



Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

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Highlight: Follow the latest updates liveExclusive: Mandatory jail terms 'clear breach' of Labor platform and shows party 'under pressure', Kim Carr saysGet our breaking news email, free app or daily news podcast

Body

block-time published-time 6.15am GMT

Kangaroo IVF breakthrough could save endangered koalas

The first kangaroo embryos produced through in-vitro fertilisation could pave the way for other marsupial species, such as koalas and wombats, to be saved from extinction.

The groundbreaking achievement has provided valuable insights into the potential for assisted marsupial breeding for conservation, University of Queensland researchers say.

"Australia is home to the greatest diversity of marsupial fauna on the planet but it also has the highest mammal extinction rate," veterinarian scientist Andres Gambini said on Thursday.

Our ultimate goal is to support the preservation of endangered marsupial species like koalas, Tasmanian devils, northern hairy-nosed wombats and Leadbeater's possums.

The study assessed the development of kangaroo eggs and sperm in a laboratory before embryos were produced by intracytoplasmic sperm injection. It's a technique that involves injecting a single sperm directly into a mature egg. "Because eastern grey kangaroos are overabundant, we collected their eggs and sperm for use as a model to adapt the embryo technologies already applied to domestic animals and humans," Gambini said.

The research team hopes the first marsupial birth through IVF could happen within a decade – but it said this would require further scientific collaboration, funding and technical advancements.

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- Australian Associated Press

block-time published-time 5.59am GMT

After that short adjournment, Labor chair Helen Polley closed down the hearing into the AFP report, despite protestations of Greens senator David Shoebridge who had called for a 15 minute extension.

In that hearing we had numerous Labor members thanking the AFP for their service, but little answers on whether the prime minister had been briefed by the federal police about the caravan packed with explosives found in Dural.

Shoebridge was clearly unhappy with Polley's decision to close down the committee rather than extend the hearing - her reasoning being that another agency was due to appear at 4.30pm.

block-time published-time 5.49am GMT

The hearing into the AFP is continuing, but for how long, it's unclear. The hearing was meant to conclude at 4.30pm, and Labor chair, Helen Polley, had tried to wrap it up at that time.

However, Greens senator David Shoebridge called for the committee to be extended by another 15 minutes, interjecting as Polley tried to close it off. Polley continued talking even as Shoebridge tried to raise his point of order, which was supported by the Coalition member of the committee, Llew O'Brien.

"You're using the government's numbers to shut down an inquiry about what millions of Australians want an answer, when the prime minister was told about potential terrorism," Shoebridge alleged of Polley.

Polley said they would take a private meeting to discuss an extension, but that she intended to close the meeting.

We're now in a short adjournment.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.53am GMT

block-time published-time 5.34am GMT

Senior government members briefed on sensitive investigations by AFP on a 'case-by-case basis', hearing told

The Australian federal police (AFP) are appearing before a parliamentary committee, where senior officers are facing questions about how politicians are briefed on sensitive investigations.

This, of course, comes in the context of the Coalition's criticism of the government's response to antisemitic crimes, and whether Anthony Albanese was briefed in a timely fashion on the Dural caravan loaded with explosives.

Coalition MP Llew O'Brien asked questions about when sensitive investigations are briefed to senior members of the government. AFP members said each investigation is different, and it's on a "case-by-case basis" whether they decide to escalate certain investigations to the notice of senior government members.

Greens senator David Shoebridge asked similar questions.

Asked about previous antisemitic investigations, AFP commissioner, Reece Kershaw, said it was inappropriate to discuss, in a public forum, whether specific ongoing investigations had been briefed to politicians.

Shoebridge countered that disclosing whether the PM had been told "in no way could prejudice a criminal investigation."

Labor senator Helen Polley, the committee chair, has interjected numerous times to direct questioning back to the purpose of the hearing – to investigate the AFP's annual report – and to note hearing rules that it should not go into ongoing investigations.

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block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.54am GMT

block-time published-time 5.17am GMT

Matildas great Williams out for rest of ALW season

The Matildas great Lydia Williams' professional career is in doubt after Melbourne Victory confirmed the veteran goalkeeper will miss the remainder of the A-League Women season through injury, AAP reports.

Williams, who officially retired from the Matildas last June, hasn't played in Victory's current campaign after suffering a wrist injury, and recently had surgery.

Victory had been unwilling to draw a line through Williams but on Thursday the coach, Jeff Hopkins, conceded her season was likely over.

Williams, whose most recent club game was last season's elimination-final loss to Central Coast, is out of contract at season's end. The 36-year-old is yet to make a decision on her playing future and will be given time and space to consider it.

"Probably looks like Lyds won't play again this season," Hopkins said.

She's had an operation and although it's gone really well, probably I don't think that will allow her to play this season.

Hopkins was unwilling to speculate on Williams' future beyond the season.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.27am GMT

block-time published-time 5.03am GMT

Amendments to hate crimes bill 'a Band-Aid on a much bigger wound', says Equality **Australia** CEO

Equality **Australia** says the federal government has "missed an opportunity to stamp out hate speech" by not including serious vilification in its hate crimes bill.

The CEO of the national LGBTIQ+ group, Anna Brown, said the amendments late last night "failed to adequately protect vulnerable communities from hate speech while capitulating to Coalition demands on mandatory sentencing".

LGBTIQ+ people and other minorities will still have no protections against people who target them by promoting hate, serious contempt or severe ridicule. Outlawing incitement to violence while ignoring the toxic rhetoric and harassment that leads to it is simply putting a Band-Aid on a much bigger wound.

Brown welcomed the bill's inclusion of children, families and friends as protected "associates" of LGBTIQ+ people, but said it stopped short of including others – such as librarians and councillors – who are "increasingly caught in the crossfire when LGBTIQ+ people are targeted by hate".

She also took aim at the inclusion of mandatory minimum sentencing, saying this "undermines judicial discretion and runs the very real risk of further fracturing social cohesion and making all communities less safe".

Related: [Labor attempts to pass minimum sentences for hate speech crimes in departure from national platform](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.11am GMT

block-time published-time 4.49am GMT

Dutton claims Trump not talking about 'forcibly removing people' from Gaza: video

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Here is the opposition leader, Peter Dutton, saying the US president, Donald Trump, is not talking about “forcibly removing people” from Gaza.

Dutton made the comments in response to Trump's [statement that the US should “take over” Gaza and “own it”](#), which the UN secretary general, António Guterres, [warned would be “ethnic cleansing”](#).

Dutton also said today that Trump brings “gravitas” to the Middle East conflict and is a “big thinker”, which [you can read about earlier in the blog](#).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.13am GMT

block-time published-time 4.38am GMT

Thanks for following along with me on the blog today! I'll hand you over to Rafqa Touma for the rest of the day's news.

I'll be with you next week for more fun when parliament sits again.

block-time published-time 4.34am GMT

Woodside CEO on nuclear: 'all energy options' should be on the table

Continuing from our last post ...

As the Guardian has reported, [scientists have warned](#) the proposal to extend the life of the North West Shelf gas processing plant on the Burrup Peninsula in the country's remote north-west is linked to the development of at least three major gas fields and could ultimately result in billions of tonnes of climate pollution being released into the atmosphere.

