



DOORSTOP - PERTH TRANSCRIPT 20 OCT 2023

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The following information was released by the office of the Prime Minister of **Australia**:

TANIA LAWRENCE MP, MEMBER FOR HASLUCK: Good morning and welcome to North Metropolitan TAFE in Midland, in the seat of Hasluck. I'm Tania Lawrence, the Member for Hasluck. And it gives me great pleasure to be today joined with the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Premier Roger Cook, my state parliamentary colleagues, the teachers, the trainers and students of North Metro TAFE. When we, even before the election in 2022, we knew we had a skills and labour shortage. So, one of the very first actions that the Albanese Labor Government took, was to host a summit of unions, businesses, experts, economists, trainers from around the country to identify and articulate the problem and work a pathway to solving it. I also hosted a roundtable here in Perth, with industry leaders, TAFE institutions and with unions. And together, culminating now in this landmark agreement to really fund the institutions and vocational education training, with TAFE. And we all know, many of us here know, just how central it is to having TAFE as the base for education. I myself, as a graduate of TAFE, my staff have done apprenticeships as well, and it really does create the careers and pathway opportunities, that have benefited the nation. So with this, I'd love to hand over now to the Prime Minister.

ANTHONY ALBANESE, PRIME MINISTER OF **AUSTRALIA**: Well, thanks very much, Tania, and it's great to be back in the electorate of Hasluck. And it's terrific also to be here with our state parliamentary colleagues, led by Premier Roger Cook, and the Training Minister Simone McGurk, but also Michelle Roberts, the local member here. I am so excited to be in WA this weekend, because of course, it's Telethon Weekend. And you can feel a real uplift here, as WA does something that other states used to do, but don't do any more, unite in a common interest to raise money to assist sick kids and their family. So, a big shout out at the beginning of this weekend, to all of those involved in Telethon and an encouragement to dig deep over this weekend, to make sure that those young Australians who are so inspirational, who I look forward to meeting their ambassadors later today, and again to talk to people tomorrow about the remarkable example that they show in their resilience, in their positivity, under circumstances which can be very difficult. But today, we are here at this wonderful TAFE institution to celebrate and to mark the first National Skills Agreement since 2012. Throughout the entire period of my predecessors, there was not only no National Skills Agreement, there weren't skills agreements between indeed any individual jurisdiction and the Commonwealth. Well, my Government is different. I went to an election saying that we would prioritise TAFE at the center of the vocational education and training system and that we would value skills. The first announcement that I made as Labor Leader, was back here in Perth in 2019, where I announced the creation of

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Jobs and Skills Australia, a body to identify what the labour market needs were for Australian business going forward, not just over a one year period, but five years, 10 years time. To make sure that our education and training system was fit for purpose. To make sure, as well, that we didn't just rely upon temporary labour, bringing people in and then sending them out, and bringing in other people to do the same job. That when we identify an area of skill shortage, we actually have a strategy to tackle it. And that means firstly, training Australians for those jobs. We need also, of course, to have, migration will continue to play a role. But training Australians up, whether it be for their first job or retraining. And it was fantastic to meet some of the students who are here, some of them new in their first task that they're looking at doing but others looking at retraining, as well, for the jobs of the future, with the concentration that this TAFE will have on the renewable sector, which will require different skills. And that's why this \$12 billion program that we have put in place over a five year period, with \$1.2 billion directly for Western Australia, will make an enormous difference going forward, over the next five years. And I pay tribute to all of the State and Territory Governments. A lot of work has gone into this, in the lead up to the National Cabinet meeting that we held on Monday, but all of the Premiers and Chief Ministers are very excited about the prospects of going forward. And an example of the way that my Government is working cooperatively with State Governments. Not picking fights with them, not choosing to back Clive Palmer rather than the local State Government, but choosing instead to back Western Australians to deliver. Back in this most magnificent of economies, that has been so central to Australia's employment growth, to continue to be a powerhouse of the national economy. This week we had the labour market figures, showed an unemployment rate of 3.6 per cent. There have been 19 occasions since records began, where unemployment has had a three in front of it and 16 of the of them have been under my Labor Government, since were elected last May. Now, we will continue to prioritise the creation of jobs, we will continue to prioritise lifting wages and we will continue to prioritise giving people the skills, so they can fill those good, secure jobs. Now, the Fee-Free TAFE is already making an enormous difference. We committed to 180,000 Fee-Free TAFE places this year. We've delivered at least but still growing, 215,000. Here in WA, there were going to be 18,000 places, we've almost doubled that figure. WA was very quick off the mark in making a difference. And here at this TAFE, just one example of the difference that it has made, before Fee-Free TAFE this course in electronics used to cost \$3,700. It attracted about seven students each term. Fee-Free TAFE means that now the course has 85 students enrolled, seven to 85. A practical example of how our commitment to Fee-Free TAFE, making a difference, working with State Governments is making a difference to the economy. But importantly as well, making a difference to people's lives by training them up and giving them the skills that they need for secure work into the future. So, I want to also conclude by just giving a shout out to those people who are doing the training. A lot of people, when I've been to TAFEs over the years, people who've already made a massive contribution through the skills and work that they've done, towards the end of their careers or sometimes after they're formally retired, go and impart those skills to the next generation coming through. And that's a really important thing about TAFE that we see and I thank those who are doing that. And this course at this wonderful TAFE, I just think this is a really practical announcement and a practical example of how my Government is getting on with dealing with cost of living pressures, dealing with the challenges which are in the economy and setting us up for a prosperous future. We're going to hear from the Premier and then the WA Training Minister, Simone. And then we'll take questions.

