



[Australia news live: Forrest says Fortescue 'not walking back from hydrogen' despite job cuts and restructure](#)

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Body

block-time published-time 7.43am BST

'Twiggy is not walking back from hydrogen': Forrest

Mining magnate Andrew Forrest is standing by his green hydrogen plan after a decision to axe hundreds of jobs cast doubt on the **Fortescue** Group's direction, AAP reports.

The iron ore miner turned energy company slashed 700 jobs in a restructure on Wednesday, saying it would ensure the company remained "lean, impactful and agile".

Forrest, nicknamed "Twiggy", took to the airwaves on Thursday to explain the move and reassure investors he remained committed to a green energy future.

We're not pulling back, this is something which I really genuinely believe in, I'm a hardcore bloke from the bush, I'm a miner, I'm a practical person, I've also had the good fortune to have an education in Australia, so I've really looked hard at the science," he told Perth radio station 6PR.

I just know that going the way we're going with fossil fuels isn't an option, the climate is changing dramatically around us.

It's been taken as 'Twiggy is walking back from hydrogen'.

Twiggy is not walking back from hydrogen. The world has to have it. We just have to work out how to produce it cheaply enough.

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The billionaire philanthropist said the uncertainty created by the wars in Ukraine and Gaza and high costs had made the operating environment tough.

We need lower power prices, hydrogen is directly a function of the electricity cost – if the electricity cost is high, then we can't make hydrogen cheaply enough to compete with fossil fuels," he said.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.05am BST

block-time published-time 7.32am BST

Car auction website fined \$10m in federal court

Car auction website Grays online has been fined \$10m over deceptive car listings that left successful bidders out of pocket, AAP report.

In the federal court on Thursday, Justice John Nicholas ordered Grays eCommerce Group to pay the partial costs of the legal proceedings on top of the fine.

Deceptions included false or misleading descriptions of vehicle make, model and features, as well as undisclosed obvious faults with the cars.

In hundreds of instances, listings gave the wrong manufacturing year or transmission system, advertised features the cars did not have and failed to mention faults such as damage to the car or active dashboard warning lights.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission began legal proceedings against the online retailer earlier this year.

At least 750 consumers bought a car from Grays that was incorrectly described, meaning hundreds may have bought a car they would not otherwise have bought or paid more than they would have had they known the correct details, according to the ACCC.

In his judgment, Nicholas said Grays encouraged its customer service team to decline refunds to buyers who had been misled, and directed staff to "say no" to buyers requesting refunds for when listings failed to disclose damage.

Grays admitted it engaged in the deceptive conduct between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2022, and agreed to pay \$10m in penalties before Thursday's ruling.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.54am BST

block-time published-time 7.16am BST

Federal police call for AI deepfake portal

A one-stop portal for victims to report AI deepfakes to police should be established, the federal police union has said, lamenting that police were forced to "cobble together" laws to charge the first person to face prosecution for spreading deepfake images of women last year.

You can read more on that story here:

Related: [Portal needed for victims to report AI deepfakes, federal police union says](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.18am BST

block-time published-time 6.39am BST

Volleyball Australia continued in [its apology to former women's indoor players](#) from 1997-2005:

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We understand that your experiences amounted to coercive control, which included using training as a method of punishment, verbal and physical abuse, favouritism, ostracism, excessive punishments, and body-shaming. Many players during this period were adolescents, with the youngest being 14 years old. We acknowledge that the poor culture, coupled with absence from family and limited contact with family members, resulted in you experiencing a sense of isolation and vulnerability. We have heard from players who have struggled with physical and mental effects of these experiences, including self-harm, eating disorders, body dysmorphia, substance abuse, estrangement from loved ones, loss of income and low self-worth. Some are living with ongoing effects. The fact that such a culture and environment could be established and maintained was wrong and is not the fault of athletes who were adversely impacted. We failed to keep athletes safe and to adequately oversee the management of the program. There was a system-wide failure to understand the seriousness of concerns raised by parents, performance support staff and external coaches regarding unacceptable coaching practices and athletes' wellbeing, and we failed to successfully check those practices.

block-time published-time 6.36am BST

Volleyball Australia apologises for 'harmful' treatment of former players, including 'coercive control'

Volleyball Australia has apologised to former team members after a [Sports Integrity Australia review](#) found there had been a "culture of fear and punishment" and lack of coach accountability and athlete support.

The sporting body issued the apology on Thursday to "players who experienced distress during their time in the Australian Women's Indoor Volleyball team between 1997 and 2005".

In the apology, it said treatment of the former players as young as 14 had "experiences [that] amounted to coercive control, which included using training as a method of punishment, verbal and physical abuse, favouritism, ostracism, excessive punishments, and body-shaming".

Sports Integrity Australia was commissioned to conduct the independent review in October 2020 after being approached by former players, assisted by the Australian Athletes Alliance and Volleyball Australia.

The review found a culture of fear and punishment; unacceptable training practices; an inadequate complaints-handling procedure; a lack of coach accountability; and limited athlete support.

Volleyball Australia said in its apology that:

We are deeply sorry for the ongoing effects these experiences have had on your life, and on your relationship with the sport of Volleyball and with Volleyball Australia. We unreservedly apologise for that harm.

block-time updated-time Updated at 7.00am BST

block-time published-time 6.24am BST

No heritage protection for housing estate after resident backlash

A historic housing estate in Brisbane will not get heritage protection, after almost all residents told the council they don't want it, and just one person backed the idea fully.

