights are better protected in law than they actually are ”.

The Australian Human Rights Commission released a [position paper in March](#) proposing a new human rights law, referencing recent public administration failures, such as the illegal robo-debt scheme, as the reason it’s necessary.

block-time updated-time Updated at 5.38am BST

block-time published-time 5.22am BST

Former PwC partner banned for eight years over tax leak scandal

The former PwC partner at the heart of a confidentiality scandal has been banned from providing financial services for eight years.

The Australian Securities and Investment Commission has been investigating the conduct of Peter John Collins, of Sandringham in Victorian, who has been accused of sharing confidential Treasury information about multinational tax avoidance with colleagues.

The breach triggered a long-running scandal that has seen PwC [Australia](#) divest its entire government consulting firm for just \$1 and referrals to the Australian Federal Police.

In a statement, [Australia](#)’s financial watchdog said Collins would not be able to “provide financial services or controlling an entity that carries on a financial services business for eight years”.

Here’s more of the statement from ASIC:

ASIC found that Mr Collins disclosed confidential information he obtained in his roles as a tax advisor to the Commonwealth Treasury and the Australian Board of Taxation.

Accordingly, ASIC found that Mr Collins is not a fit and proper person to provide financial services and that it was in the public interest to prevent him from working in the financial services industry.

Collins has the right to apply to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal for a review of ASIC’s decision.

block-time updated-time Updated at 5.30am BST

block-time published-time 5.10am BST

Arson probe after Melbourne gym extensively damaged by fire

An investigation is under way to determine whether a blaze at a gym in Melbourne’s north was deliberately lit.

A fire broke out at Power Gymnasium on Moreland Road in Coburg at about 5.15am on Friday.

No one was hurt but the building was left severely damaged, with its shop front partially destroyed and ash through the premises.

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A post on the gym's Instagram page on Friday morning claimed the blaze was caused by an electrical fault at reception.

However, Victoria police was initially unable to pinpoint the cause of the fire and an arson chemist was later on the scene to determine if it was deliberately lit.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.11am BST

block-time published-time 4.51am BST

Eleven people arrested at NSW protests amid 'heightened tension' in recent days

NSW police have given an update on arrests at protests in Sydney in recent days.

Here's the update from the state's police commissioner, Karen Webb :

To date, we have arrested 11 people for 22 charges relating to not just events of the Opera House but also other incidents reported to police throughout the week.

We know that there is heightened tension within the community at the moment, arising from the conflict from overseas. We will work with the community as we have done regularly part of Operation Shelter."

NSW police [have launched](#) Operation Shelter to "capture all intelligence available to us in relation to community sentiment, potential protest activity and potential demonstrations that might take place in the future".

enltrPolice commissioner Karen Webb updating the community on Operation Shelter: "To date, we have arrested 11 people for 22 charges relating to not just events of the Opera House but also other incidents reported to police throughout the week." [#nswpol pic.twitter.com/2BLS8B60Bp](#)

— Tamsin Rose (@tamsinroses) [October 20, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.14am BST

block-time published-time 4.37am BST

Chinese company's lease over Port of Darwin will not be cancelled, Labor says

The Australian government has announced it will not vary or cancel a Chinese company's lease over the Port of Darwin.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet said in a statement that it had finalised its review in the Landbridge Group's lease of the Port of Darwin. The statement said:

The review found that: there is a robust regulatory system in place to manage risks to critical infrastructure, including the Port of Darwin; existing monitoring mechanisms are sufficient and will be ongoing; and as a result, it was not necessary to vary or cancel the lease.

The Government has accepted that advice.

Monitoring of security arrangements around the Port of Darwin will continue. Australians can have confidence that their safety will not be compromised, while ensuring that [Australia](#) remains a competitive destination for foreign investment.

The statement said the Port of Darwin was a key piece of critical infrastructure and "a number of security assessments have been made since the Port of Darwin was leased to Landbridge Group in 2015". It said:

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The review considered the findings and outcomes of these previous assessments as well as considering whether risk management and mitigation arrangements are sufficient to protect **Australia**'s national security interests relating to the Port.

The review was conducted by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, in consultation with the Department of Defence, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Attorney-General's Department, Department of Home Affairs, Office of National Intelligence and Australian Security Intelligence Organisation.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.48am BST

block-time published-time 4.29am BST

NSW urged to make cashless gaming card permanent

The Alliance for Gambling Reform has called on the NSW government to immediately scrap its trial of a cashless gaming card and permanently introduce it.