ROGER COOK, PREMIER OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA: Thanks very much, Anthony. It's great to have the Prime Minister back here in Western Australia and here in Midland at North Metropolitan TAFE, one of the centres that will be designed to train all the people we need for our renewable energy transition. So, it's terrific to be here to celebrate Fee-Free TAFE courses. I'm joined by Minister McGurk, I want to thank her for her leadership in the training field, but also acknowledge Tania Lawrence the Member for Hasluck. And of course, the great local Member for Midland, Michelle Roberts. This is an outstanding outcome for Western Australia. In 2023, 36,000 Western Australians took advantage of our Fee-Free courses, over and above the anticipated 180,000. And so now, we've got more in 24. And we're really looking forward to extending the Fee-Free TAFE courses under the National Skills Agreement. Now, my Government always fights for the best deal for Western Australians and the National Skills Agreement is an outstanding outcome for training Western Australians, not only for the jobs of today, but for the jobs of the future. It enables us to properly target our resources to those qualifications that we know are going to be so vital for the ongoing prosperity of our economy. And it also provides us with an opportunity to target cohorts that we want to see get into the courses, that are so valuable. People from disadvantaged backgrounds, gender diversity in these courses. And so, this is an outstanding outcome. I was very proud to be at the National Cabinet meeting earlier in the week, where all the Premiers and Chief Ministers were able to sign off on the

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National Skills Agreement. It's a great sign of a Commonwealth Government, which is taking the lead to make sure our economy has the workforce that we need to continue to prosper. This is also in addition to my Government's \$246 million redevelopment of our TAFE campuses, almost a quarter of a billion dollars around designing and making sure that our TAFE campuses are fit for purpose, to continue to provide great job opportunities for those skills that we'll need today, but to continue to make sure that we have the job opportunities for skills into the future. So, for instance, here at North Metropolitan TAFE, we'll be providing skills opportunities for those people looking to transition into the renewable energies future. We'll have a wind turbine here in the very near future, to provide skills for those people to be able to practice, not only working on wind turbines, but also working at height. So, you can see how these strategic investments are so important to providing people with jobs. And that's what my Government's priority is, is to make sure that Western Australians get the jobs that they deserve. And our unemployment rate figures, which were released yesterday, 3.3 per cent is an outstanding outcome for the Western Australian economy, and we want to do more. We want to continue to make sure that we provide opportunities for Western Australians to get rewarding jobs, in great industries, that are forward looking into the future. So, thank you very much to the Commonwealth Government. Congratulations to Minister McGurk for the National Skills Agreement. This is a great day for Western Australian jobs and training, and very much looking forward to seeing more success in the Fee-Free TAFE courses into the future.

SIMONE MCGURK, WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MINISTER FOR TRAINING: Thank you Premier and thank you Prime Minister for being here, as well as Tania Lawrence and Michelle Roberts. I just wanted to acknowledge what we're able to achieve when we work in cooperation with the Federal Government and the State Government, both being so committed in Western Australia to making sure that Western Australians are skilled to do the jobs that we know are out there and we know are coming. And this five year Skills Agreement, which will deliver \$1.3 billion to Western Australia, \$1.3 billion, and that would be \$380 million more than we've had in previous, than previous funding arrangements with the Federal Government. But importantly, we have some certainty of funding for five years. And working together with a Commonwealth Government to understand what our priority areas are, for the jobs that we know are here now and the jobs that we know are coming at us. And to be here at North Metropolitan TAFE here in Midland, where we're able to meet students who are taking advantage of significant Fee-Free courses, making significant savings. And as the Prime Minister said, we've met a couple of students who are mature age and are coming back and taking the opportunity to upskill, but also young students who can see the opportunities that are here. These are electronic students and you can tell, there's real buzz in the room. They've really taken advantage of what we're able to deliver with Fee-Free and I would just like to repeat my acknowledgement of the cooperation that we're able to achieve with the Federal Government, when we work together. And for the Federal Government, under Prime Minister Albanese and the Skills Minister Brendan O'Connor, understanding that Western Australia has some real pressures and that we need to all work together to put our shoulder to the wheel, to meet the skills demands that are with us today.