Brisbane city council placed 181 homes in the Moorooka war workers' housing estate under temporary heritage protection in September 2022. After local backlash, the council agreed to cancel the order if more than half of residents opposed it in a consultation process this year.

Related: [Built as 'temporary' wartime huts, owners are being forced to preserve these crumbling Brisbane homes](#)

Heritage protection would have restricted residents from undertaking types of renovation or even repair works to the houses, which were constructed as temporary accommodation by the defence force for workers at a nearby military factory.

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In a media release on Thursday, the council announced that just one resident fully supported the proposal, with one resident partially backing it. Some 142 residents opposed the heritage overlay, representing 78% of all landowners in the area. Thirty-seven landowners did not express a view.

Councillor Adam Allan said there would be "no changes to the character protections over the homes in the former Moorooka War Workers' Housing Estate".

The homes will still be subject to character overlay protection, which prevent demolition but are less restrictive on renovation and repair. They have also been criticised as classist.

Related: [*Brisbane planning laws keeping poor out of city's most desirable suburbs, research suggests*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.32am BST

block-time published-time 6.00am BST

Many thanks for joining me on the blog, handing over to Nino Bucci who will be here for the remainder of the day! Take care.

block-time published-time 5.51am BST

[*We flagged earlier*](#) that Sydney's Liverpool council is facing the threat of suspension, after an investigation revealed evidence of broad dysfunction. You can now read the full story on that below:

Related: [*Sydney's Liverpool council faces threat of suspension after damning investigation*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.55am BST

block-time published-time 5.34am BST

Greens urge Albanese government to impose sanctions on Netanyahu government

Leader of the Greens, Adam Bandt, says that the Albanese government must sanction the Netanyahu government after the further killing of civilians by Israel this week.

Bandt noted that 23 are dead and 73 injured after Israeli bombing in the Nuseirat refugee camp, and that at least 90 are dead and 300 injured after bombing at the al-Mawasi tent camp, a designated safe zone.

He wrote on X:

There is nowhere safe for people to go. Labor must sanction the extremist Netanyahu government [and] send a clear message that these atrocities must end.

The Labor [government] cannot refuse to take action any longer. If there are no consequences for Netanyahu, the Israeli [government] will continue to commit genocide and war crimes. At the bare minimum Labor must impose sanctions and end the two-way arms trade. Anything less is inexcusable.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.38am BST

block-time published-time 5.28am BST

Albanese denounces the opposition's nuclear energy plan

Prime minister Anthony Albanese is speaking to the media from Townsville in Queensland.

He has been denouncing the opposition's nuclear energy plan, and argued that six of the seven sites chosen for reactors have been designated for other activities.

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Such as at Liddell, they're producing solar panels through Sun Drive and there's other activities in Port Augusta and in other site.

This is something that will leave a gap in energy security because coal-fired power stations – 24 of them announced they were closing on the former government's watch ... and not a single plan for energy was actually landed ...

What we have is one plan ... It's a renewable energy target of 82% by 2030. It's emissions reduction of 43% by 2030. We're moving to net zero by 2050.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.46am BST

block-time published-time 5.11am BST

Body found in Swansea believed to be missing 23-year-old

A body has been located near Swansea in the NSW Lake Macquarie region, believed to be a man who went missing earlier this month.

A small boat overturned in Swansea on 6 July and three men were pulled from the water a short time later, however a 23-year-old man could not be located.

An extensive search was conducted and at midday today a body was located in a channel in Swansea. While the body is yet to be formally identified, it is believed to be that of the missing man, police said.

A report will now be prepared for the coroner.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.15am BST

block-time published-time 4.42am BST

Agriculture ministers sign joint statement of concern over nuclear reactors

The federal agriculture minister, Murray Watt, and his state counterparts in Queensland, NSW, the ACT, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, have issued a joint statement expressing "serious concerns" about the impact of nuclear reactors on Australian agriculture.

This follows a quarterly meeting of the ministers in Brisbane today. In the joint letter, the ministers said:

As the nation's agriculture ministers, we have a duty to protect and grow the industry we represent in our respective jurisdictions.

We have serious concerns that this duty would be compromised by the federal opposition's proposal for nuclear power in and around prime agricultural land.

The statement said an estimated 11,955 farms are situated within 80km of the seven nuclear reactors [the federal opposition has proposed as part of its energy policy](#). The ministers said the opposition leader, Peter Dutton, must "urgently explain" whether these farmers would have to follow extensive actions that farmers in the US near nuclear reactors have to undertake ([we had more details on this earlier in the blog here](#)).

The ministers said Dutton also had to explain how he would manage competing demands for water resources in these locations. They also expressed concern about the "risk to food production in the event of a nuclear leak or accident".

The federal opposition's plans for nuclear energy have raised significant questions affecting our farmers and rural communities. The opposition owes it to them to answer these questions.

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Signatories include Watt, Mark Furner, Tara Moriarty, Rebecca Vassarotti, Jackie Jarvis, Clare Scriven, Mark Monaghan, and Michaela Settle.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.56am BST

block-time published-time 4.33am BST

72% of Melburnians support building rail line to Melbourne airport: survey

[Earlier, we flagged news](#) that more than a third of Melburnians feel their quality of life has worsened over the past 12 months, according to the committee for Melbourne and Ipsos's living in Melbourne 2024 report.

Some more details on the survey via AAP : almost three out of four people (72%) supported building a rail line to Melbourne airport, the highest approval of any key project polled.

The contentious Suburban Rail Loop (58%) and budget blowout-plagued North East Link (50%) fared much worse.