The call comes after the state regulator confirmed more than \$8bn was lost to pokies in the state last year. Guardian **Australia** reporting on this in detail earlier in the month.

Here's the alliance's chief advocate, Tim Costello :

The government boasts about the \$100m over five years it is devoting to gambling harm reduction but this is akin to putting an ambulance at the bottom of a cliff.

A cashless gambling card would reduce the level of gambling – it would effectively put a fence at the top of the cliff to stop people going over.

You can get more detail on the losses here:

Related: [*'Desperate' Australians losing billions more to pokies during cost-of-living crisis, researcher warns*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.44am BST

block-time published-time 4.17am BST

Frankston MP among 17 people on light plane that crash landed in Victoria

The ABC has spoken to one of the 17 people who were onboard a skydiving plane that was forced into an emergency landing near the Barwon Heads airport this morning.

The ABC's Bridget Rollason reports Frankston MP, Paul Edbrooke, is now getting tests in hospital but insists "he will be back to work in no time".

enltrBreaking: Frankston MP Paul Edbrooke was on board the plane that crashed near Barwon Heads this morning. He's in hospital getting tests but has told the ABC he will be back to work in no time. He's thanked the first responders & says he might buy a lotto ticket! [*#springst pic.twitter.com/yHnmxA1kBW*](#)

— Bridget Rollason (@bridgerollo) [*October 20, 2023*](#)

enltrA sky diving plane carrying 17 passengers has crashed near Barwon Heads. [*#BarwonHeads #PlaneCrash #Skydiving #Accident @3AW693 @7NewsMelbourne @9NewsMelb @10NewsFirstMelb pic.twitter.com/tQzwTrDQbM*](#)

— Turbo (@Turbo3862073193) [*October 19, 2023*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.53am BST

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block-time published-time 4.08am BST

Hot weekend ahead across **Australia**'s west and north

It's heating up in parts of the country, according to the Bureau of Meteorology, which has released a detailed forecast for the weekend ahead.

Here's the headline for tomorrow:

It is hot across much of western, northern and inland eastern **Australia** with temperatures getting up into the high 30s or low 40s.

enlrWeekend weather update: Here's what to expect across **Australia** over the coming days. Latest: <https://t.co/jlOoTZLz8d> or the BOM Weather app. <pic.twitter.com/mUHzwVaOR0>

— Bureau of Meteorology, **Australia** (@BOM_au) [October 20, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.13am BST

block-time published-time 3.56am BST

More apartments will improve quality of life, Infrastructure Victoria report says

Infrastructure Victoria says building more homes in Melbourne's established areas – instead of the outer fringes – is the best way to create a better quality of life.

As AAP reports, the group's latest urban development report released today found residents were becoming increasingly disconnected from work, education, services and transport as they move further out in search of their own home.

Here's how Infrastructure Victoria chief executive Jonathan Spear put it:

The evidence shows that this delivers worse quality of life and opportunities for Victorians - but it's not too late to turn that around.

Governments should focus on compact city models, both in Melbourne and the regions, with more apartments and flats built close to existing infrastructure.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.07am BST

block-time published-time 3.42am BST

Albanese: 'The responsibility for what is happening now rests firmly with Hamas'

Albanese has turned back to speaking on the Israel-Hamas conflict after he was asked a question on the matter.

He said:

The responsibility for what is happening now rests firmly with Hamas and the actions that they have taken.

But there are of course longer-term issues which President Biden has indicated this morning, again, has given people a reminder that they are issues that need to be addressed. And I acknowledge the suffering of Israeli as well as Palestinian citizens. They're innocent, they just want to live.

I also acknowledge that leaders have a responsibility at this time to make sure that there is, while there is some concern in the community and hurt being felt for people who have relatives and friends in the Middle East, whether they be Israeli, Palestinian, this is a difficult time for the community.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.06am BST

block-time published-time 3.38am BST

Albanese: 'We will continue to work on closing the gap'

Albanese has said the death of a 16-year-old Indigenous boy in WA a week after he was found non-responsive in Bansia Hill youth detention facility was "a terrible tragedy":

I give my condolences to the family and friends of this young person, who has died and there will now be a coronial inquiry in those specifics ... It is not appropriate to comment further.