PRIME MINISTER: Thanks very much, Simone. Happy to have questions, on this firstly. This is a really important announcement and I'm sure you have some other things you want to talk about.

JOURNALIST: Do you agree with Ed Husic and Anne Aly, who've accused Israel of collectively punishing Palestinians? And if it's not collective punishment, what is it?

PRIME MINISTER: Ed Husic, Anne Aly and my entire team voted for a resolution in the Parliament and indeed Ed and Anne spoke about it. That resolution was really important, it unequivocally condemned Hamas for the atrocities that it committed as a terrorist organisation, with its invasion of Israel. And with the atrocities that were committed, including to young people who were attending a music festival, we had people kidnapped and taken from their families. Israel has a right to defend itself. We also acknowledged in that resolution, importantly, that the lives of innocent civilians needed to be protected. Every loss of an innocent life matters, whether they are Israeli or Palestinian. And I do note the comments of President Biden today. This is what President Biden has had to say, 'The US remains committed to the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self determination. We mourn every innocent life lost. We can't ignore the humanity of innocent Palestinians, who only want to live in peace.' And I applaud the efforts of President Biden, to work with nations in the region to make sure that Gaza will be able to have access to food, water and medicine. President Biden went on to say, 'We cannot give up on peace and we cannot give up on a two state solution.' And his comments are appropriate, I completely agree with them, and I

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stand by, as does every Member of the Labor Party, the resolution that was adopted overwhelmingly in the Parliament, in the House of Representatives and the same resolution in the Senate just this week.

JOURNALIST: We learned just this morning that a 16 year old Aboriginal boy has become first death in custody in WA in the last 50 years. The Voice was your key measure to avoid these sorts of outcomes. With that having failed, what's next?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, firstly, can I say that this news is a terrible tragedy and I give my condolences to the family and friends of this young person who has died. And there will now be, of course, a coronial inquiry and so on those specifics, it is not appropriate, therefore, to comment further. My Government is determined to Close the Gap with Indigenous Australians. We answered the invitation of indigenous Australians to give constitutional recognition in the form which was requested, which was through a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament. Australians did not vote for that. Our constitution is difficult to change. We're now on eight out of 45, and it is though the case that Indigenous communities in remote Northern Territory, in places in the Kimberley, in Lockhart River and Palm Island and the Tiwis and other communities, overwhelmingly did vote Yes in this referendum. And that will be a difficult time, it is a difficult time for Indigenous Australians. But we respect the outcome in our democracy and I have done that. What we will continue to do, we'll continue to work on Closing the Gap though. The National Skills Agreement is an example, we have over \$200 million of that agreement, is set aside for First Nation skills uplift. We want to make sure that there are more Indigenous apprentices, that there are more Indigenous trainees, that workforces are able to benefit from skilling up Indigenous Australians. I know that many of the companies that were out there supporting the Voice, are those that have done a lot in terms of reconciliation action plans, in Indigenous apprenticeships, and here in Western Australia, of course, has led that quite often, and that's a good thing. But the fact that we have this specific program is an indication that I believe whilst Australians did not vote in favour of the referendum, Australians do want to see the gap closed. They do want to see disadvantage dealt with, that is, in Indigenous communities. And we'll continue to work in this area, but in health, in life expectancy, in community services, in all of these areas, with the programs that we have. But also consult with Indigenous communities, because one of the things that I do know, and here in Western Australia of all places, is the case. I've been coming here for a long period of time. I've been here, I think, now 17 times as Prime Minister, that's more than one a month, and it's certainly more than what I committed to, of ten visits a year. Because if you want to find out what's happening on the ground, here in Western Australia, I think West Australians understand this. They don't want decisions to just be made in Canberra. They want people to come, to talk to people on the ground, to get those results. Now, that's a principle that doesn't just apply in Indigenous affairs, it's one that applies across the board. It's one that my Government will continue to do, which is why I've engaged so strongly with the Premier, Roger Cook, and why I engaged so strongly as well with his predecessor, Mark McGowan.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, you have been coming here for a long time before you were Prime Minister and as Prime Minister, as well. Did you expect such a strong No vote in this state?