Senior government minister Mary-Anne Thomas suggested the government had a mandate to deliver the projects when asked about the survey.

"There have been two much larger and more significant polls undertaken in 2018 and 2022," she told reporters, referencing the state elections.

We went to the people of Victorian with our plans to deliver the Suburban Rail Loop.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.39am BST

block-time published-time 4.13am BST

Blizzard conditions forecast for NSW alpine regions from tomorrow evening

A severe weather warning has been issued for damaging winds across alpine regions of New South Wales from tomorrow evening.

The Bureau of Meteorology says a strengthening northwesterly flow ahead of a cold front will bring "vigorous winds and blizzards" to the alpine region tomorrow evening, which are expected to ease on Saturday afternoon.

For alpine regions above 1,900 metres, damaging winds averaging 80-90km/h with peak gusts around 125km/h – along with blizzard conditions – are likely.

The NSW national parks and wildlife service recommends that back country travel be postponed until conditions improve.

Locations which may be affected include Mount Ginini, Perisher Valley, Charlotte Pass and Thredbo Top Station.

enltr??Severe Weather Warning has been issued for damaging winds developing across the alpine region later on Friday. It will become very windy across southern NSW on Friday and eastern parts on Saturday. Monitor for updates at <https://t.co/aSN3kzTYQP> ??? <pic.twitter.com/5QP7bHZFcb>

— Bureau of Meteorology, New South Wales (@BOM_NSW) [July 18, 2024](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.19am BST

block-time published-time 4.06am BST

Albanese asked about **Fortescue** job cuts

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Anthony Albanese was asked what **Fortescue** job cuts, announced yesterday, mean for the government's energy plan.

He responded:

Our energy plan is on track. We want to make sure that we deliver the clean energy that Australia needs and that when coal fired power stations close, as they've announced their closure, there isn't a gap in the energy security that Australia needs. That's why we need a real plan that's fully costed, and that's being rolled out with the certainty being provided for investment.

Related: [Andrew Forrest's Fortescue slashes 700 jobs in restructure](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.11am BST

block-time published-time 4.01am BST

Albanese fields questions about CFMEU at doorstep interview

The prime minister has denied his government was slow to respond to allegations against the CFMEU during a doorstep interview earlier this morning.

Taking questions from reporters, Anthony Albanese responded: "There's no delay whatsoever. We have had very swift action."

As for why the CFMEU should not be deregistered, Albanese responded:

Deregistration would result in the union still being able to operate but without being regulated properly ... What we need to make sure is that we get this right and take tough action, not just tough rhetoric with no action, which is what we saw from the former government.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.02am BST

block-time published-time 3.47am BST

Queensland sets new record for electricity demand amid cold snap

Queensland has become the latest state to set a record for electricity demand, as a cold front makes its way across the country.

Victoria broke a 17-year record for maximum winter electricity demand on Monday, with the tally reaching 8,612 megawatts at 6pm according to the Australian Energy Market Operator.

Related: [Cold snap sets record winter demand for electricity in Victoria as NSW windfarms supply third of power](#)

Yesterday, Queensland also broke its record for maximum winter electricity demand at 8,728 megawatts, up 12 megawatts from the previous record on 4 July, 2022.

At the time of record demand, generation consisted of 65.1% black coal, 25.9% gas, 4.2% hydro, 2.5% wind, 0.7% batteries and 1.6% imported electricity.

enltrYesterday, Queensland hit a new winter maximum operational demand record (8,728 MW), up 12 MW from the previous record (4 July 2022). At the time, generation consisted of black coal 65.1%, gas 25.9%, hydro 4.2%, wind 2.5%, batteries 0.7% & imported electricity 1.6%. pic.twitter.com/E2HtmxjMIW

— AEMO (@AEMO_Energy) [July 18, 2024](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.16am BST

Australia news live: Forrest says Fortescue 'not walking back from hydrogen' despite job cuts and restructure

block-time published-time 3.42am BST

Australia condemns 'unacceptable deaths of innocent civilians as a result of Israel's operations in this last week', Penny Wong says

The foreign affairs minister, Penny Wong, has condemned the "unacceptable deaths of innocent civilians" as a result of Israel's actions throughout the past week, including many near schools.

In a series of posts to X, Wong wrote:

Australia condemns the unacceptable deaths of innocent civilians as a result of Israel's operations in this last week, including many near schools.

This must stop. Australia has been calling for a ceasefire for eight months. We call on parties to immediately agree to President Biden's UNSC endorsed ceasefire proposal.

Civilians, including women and children, are caught in the middle. They must be protected. Hostages must be released and humanitarian access must be increased.

At least 60 people were killed in Israeli airstrikes across the Gaza Strip, health officials have said, including in an attack on a school sheltering displaced people and another on an Israeli-designated "humanitarian zone". You can read the full report from Bethan McKernan below:

Related: [*Dozens killed in Israeli airstrikes across Gaza Strip*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.45am BST

block-time published-time 3.37am BST

Uber Eats warns customers about scam circulating via WhatsApp

Uber Eats has warned customers about a scam circulating on WhatsApp, seeming to offer rewards and promotions.

In an email to customers, Uber Eats said scammers are claiming to be from Uber Eats and inviting recipients to join a promotional team, offering rewards for liking or bookmarking merchant stores.

Please be aware that these messages are not sent by Uber Eats.