My government is determined to close the gap for Indigenous Australians. We answered the invitation of Indigenous Australians to give constitutional recognition in the form which was requested, which was through a constitutionally enshrined voice to parliament. Australians did not vote for that, our constitution is difficult to change.

Indigenous communities in remote Northern Territory and places in the Kimberley, in Lockhart River and Palm Island and the Tiwi Islands and other communities overwhelmingly did vote Yes in this referendum.

It is a difficult time for Indigenous Australians, but we respect the outcome in a democracy and I've done that. I will continue to do, we will continue to work on closing the gap.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.04am BST

block-time published-time 3.35am BST

Albanese says he 'completely agrees' with Biden on Palestine

I do note the comments of president Biden today. This is what president Biden has said, this is what he had to say. The US remains committed to the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination.

We mourn every innocent life lost. We cannot ignore the humanity of innocent Palestinians who only want to live in peace. I applaud the efforts of President Biden to work with nations in the region to make sure that Gaza will be able to have access to food, water and medicine. President Biden went on to say that we cannot give up on peace.

We cannot give up on a two-state solution. And his comments are appropriate, I completely agree with them.

Related: [Biden draws direct link between Putin and Hamas as he urges aid for Israel and Ukraine](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.10am BST

block-time published-time 3.33am BST

Albanese on Israel-Hamas conflict: 'The lives of innocent civilians needed to be protected'

Anthony Albanese is speaking in Perth now. He was asked about Labor members Ed Husic and **Anne Aly's** [views on the Hamas-Israel conflict](#).

He said:

My entire team voted for a resolution ... The resolution was important. It unequivocally condemned Hamas for the atrocities that it committed as a terrorist organisation with its invasion of Israel. And with the atrocities that were committed, including two young people who are attending a music festival, we had people kidnapped and taken from their families. Israel has a right to defend itself.

We also acknowledged in that resolution, importantly, that the lives of innocent civilians needed to be protected. Every loss of an innocent life matters. Whether they are Israeli, Palestinian.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.01am BST

block-time published-time 3.28am BST

NSW police commissioner says 'more than 800 police ready to go' for Sydney protest

Commissioner Karen Webb says:

We have more than 800 police ready to respond, and we have been working with organisers in terms of the police response to the proposal that was put before us in an application in the form one within the timeframe specified. And we have been working to negotiate a safe passage for that group.

NSW police commissioner Karen Webb. Photograph: Richard Milnes/Shutterstock

During the press conference, a reporter pointed out the change in tone compared to last week's press conference where the police announced it was seeking additional powers ahead of last Sunday's protest.

The police spokesperson responded:

We made that very clear at the press conference last week was that where organisers work with us and where we have control and we are able to ensure that the protests are safe and act peacefully and within the law, we will certainly work to make that happen. What you saw last week on Sunday was a protest where the organisers worked closely with us and we were very satisfied with the behavior.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.11am BST

block-time published-time 3.14am BST

'Facilitating protests is a very normal police operation': NSW police

The NSW police spokesperson says the force will not be using the special searching powers that were deployed for last week's protests:

We'll be using our normal policing powers.

The spokesperson also reminded people "facilitating protests is a very normal police operation".

We do it over 1,500 times a year just in the metropolitan area. That will be a range of both static and mobile assemblies ... we're satisfied by the form one that was put in by the organisers requested to have a mobile protest. We have worked closely with the organisers and was satisfied that the request can be made.

What we are asking for at the moment is that all people across the community act with respect.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.00am BST

block-time published-time 3.08am BST

NSW police say they will have 'significant policing response' at pro-Palestine march

NSW police are now holding a press conference about the pro-Palestine protests. The police have said they've been working closely with the organisers of tomorrow's planned pro-Palestine rally in Sydney.

Last week you'll remember that we asked that organisers work closely with police. Our role as police is to ensure public safety and that's what we will always work towards.

We greatly respect the right of people to be able to voice their opinions and public assembly is something that is lawful. But it is something that we ask that people do peacefully and within the law.