Woodside's CEO, Meg O'Neill also indicated support for nuclear power as part of **Australia's** energy mix, calling for “all energy options” to be on the table. Asked whether **Australia** could reach net zero emissions without nuclear, she said, “I think that'll be a stretch... I think it'll get very expensive.”

As Graham Readfearn [explained](#), the Coalition has presented no evidence to back up its claim [that its nuclear proposal could bring electricity prices down](#).

With the event held in Victoria, O'Neill also took the opportunity to criticise the Victorian government's policies on gas – including the state's ban on coal seam gas and its gas substitution roadmap. However she also expressed “cautious signs of optimism” about a change in position, noting “increased recognition that gas can and should be part of the mix”.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.37am GMT

block-time published-time 4.32am GMT

Woodside energy criticises red tape as company awaits approval on North West Shelf facility

Woodside Energy's chief executive, Meg O'Neill, has argued for governments to cut “red and green tape”, zeroing in on lengthy environmental approvals for fossil fuel projects and Victoria's “anti-gas rhetoric”.

O'Neill said she anticipated a federal decision on the North West Shelf gas processing plant soon after receiving approval from the WA state government in December.

The project's six-year environmental approval process was used as a case study, underlining the gas executive's call for clearer timelines on decisions. O'Neill said:

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We've got to have a process that is clear for everybody concerned, that's ourselves as investors, bureaucrats, [and] it's the timeline for the community who's interested in seeing these projects moving forward.

According to O'Neill, Woodside had received a letter from the federal environment department advising that the department's review of the project was expected to be completed – and handed to the minister – by 28 February.

In December, we received approval from the WA state government to extend the life of the plant, but it came after six years of assessment and appeals within the WA environmental system, despite bipartisan support for the proposal. Now we are eagerly awaiting a federal decision as a second environmental regulator has to consider [the project].

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.36am GMT

block-time published-time 4.31am GMT

Tldr: what we learned today in question time The Coalition spent more than half of their questions asking the treasurer, Jim Chalmers, about how [costs have gone up](#) on food, gas, rents etc. Chalmers didn't seem to mind and went back on the attack against Angus Taylor. The government's dixer were at first laser-focused on the [cost of living](#) and their key health and education policies, but by the end went into other territory like veterans' affairs and vaping (which felt a bit out of the blue). Tanya Plibersek was also in the spotlight today on the government pulling its nature-positive bills. She blamed the Coalition and Greens for not supporting it – though it's been revealed recently from [Fol documents](#) that she did have a deal with the Greens and David Pocock before it was pulled.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.35am GMT

block-time published-time 4.16am GMT

Question time ends

The final question is a dixer to Mark Butler on restricting vapes.

His response gets some heckling from the opposite side, and we can hear some comments of "it [a ban] doesn't work".

And with that, question time is over for the week.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.27am GMT

block-time published-time 4.14am GMT

Burke confirms no plans to raise worker threshold when defining small businesses

The questions go back to the crossbench, and independent MP Allegra Spender asks whether the government will raise the threshold of the definition of small business from 15 to 25 workers. Tony Burke takes the question:

We want to make sure we get the balance right in providing the distinction between acknowledging the different pressures of small businesses are under, particularly with paperwork, but making sure that the definitions are realistic because with every exemption, it carries two consequences. One, it does mean for those businesses, they do have an easy compliance burden, that is true, but it does also mean that the workers who work there have fewer rights than they would have [at] another business ...

The changing definition is a very big step and given the way many businesses are structured in respect to casuals, that is why we have not been supporting a change in that number.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.26am GMT

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block-time published-time 4.10am GMT

Burke continues attacks on Coalition's potential investor visa revival

The next dixer goes to home affairs minister Tony Burke, on getting rid of “dodgy visa programs”. It's a nod to the significant investor visa that Peter Dutton has suggested could be reestablished if the Coalition won government. There's a bit more context on that [here](#).

Burke says a review of the visa system found “serious problems” in the system.

The Albanese government should hold firm on good policies that are in place for good reasons, referring specifically for our abolition of the visas that the leader of the opposition wants to bring back.

This shows the twisted priorities ... today in an interview he doubled down and wanted to bring back a discredited visa.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.26am GMT

block-time published-time 4.05am GMT

Pulling ‘necessary’ and ‘sensible’ nature-positive bill a shame, says Plibersek

Tanya Plibersek gets another question from the opposition on the nature positive bill. This time it's from the Nationals leader, David Littleproud, who asks if she would rule out introducing a future environmental protection bill.

Plibersek again says its a “shame” the bill didn't pass the Senate. The government has pulled the legislation from the Senate notice paper, but says it was “necessary” and “sensible” reform.

Prof Graeme Samuel was selected by the previous government to report on our environmental laws and what did he find? He found that those laws either working for business and not working for nature.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.29am GMT

block-time published-time 4.02am GMT

Veterans ‘waiting for years’ to have claims processed after Coalition government: Keogh

We're getting a whole range of dixer today. The next one goes to Matt Keogh, the veterans' affairs minister, on how the government is improving the lives of veterans.

Keogh goes to the proposed cuts to the public service that the opposition has raised, and says some of the new public service hires by the government have been frontline workers in the department of veterans' affairs (DVA):

The leader of the opposition has been saying workers who provide government services are government waste and he has been saying that he wants to cut the 36,000 public service roles. But when the Liberals left office, DVA was under-resourced and there was some 42,000 veteran claims that were not even being looked at by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, which meant that veterans were waiting for years to have their claims processed.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.31am GMT

block-time published-time 4.00am GMT

Laos authorities investigating alcohol poisoning of Australians have not requested support from AFP

The independent MP Zoe Daniel gets the next crossbench question. She asks for an update on the investigation into alcohol poisoning that killed two Australian girls in Laos last year – Holly Moreton Bowles and Bianca Jones. The two girls lived in Daniel's electorate of Goldstein in Melbourne.

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The deputy prime minister, Richard Marles, answers, saying the Laos government hasn't taken up an offer from the Australian federal police to support the investigation.

This is an investigation which is being undertaken by the authorities in Laos. The Australian federal police have made an offer to the authorities in Laos to provide their assistance in the investigation and there is a whole lot of capability that the Australian federal police could bring to bear in terms of this investigation. I have to report ... that, at this point, the Laos authorities have not taken up that invitation ...

The minister for foreign affairs has spoken to her counterpart in Laos and made clear that it is the expectation of the Australian government that there be a thorough investigation into these events, into this crime and that the perpetrators be found.

Related: [Six people are dead after a suspected mass methanol poisoning at a backpacker party town. What went wrong in Laos?](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.30am GMT

block-time published-time 3.55am GMT

Husic spruiks \$2bn for green aluminium

The next dixer goes to the industry minister, Ed Husic, on how the government is helping job security for regional communities that make aluminium.

Husic says the government is supporting blue-collar jobs and gives a nod to the \$2bn announcement for green aluminium that the government made last month.