If you receive these messages, we strongly advise you not to engage with it, share personal or financial information, or click on any links. Remember, we will never ask you to provide your password.

block-time published-time 3.27am BST

ALP national executive suspends CFMEU affiliations

The ALP national executive have unanimously agreed to suspend the CFMEU construction division's affiliation to ALP branches in NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania.

In a statement, ALP national secretary Paul Erickson said the action had been taken because the alleged conduct of a number of officials and delegates within the division had not been in the interest of union members.

The suspension will remain in place "until further notice". It means that the branches of the CFMEU that have been suspended will be excluded from all rights ordinarily afforded to an affiliated union under Labor's national constitution and the rules of ALP state branches.

The ALP will not levy or accept any affiliation fees from this division for the period of the suspension, and no political donations from them will be accepted. Erickson said:

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The number one job of any union and its officials is to look after its members. The reported behaviour is the complete opposite of this.

The National Executive has taken note of the general manager of the Fair Work Commission's statement that, among other things, he is seeking advice about making an application to place the branches of the CFMEU into administration.

The ALP National Executive will consider extending the suspension of affiliation to other branches of the construction division should they be placed into administration.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.38am BST

block-time published-time 3.19am BST

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.32am BST

block-time published-time 3.11am BST

ACT posts lowest jobless rate in the land as Victoria among the laggards

As noted the June jobs figures look quite robust, even if the jobless rate ticked higher to 4.1%. Hours worked, for instance, rose 0.8% even as a lot more people apparently were calling in sick. Workers, it seems, were cutting back on holidays - presumably to save money amid the cost-of-living squeeze.

Across the nation, the lowest jobless rate was in the ACT, with unemployment diving from 3.8% in May to 3%. (Was the May federal budget the driver for a lot of local hiring?)

The jobless rate also eased back in Queensland (going to the polls in October) to 3.9% from 4%, with a similar decline in South Australia. Tasmania also saw the jobless rate drop back to a "3", at 3.7%.

The big states of NSW and Victoria (half the economy right there), posted modest rises in the jobless rate to 3.9% and 4.5%, respectively. The latter is the highest in the land, save for the Northern Territory's 4.6%, so perhaps not something to trumpet.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.32am BST

block-time published-time 2.59am BST

Union backs move by local government minister to suspend Liverpool council

The United Services Union (USU) has backed a move by the local government minister, Ron Hoenig, to suspend Liverpool council.

Hoenig today announced a public inquiry into the council, and that the September elections would be deferred until the inquiry reports back. He also said he intends to suspend the council – with the council given seven days to appeal.

Steve Donley, metropolitan manager with the USU, says the minister has made the "only logical move he could" given the "sad amount of dysfunction at the council".

For many years our members have been reporting to us problems at Liverpool council ... We hope this inquiry will throw open the windows and let some fresh air and sunshine in so we can move forward with a council focussed on the needs of local people.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.01am BST

block-time published-time 2.54am BST

Australia news live: Forrest says Fortescue 'not walking back from hydrogen' despite job cuts and restructure

More on the latest job figures

Bjorn Jarvis, ABS head of labour statistics:

This, along with the continued high level of job vacancies, suggests the labour market remains relatively tight, despite the unemployment rate being above 4% since April.

Those unemployed ticked higher to 608,000 in June, up about 117,000 from the low reached in October 2022. Still, that's about 100,000 fewer than pre-Covid times, and the workforce is quite a bit bigger too.

It's notable that a separate NAB monthly survey, also out at 11.30am, found business conditions eased in the June quarter as "slow economic growth and soft consumer demand growth weighed on firms' trading conditions and squeezed profitability". Within that slightly downbeat report, though, was this point:

Expectations for employment in the next 3 months fell 2pts to +8 index points while 12-month expectations eased 1pt to +18 index points. The share of firms reporting availability of labour as a constraint was broadly steady at 79%.

In other words, labour conditions aren't slackening off so much – will that be a problem for the RBA? We'll get the June quarter inflation numbers on 31 July to firm up or ease those interest rate rise fears.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.56am BST

block-time published-time 2.37am BST

Impact on rates?

Not surprisingly, the Australian dollar lifted a bit, rising about 0.15 US cents to trade recently at 67.35 US cents. Stocks too lost a bit more ground to be down about 0.25% for the day.

Both movements suggested investors viewed the labour data as making any RBA rate cut a little less likely – and perhaps even another rate rise is possible in this cycle.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.44am BST

block-time published-time 2.36am BST

Participation rate up to 66.9%

The unemployment rate increased even though the economy added the most number of jobs since February as more people were looking for work.

The participation rate rose to 66.9%, just shy of the record 67% set last November, the ABS said.

And of the 50,100 extra jobs, 43,300 were full-time positions, an indication that the labour market remains tight.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.45am BST

block-time published-time 2.33am BST

Australia's jobless rate rises slightly to 4.1% despite 50,000 new jobs

Australia's jobless rate rose to 4.1% as the economy added more than 50,000 jobs.

The unemployment rate in June was a seasonally adjusted 4.1%, the ABS has just reported. That rate compared with the 4.1% rate economists had expected.

The economy also added 50,100 jobs, compared with the economists' estimate it would have added 20,000 roles.

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More soon.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.46am BST

block-time published-time 2.27am BST

Direct government action to address problems of rural housing supply effective and possible, report says

Meanwhile, a lack of investment in public and community housing was "a widely acknowledged problem" in the overall supply of housing outside the major cities.

The report argued that the [Housing Australia Future Fund](#) may be the best currently available way to open up regional housing markets, but might disadvantage non-metro areas due to the way it is designed. However, a review of international practices suggested that direct government action to address the problems of rural housing supply was both effective and possible.