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We will have a significant policing response, so should people commit crimes they can expect that they will be arrested.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.16am BST

block-time published-time 2.52am BST

Pro-Palestine demonstrators block entry to Pine Gap base in NT

Pro-Palestinian demonstrators have blocked access to a joint US-Australian defence facility in the Northern Territory, calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

The small group of protesters gathered on Hatt Road near Pine Gap, the military intelligence base outside Alice Springs, from dawn until just before 10am on Friday.

One of the activists, who asked to be referred to only as Nic, said the group was there in the hope of disrupting military intelligence during the conflict in the Middle East.

Nic said the group, which included members of the Alice Springs Jewish and Indigenous communities, wanted to show solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The Australian government needs to stand up and call on the Israeli government to stop bombing civilians in Gaza.

Northern Territory police acting commander James Gray-Spence said a 35-year-old woman was arrested for obstructing the use of a public road.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.15am BST

block-time published-time 2.50am BST

Thank you Rafqa Touma for leading us through this morning's news. I'll now be with you for the next little while.

block-time published-time 2.46am BST

Handing you over now to Jordyn Beazley.

Thanks for reading along this morning.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.44am BST

block-time published-time 2.38am BST

Methane bubbles in groundwater cast doubts over Beetaloo basin fracking approval, scientists say

Experts have cast doubt on groundwater studies that underpin the [Northern Territory](#) government's decision to permit fracking in the Beetaloo basin, after methane bubbles were observed at hot springs in an area targeted for gas production.

In a new [report](#), commissioned by the Environment Centre NT (ECNT), the scientists warn of "critical knowledge gaps" in baseline groundwater assessments conducted by the government in response to the [Pepper inquiry into fracking](#).

Ninety percent of the territory's water supply comes from groundwater while the territory's hot springs support ecosystems and Indigenous cultural values.

Read the full story here:

Related: [Methane bubbles in groundwater cast doubts over Beetaloo basin fracking approval, scientists say](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.44am BST

block-time published-time 2.30am BST

Indigenous voices to help close gap despite referendum

Advice from First Nations communities will continue to play a role in the government's efforts to close the gap, despite Australia's refusal to enshrine an Indigenous advisory body into the constitution.

The defeat of the voice referendum on Saturday has led some in Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander groups to call for a mourning period.

Despite the voice's overwhelming support from Indigenous communities in remote parts of the country, prime minister Anthony Albanese said Australia's choice must be respected.

He told HitFM radio today:

The Australian people voted 'no' and that is something that has got to be respected.

We understand that it will be difficult for Indigenous Australians and they're entitled to think about what next steps they want to be taken.

But the prime minister maintained the government would continue to take steps to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous demographics in consultation with First Nations groups.

We do have this gap and we've been unable to bridge it. Governments of all persuasions have failed in doing that.

The best programs are ones which involved Indigenous Australians.

We can't do things in Canberra for a place like the Kimberley in the Pilbara and think bureaucrats in Canberra know better than the people on the ground.

The government has already allocated more than \$200m as part of its skills and apprenticeships package to help upskill Indigenous Australians.

– via AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.42am BST

block-time published-time 2.06am BST

Step forward for Hobart waterfront stadium assessment

A contentious Hobart waterfront stadium project, a prerequisite for Tasmania's inclusion in the AFL, is set to face an independent planning assessment.

An order to declare the stadium a project of significance - and send it to the state planning commission - passed Tasmania's lower house of parliament on Thursday night.

Construction of a 23,000-seat roofed stadium at Macquarie Point, slated to cost \$715 million, was a condition of the AFL granting the island state a team licence.

The minority Liberal state government was forced to pursue the commission assessment process in a deal with two MPs who went to the cross bench over concerns with the project.

The Labor opposition, which has described the stadium as the wrong priority and a waste of money, voted for the order.

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Labor leader Rebecca White said the planning commission assessment was the best chance of getting answers about the true cost of the stadium.

This decision is not an endorsement of the stadium.

On the contrary, there are so many doubts about the engineering and financing of the stadium.

This independent assessment process is the only way to get some transparency about details of the project the government has kept secret.