It is an incredible opportunity and a big deal. We have the resources, the people and we have got the ability to add value across the breadth of the supply chain, we have the smelters. The Australian aluminium council says our investment is globally significant.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.23am GMT

block-time published-time 3.53am GMT

Plibersek blames Coalition and Greens for ditched EPA legislature

Sussan Ley gets the next question, and asks the environment minister, Tanya Plibersek, if she still wants "a federal Environmental Protection Agency, including in Western **Australia**?"

There's a bit of back and forth between Plibersek and Peter Dutton over calling Sussan Ley the deputy leader of the opposition, and she calls Dutton "aggro" for repeatedly interrupting her.

She then continues:

We made very clear through our nature positive plan and through our laws that we wanted to see progress. Progress to deliver stronger protection for nature and progress to provide faster, clearer decisions for business. There is no business in the country that believes the environment laws are working to progress projects quickly and there is no environmental organisation or anyone with any common sense that thinks that our laws are working to protect nature effectively either.

She blames the Coalition and Greens again for not supporting the bill, though the WA premier, Roger Cook, has publicly said he doesn't want to see the bill pass.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.12am GMT

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block-time published-time 3.49am GMT

King spruiks \$7.2bn for Bruce highway after dixer on Queensland road safety improvements

Infrastructure minister Catherine King is given a dixer on improving road safety in Queensland.

King mentions the \$7.2bn commitment Labor made to the Bruce highway and that the government will support rebuilding infrastructure destroyed in the floods.

I want to assure the house [that] the Albanese government is working closely with the Queensland government to ensure that we get that freight route up as soon as possible and that we have a long-term resilience solution for that stretch of road and we have seen the prime minister is there today.

She then delves into where the opposition would cut spending to pay for their nuclear plan. She also mentions tax-free lunches.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.06am GMT

block-time published-time 3.44am GMT

Taylor presses Chalmers on insurance costs since last election

Angus Taylor asks Chalmers whether insurance costs have risen 19% since the last election.

Chalmers says the impacts of natural disasters, like in north Queensland now, are affecting insurance premiums:

Insurance has been one of the big drivers of the inflation challenge in our economy. And even as we've made some really quite substantial progress in a lot of the other categories, and insurance, I think from memory, came off a little bit in the most recent data, it is still a big and prominent part of the CPI.

Chalmers challenges Taylor to tell the house what else should be done to reduce inflation premiums.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.00am GMT

block-time published-time 3.41am GMT

Jason Clare: we will cut student debt, opposition will cut price of 'croquembouche for bosses'

It's time for another dixer, and this time, we are going from childcare to higher education and the government's promise to cut student debt if it wins the next election.

The education minister, Jason Clare, spruiks the election promise and provides our third reference to tax-free lunches for today, which gets picked up by the opposition, and is asked by Milton Dick not to stray too far.

He continues anyway:

If we win the election, Mr speaker, we will cut student debt by 20% and that will leave 3 million Australians better off. If they win the election, if they won't get that, they will be worse off ... the opposition leader says that he thinks \$1.6bn on bosses' lunches is an efficient use of taxpayers' money. Doesn't say that about Medicare, doesn't say that about childcare but apparently cut price croquembouche for bosses, that is, chef kiss.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.56am GMT

block-time published-time 3.36am GMT

Chalmers on attack after Taylor baits on gas prices

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Angus Taylor is up again flinging another question to Jim Chalmers, this time about gas prices:

Can the treasurer confirmed the cost of gas has risen 34% during Labor's cost of living crisis since the election of the Albanese Labor government?

Chalmers goes straight on the attack:

Imagine asking about gas prices when they came in here at the end of our first year we were in government and voted against our gas caps? Imagine being so slow on the uptake ... that he comes in here and asks about gas prices – when Australians needed you to act on gas prices, you are nowhere to be found.

Chalmers is then pulled up on a point of order. Milton Dick asks the treasurer to stop straying too much into “alternative policy”, i.e. focus on the government's policy, not on the opposition.

Chalmers continues on the attack:

[It's an] inconvenient fact for the shadow treasurer, who was very unhappy when inflation went down again last Wednesday and is expressing his unhinged unhappiness today in the chamber, Mr speaker.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.52am GMT

block-time published-time 3.32am GMT

Anne Aly answers dixer plugging government's childcare reforms

Staying on cost of living, the next dixer goes to **Anne Aly** on the government's childcare policy.

Aly mentions wage rises for childcare workers and the new bill she introduced that guarantees three days of childcare for all families.

However, that bill was sent to an inquiry earlier today, so it won't pass this fortnight.

We are investing \$1bn to help build the early learning services in the regions and in the suburbs where children are currently missing out. Our three-day guarantee, which I introduced into parliament yesterday, ensures every child has access to 72 hours a fortnight of early learning, regardless of their parent's activity. We have made significant progress on our reforms.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.46am GMT

block-time published-time 3.29am GMT

Monique Ryan to PM: is dropping EPA how 'climate wars end'?

The first crossbench question goes to independent MP Monique Ryan, who asks:

On 21 May 2022 in his victory speech, the prime minister said, “Together we can end the climate wars.” Yesterday your government dropped – moved to drop – the Environmental Protection Agency off the Senate bill. I ask you, minister, is this how the climate wars end?

Environment minister Tanya Plibersek blames the Coalition and the Greens for the nature positive laws not passing.

I think Greens political party voters would be surprised to learn that the political party that purports to stand up for the environment wasn't prepared to vote for a strong new cop on the beat, an Environment Protection Agency with strong new powers and penalties. They weren't prepared to vote for better data, more transparency and a world first definition of nature positive. I think that the Liberals and Nationals voters would be surprised to know that those opposite voted against faster approvals for projects, based on better data and more regional planning.

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For more context on how the nature positive bill went down, have a read of this piece by my colleague Dan Jervis-Bardy :

Related: [*Albanese 'spooked' into ditching national environment watchdog – for a second time, critics say*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.43am GMT

block-time published-time 3.23am GMT

Chalmers: only way opposition can fund 'nuclear insanity' is to cut Medicare

The next dixer goes to Jim Chalmers, again on how the government is providing cost of living support.

Chalmers is pushing the opposition on what cuts the Coalition will make if it wins government.

All they have got is secret costs and secret cuts. They have got a slogan that says they want to go back, take **Australia** backwards. The truth of that is if he gets back, Australians go backwards. The only way that he can find \$350bn in cuts, the only way they can find \$600bn to pay for this nuclear insanity, is to come after Medicare again, to come after hospitals, to come after housing again, to come after wages and pensions again.

He also uses the opportunity to bring up tax-free lunches for a second time this QT.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.36am GMT

block-time published-time 3.21am GMT

Angus Taylor has a turn at pressing treasurer on cost of living crisis

The shadow treasurer, Angus Taylor, is up again for the second opposition question.

He asks if Chalmers will confirm that "housing rents have risen 17% during Labor's cost of living crisis since the election of the Albanese Labor Government?"

Within a few seconds of Chalmers standing up, speaker Milton Dick calls on the government benches to stop giving "a running commentary on what you think of the question".