Professor Andrew Beer from the University of South Australia, who led the research, said:

Overall, we found that relatively small public sector interventions are likely to deliver substantial benefits to future generations of regional and rural residents.

In many ways, the most pressing need is for the creation of an institutional architecture that would include local housing providers, construction-related training providers and enhanced supply chains so as to support the growth of both market and non-market housing. There is also a role for direct government investment in these housing markets, particularly for social housing.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.31am BST

block-time published-time 2.22am BST

Regional shortage of skilled workers biggest challenge to building new homes, report says

The lack of skilled workers in regional areas is the biggest challenge to building new housing in regional Australia, a new paper from a housing thinktank has found.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute's report, released today, found that while the Covid pandemic and lockdowns "reshaped some of the drivers affecting housing supply and demand" in regional Australia, there was evidence things had partially course-corrected since.

Shortages in building materials and supplies were no longer a huge problem in regional housing markets, but the higher costs for those things have persisted, the report said.

The shortage of an appropriate workforce was "an especially acute challenge", which has contributed to the increased cost of buying a home and the cost of rent in regional areas.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.28am BST

block-time published-time 2.01am BST

'Labor's student debt relief policy is a bad joke,' Mehreen Faruqi says

Greens deputy leader and higher education spokesperson, senator Mehreen Faruqi, says the government's refusal to scrap "punitive fee hikes" is making the student debt crisis "much worse".

This comes as recently released student contribution [rates](#) reveal a standard three-year arts degree will cost around \$51,000, while a law degree will cost around \$85,000.

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Faruqi said in a statement:

Labor's student debt relief policy is a bad joke. It still means student debts rising by 11.5% in their first term of government and arts degrees costing over \$50,000. That's not a solution, that's a disaster for people already crushed by a housing and cost-of-living crisis.

Soaring student debt is already locking people out of the housing market, crushing dreams of further study and stopping people from starting a family, and Labor is making things worse.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.04am BST

block-time published-time 1.23am BST

Flood warning issued for Yarra River

A moderate flood warning has been issued for the Yarra River in Victoria from Coldstream to Warrandyte, with communities urged to move to higher ground.

Moderate flooding is expected to occur at Yarra Glen today, where the Melba Highway may become impacted.

The Yarra River at Yarra Glen is currently at 4.32m and rising, expected to peak around 4.6m today.

enltrThis WATCH & ACT - RIVERINE FLOOD - Move to Higher Ground is for Yarra River from Coldstream to Warrandyte Moderate flooding expected at Yarra Glen today. More details: <https://t.co/JDdsktuk2G> Take actions immediately to protect your life and property, and move to higher ground. <pic.twitter.com/4z9JNn3bdD>

— VicEmergency (@vicemergency) [July 18, 2024](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.29am BST

block-time published-time 1.04am BST

Well-known Aussie wine brands offloaded by French owner

Some of Australia's best-known wine brands have been offloaded by their French owner to a consortium with strong local links, AAP reports.

Pernod Ricard announced overnight in Paris the sale of most of its portfolio of international wine brands, including the Barossa Valley-based Jacob's Creek, Orlando and St Hugo.

The buyer is Australian Wine Holdco Limited, a consortium of international institutional investors whose backers include the private equity firm Bain Capital.

The consortium also owns Accolade Wines, one of the world's biggest wine companies, which holds the Hardys, Grant Burge, and Petaluma brands among others.

The sale is due to be completed in the first half of 2025.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.09am BST

block-time published-time 12.56am BST

Jobs figures to offer update on economy's health and pointers for RBA

Later this morning, we'll get the June labour market figures from the ABS, which will be one of the major economic figures this side of the RBA's 5-6 August board meeting to decide on the interest rate.

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Economists' consensus is for the jobless rate to tick up to 4.1% in June from 4% (or the level it previously touched in January and April). The economy probably added 20,000 jobs, or about half the level of May and about half the rate the workforce is swelling.

However, there are always a few moving parts to consider to know if the results are good or bad signs for the economy's health. Revisions for May can make it look like the June unemployment rate has risen or fallen, and a shift in part-time jobs can appear to nullify full-time movements (which is why we usually give the latter more heed).

The participation rate can also fluctuate, adding to the nuance, as can the number of hours worked.

And of course beyond the news fizz are the livelihoods of people, many of whom are hoping to stay in work to be able to meet rising costs like rents and debt repayments. (The RBA has a twin mandate too, of keeping the economy as close to full employment as possible without stoking inflation.)

In the background, the odds of an August RBA rate rise have been quietly ebbing and now are less than one in five, according to the ASX. We'll see how that might change after 11.30am AEDT when the numbers land (including right here on this blog).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.34am BST

block-time published-time 12.44am BST

Nuclear reactors taking decades to build 'not acceptable' for people in the Hunter, says local MP

One of the seven sites the Coalition has proposed for a nuclear reactor, if elected, is in the Hunter region of New South Wales.

The local member, Labor MP Dan Repacholi, spoke with the Today Show earlier about this and said it would "absolutely destroy" farming in the region.

What's that going to do to the farming right here in the Hunter? Like the meat produce, the chicken? It's just going to absolutely destroy it.

So I'm not against nuclear energy, right, and let me get that straight out there. What I'm against is the most expensive form of energy, and the fact that it'll take 20 to 30 years to build, and that's not acceptable for people in the Hunter.