Tasmania's opposition leader Rebecca White. Photograph: Julian Smith/AAP

– via AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.43am BST

block-time published-time 1.34am BST

Today marks 50 years of the Sydney Opera House

Take a look back through the years in photos here:

Related: [Sail on: 50 years of the Sydney Opera House – in pictures](#)

The Sydney Opera House under construction at Bennelong Point in Sydney, **Australia**, 22 January 1965. Photograph: JR T Richardson/Getty Images Workers cleaning up a 'No War' slogan painted on the Concert Hall sail of the Sydney Opera House, 18 March 2003. Photograph: Greg Wood/AFP/Getty Images Australian comedian Barry Humphries, dressed as his most famous character Dame Edna Everage, modelling a stunning Ascot hat based on the Sydney Opera House. Photograph: Wesley/Getty Images

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.41am BST

block-time published-time 1.13am BST

Up to 10,000 to join Sydney pro-Palestine march

Organisers expect a pro-Palestine march through central Sydney to bring together thousands of people after police cleared the event to go ahead, AAP reports.

The premier, Chris Minns, this week said a decision on further pro-Palestine protests in Sydney would be left to police, after thousands took part in a rally in Hyde Park on Sunday.

Palestine Action Group's spokesperson, Amal Naser, said she expected up to 10,000 people to attend Saturday's march from Town Hall to Belmore Park after NSW police greenlit the event.

A NSW police spokesperson confirmed the march had been approved but added that clearance could be withdrawn. They declined to say how many police would be deployed for the event.

Thousands of Australians have joined protests in support of Palestinians amid Israeli forces' bombardment of the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip after an incursion by the Islamist group's fighters on October 7 left more than 1,000 dead.

An earlier rally at Sydney's Opera House – lit up at the time in Israeli flag colours – was marred as controversial after some protesters used flares and chanted anti-Semitic slogans.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.18am BST

block-time published-time 12.42am BST

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Ley calls Husic's comments on Palestine 'out of line'

The deputy opposition leader, Sussan Ley, has criticised Labour MP Ed Husic for straying from the government's position on the Israel-Hamas war, AAP reports. Ley says Husic's remark that Palestinians are being collectively punished by Israel is "out of line".

Yesterday, Husic said Palestinians were being "collectively punished for Hamas' barbarism" in Gaza, with thousands now killed since the terror group launched its attack on Israel earlier this month. In response, Ley told Seven's Sunrise this morning:

You don't get to freelance on government policy, on foreign policy, when you're a cabinet minister.

The prime minister's got a real problem here, he's going to Washington and may well be asked who's running foreign policy in Australia? Is it Penny Wong? Is it Ed Husic? What's actually going on?

This is a minister who has stepped right out of line, and he's got a chance today to correct those remarks, otherwise he should seriously consider his position.

Deputy opposition leader Sussan Ley. Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.19am BST

block-time published-time 12.25am BST

More on Victoria aircraft incident

Victoria police attended an aircraft incident in Connewarre this morning. Seventeen people, including the pilot, were on board a plane which took off from Barwon Heads airport at around 7.50am, according to a police statement.

It's understood the plane got into difficulty before making an emergency landing nearby in Connewarre.

Five people have been taken to hospital with non-life-threatening injuries. Investigations into the exact circumstances of the incident are ongoing.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.36am BST

block-time published-time 12.09am BST

Further details on recent drug charges regarding 'rip on, rip off' containers

Here are details of the five charged, courtesy of a NSW police media statement:

At the Woodpark address, police arrested a 18-year-old man who they will allege directed the local criminal syndicate in "ripping off" the containers.

He was charged with 12 offences including knowingly/recklessly direct criminal group, take part in supply large commercial quantity of prohibited drugs, manufacture prohibited drug, knowingly deal with proceeds and property proceeds of crime, and possessing ammunition, DECCD (dedicated criminal-activity encryption devices), housebreaking implements and means of disguising face with intent to commit indictable offence.

A 28-year-old man was arrested at the Plumpton address. He was charged with eight offences including participate in criminal group, take part in supply large commercial quantity of prohibited drugs, possess ammunition without holding a licence or permit, and possessing housebreaking implements and means of disguising face with intent to commit indictable offence.

In Merrylands, police arrested an 18-year-old man. He was charged with 11 offences including participate in a criminal group, take part in supply of large commercial quantity of prohibited drugs, knowingly deal with proceeds of

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crime, and possessing an unauthorised pistol, DECCD, housebreaking implements, and means of disguising face with intent to commit indictable offence.