Chalmers then answers:

I can confirm that rents would be higher were it not for our Commonwealth rent assistance. I would remind the house again that when this side of the house was there for Australian renters, those opposite described two permanent increases in Commonwealth rent assistance as a sugar hit and wasteful spending. It is another welcome opportunity to remind the house and the people at home that when those opposite talk about \$50bn in wasteful spending, included in that is investment in housing and the two consecutive increases in Commonwealth rent assistance.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.31am GMT

block-time published-time 3.18am GMT

Cost of living again focus of today's dixer

Same as Tuesday and Wednesday, today's dixer in question time are fully focused on cost of living.

The first dixer is from former dolphin trainer turned WA MP Sam Lim, who flings it to Richard Marles.

Marles lists off their cost of living policies.

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We have made medicines cheaper, we made childcare more affordable, we provided energy bill relief to every Australian. We've got wages going [up] again.

For good measure, he brings up the tax-free lunch policy at the end.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.26am GMT

block-time published-time 3.14am GMT

Sukkar and Chalmers trade figures on food prices

Michael Sukkar, the manager of opposition business, stands up with a point of order:

The question was very tight, the question asked the treasurer how much food prices were up since the election of the government, not the last 12 months, since the election of the government, and if the treasurer doesn't know the answer is 12%.

Chalmers replies, going back to his previous figures:

Food inflation is currently half what it was when we came to office ...

I don't think I've ever seen anyone as unhappy as the shadow treasurer on the day last week when inflation came down again on the bottom half of the Reserve Bank target band.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.22am GMT

block-time published-time 3.11am GMT

Question time begins

We're now on to questions.

Angus Taylor has the first one for Jim Chalmers :

Can the treasurer tell Australians by what percentage the cost of food has gone up during Labor's cost-of-living crisis since the election of the Albanese Labor government.

This is similar to Sussan Ley's question for the prime minister yesterday.

Chalmers says Taylor has "nerve" to ask him about cost of living, and repeats the figures the PM gave.

The nerve of these characters asking about the cost of living after they opposed all of our efforts to help Australians with the cost of living. Now, if you had been there for Australians when we wanted to give them tax cuts, energy bill relief, cheaper early childhood education, cheaper medicines, better wages, help with rent ...

As the prime minister said in response to this question ... if you look at the last year of food inflation it is 3%, if you look at the last year under those opposite it was 5.9%.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.19am GMT

block-time published-time 3.05am GMT

House commemorates former defence minister who died last month

As the prime minister is in Townsville, the deputy prime minister, Richard Marles, is in the hot seat today.

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Before questions begin, the House is commemorating former defence minister John Colinton Moore who died on 22 January.

Marles and opposition leader Peter Dutton both pay their respects.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.09am GMT

block-time published-time 2.57am GMT

Video: Dutton calls for inquiry into what Albanese knew about explosive-laden caravan

We're approaching the final question time for this first sitting week.

In the meantime, we have a video of Peter Dutton's press conference earlier calling for an inquiry into when the PM was made aware of the caravan full of explosives:

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.03am GMT

block-time published-time 2.36am GMT

Wilkie says punishments 'for the courts to decide' as cross-bench responds to Labor's mandatory sentencing backflip

[In case you missed it earlier today](#) : the hate crimes amendment to add mandatory minimum sentences for some terrorism offences and the display of hate symbols was voted on and agreed to in the house.

Reaction has flowed from the cross-bench throughout the afternoon, including from the independent MP Andrew Wilkie, who said it is "for the courts to decide punishments, not politicians".

For the major parties to push through mandatory minimum sentencing on the Hate Crimes Bill today shows once again their contempt for due process and matters of principle.

The independent MP for Kooyong, Monique Ryan, shared a similar sentiment: "These crimes are serious – and I voted for the legislation – but courts, not politicians, should decide on criminal sentencing."

Kate Chaney, the independent MP for Curtin, also agreed: "Hate crimes need serious consequences, but courts should decide sentences based on all the circumstances."

The independent Victorian senator Lidia Thorpe said she would not support "any bill that would create mandatory minimum sentences", saying these "undermine the independence and discretion of the judiciary and lead to unjust, discriminatory outcomes".

Labor continues to listen to Peter Dutton instead of Labor members and the expert evidence. This is another shameful instance of Labor betraying their member base and lurching to the right.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.54am GMT

block-time published-time 2.27am GMT

Labor's Queensland caucus calls out 'convenient timing' remark from Hughes

Labor's Queensland caucus has strongly called out Liberal senator Hollie Hughes, who claimed it was "convenient timing" that Anthony Albanese had travelled to the north Queensland flood zone.

Employment minister Murray Watt – formerly the emergency management minister – called the Liberal senator's remarks "disgusting".

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I can tell you it's not trivial and it's not convenient for North Queenslanders to have to evacuate their homes right now. It's not convenient for North Queenslanders to have supply chains interrupted, and it's certainly not convenient for them to have their homes damaged in the way that is going on right now. And that's why the prime minister is exactly where he needs to be today in north Queensland to deliver the support that is necessary.

As Krishani brought you earlier, Hughes said in the Senate chamber this morning:

The boss [Albanese] is away. He's on a plane up to Townsville. Doesn't want to talk to the Australian people through the parliament today. He's up there. Convenient timing, some might say. The boss is away.

Albanese's office flagged to journalists last night that he was travelling to the flood region, where he conducted multiple media interviews and a press conference today.

Peter Dutton was asked about Albanese's absence from parliament, to which he said it was "right for the prime minister to visit".

Nita Green, Labor's senator based in north Queensland, claimed Hughes' words "belittle the people of north Queensland".

The prime minister is exactly where he should be today, talking to the people of north Queensland and working out how he can best assist along with the Queensland Government. That is exactly what we are focused on today, and the people of north Queensland are hearing that directly from us. But unfortunately, Peter Dutton and Hollie Hughes were focused today on attacking the prime minister and making light of the floods in north Queensland.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.34am GMT

block-time published-time 2.16am GMT

Albanese: Dutton's caravan inquiry call a 'remarkable' attempt to play politics

The prime minister has labelled calls from Peter Dutton to establish an inquiry into what the government knew and revealed about a caravan of explosives found in NSW as "remarkable".

As Krishani reported earlier, the Coalition used yesterday's question time to repeatedly pressure Anthony Albanese to reveal exactly when he knew about the caravan. Dutton has called for an inquiry to determine whether a "communications failure" occurred.

Speaking to reporters in Queensland just a moment ago, Albanese said he is briefed regularly and criticised Dutton for pursuing a "political process" rather than allowing intelligence agencies to continue their work:

Peter Dutton wants resources of the Australian Federal Police and the intelligence agencies to stop doing what they're doing – chasing down these criminals, arresting them, putting them in the clink – instead, he wants a political process. [It] says more about Peter Dutton than anything else ... You don't have to be someone who watches CSI every week to know that that's the important process, not political games.

Albanese claimed that for Dutton, there is "no issue too big for him to show how small his approach to politics is and to attempt to play politics".

This is an ongoing investigation. I find it remarkable that Peter Dutton says that should stop, while we do some sort of party committee process.

The PM was also asked about Gaza again and whether he's contacted Trump for more details on his proposal. Albanese said again his position was a "bipartisan position for a two-state solution".