The proposed nuclear reactor site in the Hunter is the only location put forward by the Coalition in a Labor-held seat. One is held by a former Nationals turned independent, and the rest are in Coalition seats.

Related: [Here's what we know about the Coalition's seven planned nuclear power sites](#)

block-time published-time 12.34am BST

Victorian Greens say Labor move to demolish public housing 'a callous betrayal' of residents

The Victorian Greens have slammed the state government's decision to sign a contract for demolition works at three public housing towers subject to a class action – as reported by Guardian Australia this morning.

The Greens' spokesperson for public housing, Samantha Ratnam, said Labor has previously used the awarding of demolition contracts to force residents to leave their homes using the threat of eviction and legal proceedings.

She said the move shows a "complete disregard for the existing class action and is a callous betrayal of residents still living in the buildings".

Australia news live: Forrest says Fortescue 'not walking back from hydrogen' despite job cuts and restructure

Labor steamrolling ahead with this demolition and privatisation plan completely undermines the rights of residents who are being forced from their homes. People have called these towers home for decades and yet Labor is determined to rip these communities apart.

Here's our full report:

Related: [Melbourne public housing towers demolition to go ahead despite residents' class action](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.37am BST

block-time published-time 12.28am BST

Melburnians' quality of life plummeting, according to new report

More than a third of Melburnians feel their quality of life has worsened over the past 12 months, despite most enjoying living in the city, AAP reports.

The insight comes as part of the committee for Melbourne and Ipsos's living in Melbourne 2024 report, which was released today. It quizzed 1,000 Melburnians and found even though 81% are satisfied with living in the city's metro area, 37% feel their quality of life has worsened over the past 12 months.

Melbourne's sprawling suburbs are creating challenges for residents, according to the survey, with 72% using cars of transport to travel to and from work or study. This is compared with lower rates of commuting by trains (36%), trams (28%) and buses (16%).

64% of respondents rated the state government's extensive future public transport projects as a crucial factor in choosing where to live.

The committee for Melbourne's chief executive, Mark Melvin, said Melburnians' priorities for the city include safety, cost of living and affordable housing.

The overarching message from the data is that Melburnians love their city and this is reflected in the attitudes. But, the elements which make Melbourne a great place to live could increasingly become under strain, with signs that the city's lifestyle options are increasingly becoming harder for people living outside the inner suburbs to access.

Two thirds of those surveyed are more supportive of accommodating new housing in outer areas of the city. This compared with just less than half supporting increased density in established, inner-city Melbourne suburbs.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.33am BST

block-time published-time 12.16am BST

Animal testing to be reined in with medical tech push

A state-first network of experts will be set up to develop technology to help cut out the use of animals in medical research and deliver better treatments for patients in New South Wales, AAP reports.

The non-animal technologies network will be set up with \$4.5m of state government funding to explore alternatives to animal testing. It will investigate options such as the use of human cells or tissues in place of animal trials during the development of drugs and other medical advances.

Non-animal technology is starting to exceed the performance of animal models through the use of human material that was biologically similar to the patients being treated, the government said in a statement.

The funding will support competitive research grants and a working group to develop regulations, in addition to financing the establishment of the network.

Australia news live: Forrest says Fortescue 'not walking back from hydrogen' despite job cuts and restructure

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.19am BST

block-time published-time 12.05am BST

McManus says Liberal focus on ABCC 'trying to make this a union-bashing exercise'

Why not give the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) more powers if there is something systemic going on within the industry, as suggested by the shadow treasurer earlier? Sally McManus responded:

The Liberals were just focused on trying to make this a union-bashing exercise instead of actually addressing the issue here.

The ABCC ... why was it focused on ... flags and stickers on hard hats and not focused on these particular issues?

That organisation was there for a long period of time and we can see it was completely ineffectual because it was about politics, not about what the actual issues are.

The ABCC was abolished in 2023 and had enforced workplace relations compliance in the building and construction sector. Its powers were transferred to the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Asked if there should then be a criminal body, McManus responded: "There's the police."

And asked if she was worried about her personal safety, Sally McManus said a few people have raised this with her, but she will "do what's necessary [to] stand up against this behaviour, and we will fight to ensure that construction workers get the union they deserve."

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.13am BST

block-time published-time 12.00am BST

McManus says it could take years for CFMEU to investigate allegations

Q : How damaging is this for the union movement?

Sally McManus responded:

Some people in that union have been putting their own personal interests before the rest of the movement for quite a while, [but] the average union member in our country is a 46-year-old nurse...

That's why we kick those people out and we will continue to uphold that, every single day. Australia needs a strong principle[d] trade union.

She suggested it could take "years" for the union to investigate and address allegations and concerns.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.02am BST

block-time published-time 11.56pm BST

Sally McManus says trade union council had 'no idea of alleged infiltration by criminal elements' of CFMEU

The secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), Sally McManus, spoke with ABC RN earlier this morning about the allegations against the CFMEU.

Responding to accusations that her union was previously aware of allegations against the CFMEU, McManus said "we had no idea of the alleged infiltration by criminal elements" and added:

Australia news live: Forrest says Fortescue 'not walking back from hydrogen' despite job cuts and restructure

How come [the media] needed a nine-month investigation? How come the police haven't been talking about this? How come [you're] expecting that we would know that, when the people with all of the resources – all of the resources – weren't saying it?