Another 18-year-old man was arrested in Bondi. He was charged with seven offences including participate in criminal group, take part in supply of large commercial quantity of prohibited drugs, knowingly deal with proceeds of crime, and possessing housebreaking implements and means of disguising face with intent to commit indictable offence.

In Seven Hills, police arrested a 25-year-old man. He was charged with participate in criminal group, deal with property proceeds of crime, and possessing ammunition without holding a licence or permit, and identity info to commit indictable offence.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.15am BST

block-time published-time 12.07am BST

Five charged after investigation into 'rip on, rip off' method of accessing drugs concealed in shipping containers

Drug and firearms squad detectives have charged five men following an ongoing investigation into the supply of large commercial quantities of drugs concealed in shipping containers, according to a NSW police media release.

Investigation began in May this year of a criminal syndicate allegedly using a method referred to as "rip on, rip off" to access prohibited drugs concealed in shipping containers. Strike force detectives, the Australian federal police and the Australian border force seized 201kg of cocaine (with a street value of \$105m) from inside three containers.

Six people have already been charged for various related offences and remain before the courts.

Just after 6am yesterday, eight search warrants were executed across Woodpark, Rydalmere, Wentworthville, Plumpton, Merrylands, St Clair, and Seven Hills with five arrests made.

During searches, police found \$37,000 cash, 4kg of methylamphetamine, 3kg of cocaine, a replica firearm, ammunition, electronics and luxury jewellery and watches. All items were seized to undergo further forensic examination.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.13am BST

block-time published-time 11.56pm BST

Liberals to run a candidate in Victorian byelection

The Liberal party has confirmed it will run a candidate in the byelection triggered by Daniel Andrews' resignation as Victorian premier, AAP reports.

The former Labor leader had been MP for Mulgrave, in Melbourne's south-east, since 2002, when the seat was recreated after being abolished in 1967. He quit politics last month, with the byelection to replace his local seat locked in for 18 November.

The opposition leader John Pesutto on Friday confirmed the Liberals would run a candidate. He told ABC Radio Melbourne:

People deserve a choice.

We were built to contest elections... I don't think there are any reasons why we wouldn't stand up and offer people a choice.

Pesutto acknowledged it was a safe Labor seat, but said his yet-to-be-named candidate would show that change was possible and necessary.

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block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.59pm BST

block-time published-time 11.44pm BST

Victoria police confirm 'aircraft incident' in Connewarre

Victoria police are currently at an airfield in Connewarre following an aircraft incident.

It is believed that two people may have suffered non-life-threatening injuries.

More to come.

[Interactive](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.54pm BST

block-time published-time 11.18pm BST

Residents unable to return home as Queensland bushfire rages

A bushfire is still threatening properties in central Queensland, with residents unable to return to their homes. Authorities issued a "not safe to return" alert early today for Oyster Creek near Gladstone.

Firefighters are continuing to battle a blaze that has burned through more than 3,000 hectares since Sunday. The wildfire is burning between Oyster Creek Rd and Muller Rd, affecting properties between Uxbridge Rd, Oyster Creek Rd, Muller Rd, Coast Rd, and Kirchner Rd.

"If you left the area, it is not safe to return," Queensland Fire and Emergency Services said in the alert.

Similar warnings are current for Deepwater where the fire is burning between Muller Rd and Capricornia Drive, with properties between Capricornia Drive, Pacific Drive, Oceania Court, Muller Rd and Sorensen Rd affected.

- Australian Associated Press

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.33pm BST

block-time published-time 11.04pm BST

Abbott suggests 'scaling back' on 'separatism' after no referendum vote

Former prime minister Tony Abbott has some... opinions... on what the defeat of the voice referendum means the country should do next. It's fair to say they're not uncontroversial.

He [writes in the Australian](#) that respecting the "people's vote" of no in the referendum means "abandoning or at least scaling back recent concessions to separatism". He points to some examples:

Flying the Aboriginal flag co-equally (as if **Australia** is a country of two nations) and the routine acknowledgement of country by all speakers at official events (as if those whose ancestry here stretches beyond 1788 are more Australian than anyone else).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.09pm BST

block-time published-time 10.36pm BST

Indigenous boy, 16, dead after being found unresponsive at WA youth prison

A 16-year-old boy detained at Casuarina prison's Unit 18 youth detention facility in [Western Australia](#) has died after being [found unresponsive at the facility last week](#).