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.34am GMT

Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

block-time published-time 2.04am GMT

Woodside energy CEO expected to call for reduction of 'red and green tape' in response to Trump's fossil fuel industry support

The Woodside Energy chief executive, Meg O'Neill, is expected to call on "all levels of government" to reduce "red and green tape" in response to US president Donald Trump's support for the fossil fuel industry in an address to a mining club function in Melbourne.

The speech was due to begin at 1pm today, but excerpts from the address have already been reported in The Australian and West Australian newspapers.

"Amid rising global protectionism and greater competition for capital, Australia must sharpen its competitive edge even further," O'Neill was expected to say.

And moves by the new administration in the US to deregulate the economy and spur new energy investments make the challenge for countries like Australia even more acute.

She was also expected to seek action against environmental activists, according to the reports.

A small group of citizens held up climate emergency posters outside the Melbourne town hall as mining executives filed into the event.

Retired science teacher Lesley Walker was among those raising their concerns about oil and gas activities fuelling climate change. "We are sleepwalking into a catastrophe," she said.

Quoting [Prof Stephen Humphreys](#) from the London School of Economics, Walker added: "The only thing that can stop this now is civil disobedience."

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.06am GMT

block-time published-time 2.01am GMT

Bill guaranteeing three days of subsidised childcare held up in inquiry

The government's childcare bill, which would have guaranteed three days of subsidised childcare for all families, has been delayed after being sent to an inquiry.

The bill would have provided subsidised care for three days for families earning up to \$533,280 a year and would have ended the "activity test" that advocates said penalised single mothers trying to find work.

The Greens had said they would support the bill, so it had a fairly clear pathway to pass in this sitting fortnight, but it's now with an inquiry that is only due to report back in March.

Greens senator Steph Hodgins-May said the Greens wanted the bill passed before the election.

Labor supported the Liberals in pushing this bill off to a Senate inquiry that won't be finished until late March, effectively ruining its chances before the election.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.10am GMT

block-time published-time 1.46am GMT

PM says extreme weather events becoming 'more intense'

Bob Katter, the local member for Kennedy, one of the flooded areas, is standing with the PM.

Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

Albanese says he's worked with Katter to fix infrastructure in the flood-affected region.

He says extreme weather events are becoming "more intense", and his government is trying to respond by putting in measures to mitigate the impact of future disasters.

We've established a \$200m fund annually, for making sure that we build infrastructure and we deal with resilience, because we are seeing in Australia, unfortunately, more extreme weather events and they're more intense.

The Queensland premier, David Crisafulli, is also providing an update on the situation:

There is a new wave of monsoonal rains in the upcoming few days, the bureau has reported. We must remain alert, particularly in the area between Ingham and Bowen. Those conditions exist and you only had to see some of the showers this morning to understand the real threat that remains. The double whammy is that you have conditions where everything is so water logged, it's got nowhere to go so if you have heavy rainfall in a short period of time, there is a real risk of flooding.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.54am GMT

block-time published-time 1.38am GMT

PM announces \$8m community relief fund for Townsville flood recovery

Anthony Albanese has announced \$8m for a co-funded community relief fund, which will provide up to \$1m for eight local government associations affected by the floods.

Albanese says:

This will provide councils with financial assurance that they need to get on with the business of cleaning up and making their communities safe.

He's also going through the disaster relief funding that the government's activated, which provides \$1000 for eligible adults and \$400 for children affected in designated areas.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.46am GMT

block-time published-time 1.35am GMT

PM says 'best of the Australian character' seen in 'worst of times' in Townsville update

The prime minister is speaking in Townsville, providing an update on the north Queensland floods.

At the worst of times, what we see is the best of the Australian character.

What we're seeing here are through three levels of government and the community is working together to get through what is a really tough time.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.42am GMT

block-time published-time 12.58am GMT

Dutton declines to give details on his plan to cut Canberra's public servants

Questions have now gone to Dutton's announcement that he would cut public servants working in Canberra.

He has asked for more details on whether a Coalition government would offer redundancies or issue a hiring freeze.

Again, Dutton says he will make an announcement on his policies "in due course".

Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

I just don't find any Australians who say that it's easier to deal with the government as a result of employing 36,000 more public servants.

He clarifies by saying the party doesn't want to cut frontline positions, but he won't say whether he will commit to limiting spending on consultants in a following question.

We will cut back on wasteful spending and if there is wasteful spending taking place, it should be cut.

For more background on what those 36,000 positions are, my colleague Josh Butler has this explainer from last week:

Related: [Dutton wants to slash thousands of government jobs in an Elon Musk-style crusade. But what's actually on the chopping block?](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.05am GMT

block-time published-time 12.51am GMT

Dutton says it's 'right' for PM to be away visiting flood-affected Queensland at this time

Dutton says it's "right" for the prime minister to be visiting north Queensland on a sitting day, and missing question time.

Look, I think it's right for the prime minister to visit. It's always difficult to know, particularly when the waters haven't receded or people are still right in the thick of it, I made a decision not to go because I just think the emergency workers are still on the ground.

It's a change in tone from the Liberal senator Hollie Hughes, who earlier said in the chamber: "The boss is away... that's convenient timing, some might say."

Albanese is due to speak with Queensland's LNP premier, David Crisafulli, shortly.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.54am GMT

block-time published-time 12.47am GMT

Dutton says Coalition supports net zero emissions by 2050 but declines to comment on 2035 target

The press conference turns to climate and the Coalition's emissions targets. Dutton won't say whether the Coalition will sign up to a 2035 target – only that the party supports net zero by 2050.

He says the Coalition "doesn't have the capacity to model in opposition".

We'll sign up to targets that we believe are in our country's best interests. I do believe that as we get toward 2050, particularly with nuclear coming in in 2035.

The point that I've made in relation to 2035 to your question is that we don't have the capacity to model in opposition. The government has a lot of modelling – and you would have expected them to have released the detail of their 2035 target by February.

A note here – Labor modelled its 2030 target announcement from opposition in 2021. They announced their policy to reduce emissions by 43% by 2030, and said it was backed by modelling by market analysts Reputex.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.11am GMT

block-time published-time 12.42am GMT

Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

Dutton says 'no proposals to make any changes' to stance on Israeli capital

Q: Would a Coalition government recognise West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel again?

(Scott Morrison, as prime minister, officially recognised West Jerusalem as Israel's capital. The Albanese government [changed from that position](#) in October 2022.)

Dutton says there are "no proposals to make any changes to the settings we've got at the moment".

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.47am GMT

block-time published-time 12.37am GMT

President Trump not talking about 'forcibly moving people' from Gaza: Dutton

Earlier we reported on Dutton calling Donald Trump a "big thinker". He's been asked about the comments he made to 2GB this morning, which were in relation to Trump's comments to "take over" Gaza.

Dutton backs in his comments, calling Trump a "dealmaker" who's created "incredible success".

I think the point the president was making, which is a point all of us, I'm sure, would want to emphasise, is that we want peace in the Middle East.