It's one thing for people to say, 'oh, we knew it' or this or that, or 'why didn't they go to the police'? That's what I would say: if we had known, if we had of known there were [alleged] criminal elements in that union, that's exactly what we would have done. And now that we do, we will fight it.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.00am BST

block-time published-time 11.46pm BST

Murray Watt flags support for Labor suspending donations from CFMEU's construction arm

[As we flagged earlier](#), Bill Shorten was on 7.30 last night and said he expects the national executive of the Labor party to suspend political donations from the construction arm of the CFMEU during a meeting today.

The agriculture minister, Murray Watt, was on ABC News Breakfast earlier and was asked if he would support the move.

Yeah, I would certainly expect the national executive of the Labor party to be making moves in that direction this morning, and that would have my full support.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.52pm BST

block-time published-time 11.33pm BST

Drone delivery service launches in Melbourne

A drone delivery service will launch in Melbourne today.

Food delivery service DoorDash is working with Wing – a subsidiary of Alphabet, AKA Google – to deliver the service.

Wing said in a statement that the approved coverage area in Melbourne is its largest in Australia to date, allowing a single pilot to oversee up to 50 drones in the air at any given time.

According to Wing, more than 250,000 Melburnians will have access to drone delivery via the DoorDash app, delivered from a base at QIC's Eastland shopping centre in Maroondah.

The Herald Sun reported that the service will cover 26 suburbs across Melbourne's east, with 5kg styrofoam drones travelling up to 7km from the home base, able to carry around 1kg while travelling at 110km/h.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.00am BST

block-time published-time 11.27pm BST

More from AAP on the 3G network shutdown

Optus research released last week identified suburbs and regions with the highest number of incompatible devices, where many residents are native Mandarin, Cantonese, Arabic, Vietnamese and Korean speakers. Some areas may also have large cohorts of international university students.

The city suburbs with the highest number of affected devices on the Optus network were Melbourne's CBD and Sydney's Macquarie Park, Marsfield and Millers Point.

Australia news live: Forrest says Fortescue 'not walking back from hydrogen' despite job cuts and restructure

Top regional areas were Port Hedland, Western Australia, Cairns and Sarina in Queensland and Griffith and Orange in NSW.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.33pm BST

block-time published-time 11.23pm BST

Thousands of phone users not ready to hang up on 3G

The major telcos are under mounting pressure to ensure every Australian can connect to the triple zero emergency line when the 3G network shuts down from next month, AAP reports.

Telstra is due to switch off the ageing network on 31 August, having extended its original June closure deadline, while Optus will shutdown from September. TPG/Vodafone shut its 3G operation in January.

But there are still 102,000 mobile phones across the nation that are not compatible with 4G, according to latest industry figures provided to the government. The number of these devices in use has reduced from 740,000 in March, after the government formed an industry working group.

The telcos' significant effort to reach affected customers is encouraging, but more needs to be done, the communications minister, Michelle Rowland, said.

The government is keen to see this work ramp-up and continue. All Australians must have confidence in the triple-zero service.

I encourage everyone to check their own device, speak to friends, family and loved ones about the 3G switchover and reach out directly to their service providers for further information.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.33pm BST

block-time published-time 11.15pm BST

Committee looking to extend deal allowing Nasa to conduct balloon experiments in Alice Springs

Whether a treaty allowing Nasa to conduct scientific balloon experiments in Alice Springs should be extended will be the subject of a public hearing today.

The joint standing committee on treaties will hold the hearing on an extension of the 2002 agreement between the Australian and US governments.

Nasa established a [balloon launch facility](#) in Alice Springs in the early 1970s, which is now operated by the University of New South Wales. The committee chair, Josh Wilson MP, said:

The extension of this agreement would continue the longstanding and mutually beneficial relationship between the Australian and US governments. Nasa's collaboration with Australia on space-related activities has contributed more than \$1bn to the local economy.

The existing facilities established by Nasa in Alice Springs aid research into matters related to black holes, quasars, and atmospheric and environmental science. Australian scientists directly benefit from these experiments, with the agreement ensuring that Australia is entitled to receive any data from the experiments.

The committee will hear from CSIRO officials today, as well as officials from UNSW and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.22pm BST

block-time published-time 11.05pm BST

Australia news live: Forrest says Fortescue 'not walking back from hydrogen' despite job cuts and restructure

Shadow treasurer says government should go further in response to CFMEU

The shadow treasurer, Angus Taylor, says the government needs to go further in its response to allegations against the CFMEU.

Speaking to ABC AM earlier this morning, Taylor called on the government to deregister the CFMEU, reinstate the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) and ensure workers can get representation from other unions.

The ABCC was abolished in 2023 and had enforced workplace relations compliance in the building and construction sector. Its powers were transferred to the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Host Patricia Karvelas said she spoke to the Master Builders Association, who argued that deregistration hasn't solved problems in the past. Taylor argued it is "part of the answer" because the union can still act for workers from administration, but agreed deregistration on its own is "not enough".

What's required is deregistration, allowing other unions then to move to into the sector – unions that haven't been subject to these sorts of allegations – and we have competition to represent workers.

Karvelas noted that an administrator could sack officials, so "wouldn't it be a clean union doing those deals under an administrator?" He replied, "the better way to do it is to have a tough cop on the beat through the ABCC".

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.10pm BST

block-time published-time 10.44pm BST

Coalition's nuclear plan 'puts farms in radiation alert zone', government says

The government says nuclear energy threatens Australia's food production with more than 11,000 farms near the opposition's proposed reactor sites, AAP reports.

The farms are located within an 80km radius of the seven earmarked sites, according to a data analysis released by the federal government this morning.