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He died at Sir Charles Gairdner hospital shortly after 10 o'clock last night, in the company of family members, according to a statement from the state government's Department of Justice.

The Department of Justice wishes to express deepest sympathies to the boy's family, friends and community for their tragic loss. The department is continuing its investigation into all the circumstances of the incident.

The death will be subject to a mandatory inquest and the department will fully co-operate with the coronial process.

Detainees and staff at Unit 18 and Banksia Hill detention centre will be provided counselling and support services during this difficult time.

The boy had been in critical condition at Sir Charles Gairdner hospital since being found unresponsive in his cell by staff in the early hours of 12 October. There he was provided emergency first aid until paramedics arrived.

In [Australia](#), the crisis support service Lifeline is 13 11 14. Other international suicide helplines can be found at befrienders.org

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.46pm BST

block-time published-time 10.12pm BST

'We cannot stand by and watch': independent Dai Le calls for peace amid Israel-Hamas war

"I know too well the sorrows of war," the independent MP Dai Le tells Today in a plea to [Australia](#) to "stand for peace". She says:

As a daughter of ... war-torn Vietnam, I know too well the sorrows of war.

Of course everybody in parliament condemned the Hamas attack, breaking into Israel – but I think what people are subsequently seeing is the total destruction and killing of innocent lives.

I will echo the prime minister's line which is every single life matters, whether it is Israelis or Palestinian, and I think at the end of the day ... they kill innocent women, children particularly, children.

For the communities in Le's electorate of Fowler, "who have fled war-torn countries," images coming from the war are "distressing" and "triggering". Her community is "calling for peace," she says.

We as [Australia](#), we should be a great example of a united nation ... We are a multicultural society and we need to stand for peace. Because we cannot stand by and watch.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.34pm BST

block-time published-time 9.52pm BST

Prime minister ruling out Israel visit 'the right call,' Swan says

The ALP party president, Wayne Swan, is asked on the Today program about reports that the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, has ruled out a visit to Israel on his way to the United States. "I think that is the right call," Swan said:

He has a very important visit to the US. I don't think [Israel] want to see an avalanche of people wandering through as they go through this difficult time.

President Biden has been more involved in the Middle East than anybody else. So I would have thought if people were ... talking about the need to continue his involvement, he can do [that] with that President Biden when he is in the United States.

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The most important thing here is to be calm in the face of adversity.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.57pm BST

block-time published-time 9.38pm BST

Division in Labor party over support for Israel 'not true': ALP party president

Responding to whether government support of Israel has been "undermined ... from within" on the Today show, the Australian Labor party president, Wayne Swan, says:

That is not true, that is just a complete beatup.

Swan says recent statements from Labor ministers Ed Husic and **Anne Aly** "don't depart in any way from the government's position". Support for Israel's right to exist and to defend itself can coexist alongside calls to avoid the loss of innocent life, he says. He tells Today:

Israel has a right to exist, it has a right to defend itself, it has a right to respond to Hamas ... it has a right to eliminate Hamas, and all members of the Labor party share that ambition.

But they also say, and this is a complex issue, that we should avoid the loss of innocent life and we should do our best to ensure that those affected by the ramifications ... are looked after. That is all they have said. They have gone no further. I think people ought to be very careful about playing politics with this.

This is national security. The head of Asio has already warned about this sort of politics being played. I think is a view in the Australian community that what has happened here is incredibly serious, not only for future of that region, but it has impacts all around the world.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.48pm BST

block-time published-time 9.28pm BST

Family law change pass parliament

The family law system has been simplified after reforms passed federal parliament yesterday, AAP reports. The new laws will also make custody arrangements safer for children with their best interests being upheld, and will remove the presumption of "equal shared parental responsibility".

The attorney general, Mark Dreyfus, said the updated laws were consistent with the recommendations of family law experts:

These reforms are long overdue and will improve the lives of Australian families.

In the nine years the former government was in office, there were more than two dozen reviews into the family law system, with hundreds of recommendations that were simply ignored.

Women's Legal Service **Australia** [welcomed the news](#) yesterday, but said reform alone was not enough. Their chair, Elena Rosenman :

Women's legal services across **Australia** have advocated for this reform for many years based on the toxic and harmful effect it has had on families going through separation. Removing this dangerous provision will give the courts the freedom to focus on safety and the genuine best interests of children and families.