... hopefully more people [hostages] can be released and if that is part of the work that the Trump administration is doing – which, of course, it is – then that's fantastic work and whatever leverage can be applied to bring people out of a hostage situation back to their families I think is a good thing and if we can see a plan which has peace and stability restored to the region, then would I support that? Yes, of course I would.

He's tested further on whether Trump's plan would end Gaza as a place for Palestinians – he defers the question to the prime minister, but says:

I don't think the president, from what I've seen, is talking about forcefully moving people. I would wait to see the detail of what is released as the discussions continue

Trump said yesterday the US will "take over" war-ravaged Gaza and "own it" and declined to rule out sending US troops to do so, adding that Palestinians should be resettled "permanently".

Related: [Trump says US will 'take over' Gaza Strip in shock announcement during Netanyahu visit](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.44am GMT

block-time published-time 12.32am GMT

Dutton floats possibility that AFP was concerned that PM or his office 'could leak the information' on caravan investigation

Dutton is asked whether the AFP has questions to answer on when the prime minister was told about the incident.

Dutton says he "doesn't think there is a breakdown in the process":

To be honest, the prime minister has the questions to answer here. I don't think there is any breakdown in the process. The NSW police have either made a deliberate decision not to advise the commonwealth so that the prime minister wasn't advised because they are worried he would leak the information ... Beyond that there is no other reasonable explanation.

Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

Dutton goes further to say there are “reasonable questions” for the prime minister to answer, and says the “first step” should be an inquiry.

He's also asked if he thinks there's been an “ill outcome” over this communication. He says that's a “hard question to answer”:

As I said before, when I was home affairs minister – and I'm sure it's the case for Tony Burke now – we carried secure communications with us 24/7, wherever we were in the world.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.45am GMT

block-time published-time 12.24am GMT

Liberals claim Labor was dragged ‘kicking and screaming’ into supporting mandatory minimum sentences

Dutton is with the shadow home affairs minister, James Paterson, and is welcoming the amendments for mandatory minimum sentencing voted on in the House this morning.

Paterson says the PM was “dragged kicking and screaming” to support the amendments, and that he and other Labor MPs had previously spoken out against mandatory minimum sentencing.

It was only last week that the prime minister was rubbishing the need for mandatory minimum sentences. It was on Tuesday that Labor senators voted against the motion from the Coalition advocating mandatory minimum sentences. So, once again we have a prime minister [who] doesn't have the strength to make the tough decisions in the national interest.

Dutton's asked about whether an investigation would expose security agencies. He says the investigation “should be made public”:

There is no way in the world that the prime minister would be kept in the dark for 10 days about an alleged terrorist plot that could kill hundreds of Australians. Why was the premier of New South Wales notified about it if there was a national security imperative to keep it from political leaders? It just doesn't add up.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.30am GMT

block-time published-time 12.17am GMT

Dutton calls for inquiry into when PM notified of caravan full of explosives

The opposition leader, Peter Dutton, is doing his first press conference this year in Canberra.

He's focusing on when the PM was briefed on the caravan filled with explosives in Sydney.

I have written to the prime minister today asking for an independent inquiry in relation to the fact that the prime minister of our country wasn't notified for nine days, 10 days of what was believed to be the biggest planned terrorist attack in our country's history.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.07am GMT

block-time published-time 11.55pm GMT

Labor education bill keeping Tafe free has passed the House

Labor's “Free Tafe” bill has passed the House of Representatives, paving the way for it to become legislated with the backing of the Senate.

Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

The Australian Education Union's federal president, Correna Haythorpe, urged the federal parliament to prioritise the bill prior to the election being called.

We are calling on the federal parliament to pass this legislation so that Tafe students and teachers can have certainty into the future. We know that the Coalition have been vocally opposed to Free Tafe. This puts Free Tafe at significant risk of being scrapped should a Dutton government be elected.

"Free Tafe has changed lives, and we have seen rapid invigoration of the Tafe sector under the Albanese government, but now all that progress is at risk.

The minister for skills and training, Andrew Giles, confirmed the Liberal party was blocking the bill but said with "Anthony Albanese and the Australian Labor party, Free Tafe is here to stay".

Read more about the bill here:

Related: [*Albanese is promising fee-free Tafe. How would it work – and why is it causing controversy?*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.03am GMT

block-time published-time 11.50pm GMT

Education minister proposes new laws to prevent gender-based violence at universities

The education minister, Jason Clare, has introduced legislation that would enshrine a national code to prevent and respond to gender-based violence at universities.

It comes the same week the newly established national student ombudsman began taking complaints from students with the powers of a royal commission.

Addressing parliament this morning, Clare said for "too long" students had been "let down by their universities and inaction by previous governments".

Advocates have been ignored and they shouldn't have been.

The code will require higher education institutions to take evidence-based steps to prevent gender-based violence on campuses and at third-party student accommodation providers. It will be backed by mandatory reporting to governing bodies, which could enact financial penalties if universities fail to meet their expectations.

National gender equity campaigning group Fair Agenda's Renee Carr said the code was the product of "years of research and collective advocacy".

For too long, student victim-survivors have faced harmful actions from their universities, compounding the harm of their assault. Too many have been left without support for their safety on campus or in exam spaces, and have been left to drop out or fail as a result.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.59pm GMT

block-time published-time 11.34pm GMT

Labor MP speaks out on Trump's Gaza comments

While Anthony Albanese has avoided directly responding to president Donald Trump's comments on taking over Gaza, Labor MP and assistant climate change minister Josh Wilson has issued a statement on X.

He said there "can be no suggestion" another country could "own" Gaza.

Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

Australia is a longstanding supporter of a two-state solution that delivers peace, justice and self-determination for the Palestinian people. There can be no suggestion that another country would unilaterally "own" Gaza and displace Palestinians.

enltrAustralia is a longstanding supporter of a two-state solution that delivers peace, justice and self-determination for the Palestinian people. There can be no suggestion that another country would unilaterally "own" Gaza and displace Palestinians. <https://t.co/YEyCWozacq>

— Josh Wilson (@JoshIFreo) [February 5, 2025](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.44pm GMT

block-time published-time 11.18pm GMT

Government seeks to move Senate hate crimes bill vote to today

The government will move a motion to bring forward a vote on the hate crimes legislation in the Senate so it can pass there today as well.

The Senate is now debating the future made in **Australia** bill to legislate production tax credits.

They have the numbers for it, and you can read more on it here:

Related: [Future Made in **Australia** bill set to pass but much of Labor's remaining agenda up in the air](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.29pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.43pm GMT

Ged Kearney not present for mandatory minimum sentencing vote

The assistant health minister, Ged Kearney, was not in the chamber when voting on the amendment for mandatory minimum sentencing in the hate crimes bill took place.

The amendment was supported by the coalition and government, as well as independents Allegra Spender, Rebekha Sharkie, Dai Le and Russell Broadbent and was voted against by the Greens and other cross-benchers.

Clarification: This post was amended on 6 February, 2025, to clarify that Ged Kearney did not formally abstain from the vote on the amendment but was not in the chamber at the time.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.51am GMT

block-time published-time 10.30pm GMT

House agrees to mandatory minimum sentences for hate crimes

The hate crimes amendment to add mandatory minimum sentencing has now been voted on and agreed to in the house.