PRIME MINISTER: People saw what polling was saying, we were determined, though. You had a call in 2017. You'll note that I was coming here in 2017, but I wasn't the Prime Minister. Nor was I the Prime Minister who established a process, which asked Indigenous Australians to deliberate on what form constitutional recognition should take. That process, we had John Howard way back in, we had a vote on the Preamble, which had a similar outcome, last century. We then had John Howard go to an election in 2007, we then had Tony Abbott and then Malcolm Turnbull establish a process. That process came up with the Uluru Statement from the Heart in 2017. You had Ken Wyatt appointed as the Minister for Indigenous Australians and go to Garma in 2019. I was there when he put forward the idea that there would be a referendum. That was the policy that Scott Morrison was elected on in 2019. It never happened. It never happened. I'm a Prime Minister who will promise to do things and then go and do them. I think that's how you restore faith in politics. That is something that we need to do. I launched my campaign here at the stadium and I promised on multiple occasions, that we would do this. And we gave Australians their say, but we respect the outcome that was given.

JOURNALIST: How concerned are you about the unlawful use of solitary confinement in our detention centre, that can see Indigenous kids held in their cell for 23 hours? Including the one -

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PRIME MINISTER: I have no intention of commenting on, from Canberra, about the specifics of what occurs in every centre in Australia

JOURNALIST: But, if we're trying to Close the Gap

PRIME MINISTER: It's a question of the State. I'm not going to pretend, on a serious issue when it comes to Indigenous Australians, that I am somehow an expert on every issue. That's the whole point that I'm making here, is that you need to get local engagement and local input on matters.

JOURNALIST: What do you make of the Opposition Leader's claims yesterday, urging you to fly to Washington via Tel Aviv, in the final moments of Parliament?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, I think that quite clearly, the conflict in the Middle East is a complex one. It's one that has gone on for a considerable period of time. The responsibility for what is happening now rests firmly with Hamas and the actions that they have taken. But there are, of course, longer term issues which President Biden has indicated this morning again, has given people a reminder, that they are issues that need to be addressed. And I acknowledge the suffering of Israeli, as well as Palestinian citizens, who are innocent, who just want to live a life in security and with justice, as the resolution carried by the Parliament said, going forward. I also acknowledge that leaders have a responsibility at this time to make sure that there is, whilst there is some concern in the community and hurt being felt for people who have relatives and friends in the Middle East, whether they be Israeli or Palestinian, this is a very difficult time for the community. So, individuals and particularly people, I draw your attention to the comments of the Director General of ASIO, Mike Burgess, who's spoken about the need to be responsible in comments and to be careful about language which is used at this time. We have a harmonious community here in Australia, I want to see that continue. There's no place here in Australia for anti-Semitism. There is also no place here in Australia for Islamophobia. The Leader of the Opposition chose to do that, that's a matter for him. I have scheduled a visit, that has been longstanding with President Biden, where the logistics of organising that for Sunday, is when we will depart from Canberra. The leaders who have visited, and I note this, the leaders who have visited are members of the P5, the Permanent Members of the Security Council. The United States has a particular role in that, as does the United Kingdom, as does the other people who have visited there. And President Biden's visit produced outcomes of negotiating through with different states, but also was accompanied by a considerable security effort for President Biden. This is not a secure area. Our priority has been to engage and I've engaged, I've met personally with the Israeli Ambassador. I had him to my residence and had a discussion. I've had discussions with leaders of the Palestinian community, leaders of the Jewish community here in Australia, as well. The decision of the Leader of the Opposition to raise such an issue publicly, that's a matter for him. But at this point in time, I have no plans to visit the Middle East, and in terms of the security agencies as well, there's no disagreement from the position that I've taken.

JOURNALIST: From Joe Biden's speech, what are your thoughts, more specifically on these comments, that if we walk away and let Putin erase Ukraine's independence, would be aggressors, would be emboldened to try and do the same possibly in the Pacific and the Middle East more broadly?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, we're there with the people of Ukraine because the actions of Vladimir Putin, of invading, illegally the sovereign state of Ukraine, is an attack on the international rule of law and on respect for national boundaries and national sovereignty. That's why Australia has been a significant contributor to the struggle in Ukraine. And that's why we've provided support, including providing comfort and refuge for people fleeing Ukraine. Similarly, our priority hasn't been to get people into the Middle East, it's been to get people out of the Middle East. Australian citizens, is what we've been concentrating on, rather than having a whole contingent go into an area which is clearly very volatile, to say the least. It's a state of war, is going on. The people of Ukraine are showing extraordinary courage, extraordinary courage, and I support President Biden's call to continue to engage, to show resolve. Australia will continue to be a part of the support for the people of Ukraine, for as long as it is required, because this isn't just a struggle about what occurs in Ukraine. Thanks very much.

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