Women's legal services remain severely underfunded and unable to meet current demand. Law reform on its own is not enough. This bill must be accompanied by additional resourcing to the legal assistance sector ...

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.31pm BST

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block-time published-time 9.19pm BST

Thanks Martin Farrer for rolling the blog this morning.

I'll be taking you through the day's news. If you see anything you don't want us to miss, let me know on X (Twitter) @At_Raf_

Let's go!

block-time published-time 8.58pm BST

Labor cracks down on greenwashing by dumping 'carbon neutral' claim

An overhaul of a long-criticised federal program should mean businesses can no longer hoodwink consumers or offset their way out of climate action, AAP reports.

The scheme, known as Climate Active, will become a credible standard for the domestic market and consumers, the assistant minister for climate change and energy Jenny McAllister will announce today. McAllister will say:

Climate Active certification should be a trusted signal to Australian consumers that a business is taking credible climate action.

Climate Active was established in 2010 to help businesses measure, reduce, offset, and publicly report their emissions. It has provided more than 700 certifications to over 540 businesses that have offset more than 38m tonnes of carbon emissions.

But critics have said the scheme allowed companies to exclude part of their pollution from the assessment, which meant they were effectively "greenwashing" shoppers who were convinced by the certification and logo.

The term "carbon neutral" will be dumped and organisations will be required to prioritise direct emissions reductions.

We are sending a clear signal to the market that climate claims must be legitimate and that consumer trust must be maintained.

The federal government is seeking feedback by 15 December.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.16pm BST

block-time published-time 8.48pm BST

Trade minister Don Farrell seeks to save EU free trade deal

The trade minister, Don Farrell, is set to meet with his European Union counterpart at a summit as **Australia** hopes to net a free trade agreement with the bloc by the end of the year, Australian Associated Press reports.

Farrell and the EU trade commissioner, Valdis Dombrovskis, will be in Osaka for a G7 trade ministers' meeting at the end of the month – the first time an Australian trade minister has been invited.

Olaf Gill, an EU spokesman said the two sides had intensified talks and will have a series of meetings in October "including at (a) ministerial level on the margins of the G7... to make further progress". He told AAP in a statement:

Concluding this FTA will open up trade opportunities with an important partner, thereby strengthening EU supply chains, all under the framework of an enforceable trade agreement with strong sustainability provisions.

This will help to make the EU economy stronger, greener and more competitive.

Farrell said he remained hopeful a deal could be signed by the end of the year.

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The trade minister has signalled this could be the final round of negotiations, because a failed agreement would likely result in a deal kicked being down the road when the Europeans enter their domestic election cycles.

We weren't able to do it back in July but I've indicated since then that we want a deal.

There are 450 million Europeans, an economy of \$24tn – in this increasingly unstable world you need some friends.

Sticking points have been the level of market access and the Europeans pushing for geographical indicators, which would stop Australian producers using names such as feta, prosecco and kalamata.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.58pm BST

block-time published-time 8.38pm BST

Welcome

Good morning and welcome to our rolling news coverage. I'm Martin Farrer and I'm going to preview some of our top stories this morning before my colleague Rafqa Touma fires up the computer.

Australia's view of itself as one of the world's most successful multicultural nations has taken a battering in the past two weeks after the failed voice referendum and the stirring of intra-communal tension by the eruption of conflict in the Middle East. Our [exclusive story](#) this morning reveals that the Albanese government plans to bring in a new national racism strategy. The minister for multicultural affairs, Andrew Giles, says there is a "renewed sense of urgency" about launching a new anti-racism campaign "given the events of recent weeks". The polarising referendum campaign and domestic anxieties about the Middle East conflict had left him "very concerned".

And we have another scoop that a centre-right thinktank is at odds with the Coalition by calling for a ["drastic" boost in Australia's renewable capacity](#). The Blueprint Institute argues in a report today that **Australia** needs more green energy, batteries and grid infrastructure, potentially undermining Peter Dutton's opposition to a bigger rollout. However, it also says the government's nuclear ban should be lifted and that small modular reactors could still play a part in the mix by 2050.

And today the government will announced an overhaul of the way businesses get their climate credentials certified. The aim is to make it clearer who is taking credible climate action. More on this soon.

Load-Date: October 20, 2023