But neither the government nor Coalition supported amendments from independent MP Allegra Spender to include stronger anti-vilification provisions.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.55pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.18pm GMT

Voting begins on hate crimes legislation

Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

Parliament is sitting this morning, and over in the house they've begun voting on amendments to the hate crimes legislation that adds mandatory minimum sentences for some terrorism offences and displaying hate symbols.

The amendments were brought up in the federation chamber late yesterday – it's an extra chamber that can work in parallel with the House of Representatives to get legislation moving along.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.26pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.12pm GMT

'Incredible assumption there, Karl': PM defends communication on caravan plot in heated exchange

The Coalition used yesterday's question time to repeatedly pressure Anthony Albanese to reveal exactly when he knew about the caravan carrying explosives in Sydney.

Albanese was asked about it again in several interviews this morning, including on Nine's Today. It got a bit heated.

Host Karl Stefanovic said the PM must have been "livid" that he wasn't notified, to which Albanese responded: "You're making an incredible assumption there, Karl."

He's then asked whether he'd support an inquiry into whether a "communications failure" occurred.

Here's the rest of the exchange:

Albanese: "What? So, stop the investigations? Stop doing the work to track down the perpetrators of these crimes and engage in politics?"

Stefanovic: "All right, that's a no."

Albanese: "Do you think that that is a sensible use of resources?"

Stefanovic: "I think that it needs some focus ... But it's when you are actually informed about something of this magnitude that's important."

Albanese: "Karl, what's important is tracking down the perpetrators of these crimes. It is, I find it, frankly, absurd that people think, for example, that resources should be diverted, that the AFP and intelligence agencies should be engaged in a political process rather than doing their job."

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.41pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.03pm GMT

Dutton doubles down on proposal to return 'golden ticket' visa for high net worth migrants

Peter Dutton has backed a proposal to bring back the significant investor visa – also known as the "golden ticket" – that was abolished by the government in January 2024.

Dutton was reportedly overheard at a Liberal party fundraising event last week telling a migration agent, "I think we'll bring it back."

The visa required a minimum investment of \$5m in [Australia](#) in exchange for automatic permanent residency.

Dutton was asked about it on 2GB this morning and said he doesn't think there's "anything remarkable" about wanting to bring in high net worth individuals.

Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

The whole idea is to try and attract capital to our country. I want people to invest in businesses, I want start ups in the IT space where we can attract capital from international partners and you need all the requisite security checks and that's a given.

The scheme was dumped after a review, which found migrants on skilled visas contributed more to the economy over a lifetime than the "golden ticket" visa holders.

Then-home affairs minister Clare O'Neil said at the time: "It has been obvious for years that this visa is not delivering what our country and economy needs from a migration system."

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.13pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.40pm GMT

Not enough known about Trump's Gaza plans to determine his statement's meaning, Paterson says

There has been plenty of reaction from politicians this morning to Donald Trump 's comments on taking over Gaza.

Looping back to shadow home affairs minister James Paterson on ABC News Breakfast earlier – he was asked whether the plan could be characterised as "ethnic cleansing". He replied:

I wouldn't use those words, but I would say that it hasn't changed the view, the longstanding view of the Liberal party, that we support a two-state solution that includes self-determination for both Israelis and Palestinians. It includes security and peace within secure borders of two states. And we do have a task ahead of us to rebuild Gaza after a terrible war. And one of the critical elements of that task is going to have to be removing Hamas from power.

He says we "don't understand enough" about Trump's intentions or plans.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.22pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.23pm GMT

Dutton: Trump is a 'big thinker'

Peter Dutton says the US president, Donald Trump, brings "gravitas" to the Middle East conflict and that he is a "big thinker". The opposition leader made the comments in response to Trump's statement that the US should take over Gaza.

Dutton told 2GB: "What's gone before us has failed."

I think he [Trump] genuinely wants to see a chance for peace; he wants to see people not living in squalor but living in the safe environment with good housing for their children ...

He's a big thinker and a deal maker. He's not become a president of the United States for a second time by being anything other than shrewd.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.53pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.12pm GMT

PM lists government support for Townsville as he bats off further challenges on Trump's Gaza comments

You can hear the torrential rain in Townsville this morning as the PM continues his interviews.

On Sunrise, Anthony Albanese's gone through the support the federal government is providing:

Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

We've triggered income support. We've already signed off on the support for local government here. We have ADF ...choppers have come not just from the Townsville base but from Oakey as well to provide support ... so a lot of ADF personnel are here helping.

He also said earlier the government would support the rebuild of the Bruce Highway, damaged by the floods.

Albanese was then rechallenged on Donald Trump's comments. He still won't bite and reiterates Australia's position.

Let's not get ahead of ourselves here. This is a statement that's been made yesterday. I've said for, I think, very sound reasons, two things. One is, Australia determines our foreign policy. Our foreign policy remains the same. And secondly, that I'm not going to run a running commentary on the statements of the US president on a day-to-day basis.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.02pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.00pm GMT

PM again refuses to comment on Trump's stated plan to take over Gaza

Anthony Albanese is challenged again on Donald Trump's statement to take over Gaza.

He continues avoiding directly responding to the statement, reiterating the government's position that it supports a two-state solution.

He tells ABC News Breakfast he's taking a "sit back" approach and Australia's position is "the right of both Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and security in their own states".

Quite clearly the policy announced yesterday was a different one. I have said that I'm not going to respond to every statement, every day, that's made. I will determine and my government will determine Australia's position, which has been consistent for a long period of time. And that is consistent as well with what the world has said.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.28pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.54pm GMT

PM downplays suggestion party caucus didn't back hate crime bill amendments

The PM is doing a series of interviews from Townsville this morning, starting on Nine's Today.

Anthony Albanese downplayed suggestions the party caucus didn't approve the amendments to include mandatory minimum sentencing. Several Labor members had spoken against mandatory minimum sentencing earlier that day.

He says the party "approved everything".

We go through all of our proper processes on these items. So caucus approved everything that we do. Our caucus committee process. But we believe that the strongest action is required here. We have, as I said, we introduced this legislation last year to outlaw Nazi symbols and hate symbols as well.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.06pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.49pm GMT

Proposed Gaza takeover 'utterly unlawful': UN special rapporteur

United Nations special rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, tells ABC RN Breakfast Donald Trump 's statement the US "will take over" Gaza is "utterly unlawful".

Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

The implications is that the president of the United States says that it's country [is] ready to commit an act of aggression.

She is drawn in on whether Anthony Albanese should comment on Trump's statement, which he refused to do yesterday.

The prime minister sidestepped repeated questions from journalists, saying he wouldn't give a "running commentary".

Francesca Albanese says it's "pathetic" **Australia** and other nations aren't speaking out against Trump and on the ongoing harm Palestinians are facing.

It's pathetic ... I think that there are many countries which have a word to say about the two state solution, and then they do not even recognise the state of Palestine. If **Australia** is not ready to recognise the state of Palestine, it has nothing to say about the two state solution, it has nothing to contribute with when it comes to the two state solution, but it still has obligations under international law not to aid and assist a system that is committing international crimes.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.09pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.41pm GMT

'No discretion here': James Paterson dismisses Labor's concern over mandatory minimums

Shadow home affairs minister James Paterson, a key proponent of minimum mandatory sentencing, has been talking about the amendments to the hate crimes bill this morning.