Related: [*Here's what we know about the Coalition's seven planned nuclear power sites*](#)

Under international standards, that radius is classified as an "ingestion exposure pathway" in which people may be exposed to radiation through contaminated food, milk and water after a nuclear leak.

US farmers in those zones must take on preventative measures in an emergency, such as providing livestock with separate feed and water, holding shipments and decontaminating produce. The agriculture minister, Murray Watt, said:

Based on international practice, farmers would need to take expensive steps during a nuclear leak and would need to inform their customers that they operate within the fallout zone.

It's bizarre that the Nationals and Liberals are putting at risk our prime agricultural land like this, especially without the decency to explain it to farmers and consumers how they'd mitigate all the potential impacts.

But the Nationals leader, David Littleproud, said the comments were "scaremongering" and "hypocrisy" and that the Coalition's policy was to use existing water entitlements from coal power plants at each site so water would not be taken from agriculture or communities.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.46pm BST

block-time published-time 10.35pm BST

Australia news live: Forrest says Fortescue 'not walking back from hydrogen' despite job cuts and restructure

Mental health organisations warn of 'unintended harms' of social media ban for teenagers

Some of Australia's leading mental health organisations have said that while social media can pose significant risks to young people, the "unintended consequences" of a ban need to be considered.

The premiers of New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia are united in a push to lift age minimums on tech platforms as governments across Australia explore the potential to ban social media for some young people.

Related: [Should Australia ban children under 16 from social media – and how would it actually work?](#)

In [a submission to the joint select committee on social media and Australian society](#), ReachOut, Beyond Blue and Black Dog Institute are calling for evidence-based measures to improve social media safety for young people – such as the verification of mental health information and a limit to infinite scroll features.

ReachOut director of service Jackie Hallan said:

Young people are digital natives and for many that means that social media is already part of their worlds. Unfortunately, for too many young people that time on platforms has led to harm. It is clear that social media platforms need a lot of change to improve young people's mental health and wellbeing.

However, the proposal that the age of accessing social media be increased from 13 to 16 simplifies what is a very complex issue. And, it ignores the fact that many young people are using social media to access things like mental health support, to build their identities and as a source of connection ... What we don't want to see are solutions that lead to unintended harms.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.38pm BST

block-time published-time 10.29pm BST

Energy, climate groups sign joint letter calling for 'credible and consistent energy framework'

Eighteen organisations have released a joint statement on the need for climate and energy policy certainty.

Signed by the likes of the Clean [Energy](#) Council, National Farmers' Federation and WWF-Australia, the group reinforced the need for "a certain, credible and consistent policy framework" for business, industry investors, as well as consumers, farmers, local communities and workers.

The statement said a "credible and consistent energy framework" is "essential" to attract finance at the lowest cost of capital and ensure all sectors can plan, resource and deliver a "just and timely transition to net zero emissions".

Australia's existing national emissions and energy targets for 2030 are critical foundations for the investments we need to deliver reliable, affordable and clean energy. Achieving them and the deeper targets that must follow on the road to net zero will take further and sustained effort.

Planning for our energy future needs to be evidence-based, transparent, and founded in wide consultation. It must deliver a cost-efficient, practical and equitable response that suits Australia's context and meets our immediate and longer-term energy needs. And it has to be resilient to a changing climate.

Signatories also include the Ai Group, Australian Conservation Foundation, Australian Council of Social Service, Australian Energy Council, Energy Efficiency Council, Property Council of Australia and the Smart Energy Council.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.22am BST

block-time published-time 10.22pm BST

Labor executive to meet as states freeze CFMEU links

Australia news live: Forrest says Fortescue 'not walking back from hydrogen' despite job cuts and restructure

Labor's national executive is deciding whether it will continue taking donations from the embattled CFMEU's construction division after state branches and the peak union body suspended links, AAP reports.

Related: [Minns calls for NSW Labor to suspend CFMEU affiliation and stop donations after corruption allegations](#)

The national executive was set to meet today and would be "dealing with this in a fairly firm fashion", the workplace relations minister, Tony Burke, said.

Burke said "a number of state branches have already done so," but wouldn't preempt whether the executive would cut ties or refuse future donations.

The division between their role and the role of ministers is important.

While not wishing to breach that separation either, Bill Shorten told the ABC's 7.30 program he fully expected the executive "to make sure there's no more donations received from the CFMEU until their house is cleaned".

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.28pm BST

block-time published-time 10.16pm BST

Welcome

Good morning, and welcome back to the Australia news live blog. I'm Emily Wind and I'll be taking you through our rolling coverage today.

Making news this morning: AAP reports that Labor's national executive is deciding whether it will continue taking donations from the embattled CFMEU's construction division, after state branches and the peak union body suspended links.

The national executive is set to meet today and would be "dealing with this in a fairly firm fashion", the workplace relations minister, Tony Burke, said. He noted "a number of state branches have already done so," but wouldn't preempt whether the executive would cut ties or refuse future donations. More on this shortly.

Meanwhile, 18 organisations have released a joint statement on the need for climate and energy policy certainty. Signed by the likes of the Clean Energy Council, National Farmers' Federation and WWF-Australia, the statement reiterates business and community support for 2030 climate targets and states:

Time is short before ageing generators retire. By working with and refining the tools at hand now, Australia can efficiently meet its existing and future targets to help the world limit climate change, improve affordability and build a new advantage in energy.

As always, you can get in touch with any tips, thoughts or questions via X, @emilywindwrites, or you can send me an email: emily.wind@guardian.com Let's get started.

Load-Date: July 18, 2024