One of the concerns Labor has had is that mandatory sentences take away the discretionary power of judges. To that, Paterson tells Sky News:

There really is no discretion here. We have set a mandatory minimum sentence. The judges are free to impose sentences a lot longer than those mandatory minimums, and there'll be some cases where that's very necessary for very serious terrorism offences, people can be jailed for 20 years or more

As mentioned earlier, the amendment goes against Labor's national platform, which states the "practice does not reduce crime but does undermine the independence of the judiciary, lead to unjust outcomes and is often discriminatory in practice".

You can read more about that from my colleague Sarah Basford-Canales :

Related: [Labor attempts to pass minimum jail sentences for hate speech crimes](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.56pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.26pm GMT

Mark Butler says PM has committed to five-year plan as part of \$1.7bn for states and territories

The federal health minister is on ABC AM this morning, following up on his announcement with the PM to give states and territories \$1.7bn in additional funding for a year.

Mark Butler says Anthony Albanese has committed to establishing a five-year plan but ran out of time due to the WA election. He's also a bit stronger this morning on holding the states and territories over NDIS reforms.

He says the national cabinet agreed health funding directives would be tied to the NDIS reforms.

Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

Although we're making really good progress on NDIS reform, that's not moving as quickly as, frankly, would have allowed us to get a health funding deal done in time.

Butler also says progress on foundational supports by the states, which are supposed to support people outside the NDIS, is proceeding "very well".

We're satisfied with our progress. We're very confident we're going to get to where we need to be on NDIS reform and ultimately with hospital funding deals as well. But in the interim, we're committed to being more reliable partner on hospital funding.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.45pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.15pm GMT

Anika Wells defends Labor's backflip on mandatory minimum sentencing

The hate crimes bill will be debated in parliament today, and it's already dominating the morning interviews.

Government frontbencher Anika Wells was on the Nine's morning show, Today, earlier, defending Labor's decision to go against its national platform to accept the amendments on mandatory minimum sentencing from the Coalition.

We as a Labor government try to listen, try to listen to community sentiment and act where people want us to act. And, I think, this is us being responsive to community sentiment.

Asked why it's taken so long to act, she said she "wouldn't agree with that premise whatsoever".

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.23pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.10pm GMT

Good morning

Good morning, Krishani Dhanji here with you as we continue on the first sitting week of the year.

The prime minister is in Townsville this morning with the Queensland premier. He'll be doing a few interviews so we can expect some updates on the floods.

He'll likely also be challenged on the government's decision to back the Coalition's amendments on Labor's hate crimes bill, to introduce mandatory sentencing for some terrorism offences and displaying hate symbols. As we've reported, it goes against Labor's national platform, and the amendments will be voted on today.

It's going to be a big one, so hang on!

Let's get this started.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.11pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.05pm GMT

Australian gas in Asia would provide 'biggest bang for buck', says O'Neill

Australian energy companies are considering gas's potential in Asian markets, with O'Neill stressing it would be key to securing the "biggest bang for buck" for decarbonisation.

She argued that switching 20% of the continent's coal-fired power stations to gas would slash emissions by 680m tonnes a year, equivalent to one-and-a-half times **Australia's** total annual net greenhouse gas emissions.

Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

The reality is we get far more impact from replacing coal in Asia with Australian [liquefied natural gas] than we do from asking Australian consumers to switch their household appliances from gas to electric.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.30pm GMT

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Woodside boss to give energy warning

The Trump administration's early action on deregulation and energy investment add to "acute" challenges facing Australian producers, Australian Associated Press reports.

The boss of **Australia**'s biggest energy producer, Woodside, will sound the warning in an address to the Melbourne Mining Club today.

Meg O'Neill is urging the nation to stay focused on being competitive in global markets, pushing for an energy policy debate "based on science and facts, not wishful thinking".

"Amid rising global protectionism and greater competition for capital, **Australia** must sharpen its competitive edge even further," she will say.

"Moves by the new administration in the US to deregulate the economy and spur new energy investments make the challenge for countries like **Australia** even more acute."

US president Donald Trump has promised to "unleash" reliable energy and natural resources by scrapping regulations and encouraging more energy exploration in the US, while threatening tariffs on imports.

O'Neill is also targeting environmental approvals at home, urging the federal government to allow an extension to a Woodside project in Western **Australia** that's been tied up for years.

"We understand the need for robust environmental assessment, but when an approval to continue to use existing infrastructure takes more than six years, it's in nobody's interests," she will say.

'It does not give **Australia** a competitive edge, or better environmental outcomes.'

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Federal election to hinge on cost of living pressures

This year's election will swing, just like so many others around the world last year, on the cost of living – and whether people feel better off than they did when they last voted.

It's one of the reasons Labor is struggling in the polls, but, as our columnist Greg Jericho argues today, the government has done much to tame the inflation demon without getting much credit.

Read his column here, which is, as usual, packed with some great charts.

Related: [Labor has managed to tame inflation in an election year – but is anybody listening? | Greg Jericho](#)

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Labor pushes amendments to hate crime laws

It was a late night for our reporter in Canberra, Sarah Basford Canales, after the home affairs minister, Tony Burke, [introduced amendments](#) to the hate crime bill.

Australia politics live: Labor chair rejects calls for AFP hearing to be extended amid questions about PM's knowledge of Dural caravan

The changes will enable minimum jail sentences for threatening force or violence against people based on their race, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, political opinion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status.

It comes as the government tries to counter the opposition narrative that Labor is not strong enough in its handling of a wave of antisemitic attacks.

Read Sarah's full story here:

Related: [Labor attempt to pass minimum jail sentences for hate speech crimes](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.01pm GMT

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Welcome

Good morning and welcome to our live news blog. I'm Martin Farrer bringing you the top overnight stories before Krishani Dhanji guides you through the day.

The government's attempts to look tougher on antisemitism will be the focus of a lot of activity today after the home affairs minister, Tony Burke, said last night that he would attempt to pass legislation setting [minimum jail sentences](#) of between one and six years for hate speech crimes. The Greens say Labor caved to pressure from the Coalition. We've got more coming up while in New South Wales, the premier, Chris Minns, [proposed legislation](#) that could make certain types of protests outside places of worship a criminal offence.

The fallout from Donald Trump's assault on global governance and norms continues today, with Australian aid workers warning about the potentially ["catastrophic"](#) impact of his plans to [freeze foreign aid](#). Staff have described "chaos" and "total panic" as they try to work out what the policy means for their work.

The boss of our biggest energy producer warns today that the US president's plans to shake up the energy market present "acute" challenges for [Australia](#). In an address to the Melbourne Mining Club today, Meg O'Neill, the CEO of Woodside Petroleum, will urge [Australia](#) to stay focused on being competitive in global markets, pushing for an energy policy debate "based on science and facts, not wishful thinking". More coming up.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.42pm GMT

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