



News live: Israel must allow humanitarian relief to reach Gaza, Australia and UK say in new joint statement

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Highlight: Joint statement issued Friday afternoon afternoon expresses 'deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian crisis'. Follow latest updates liveGet our morning and afternoon news emails, free app or daily news podcast

Body

block-time published-time 6.13am GMT

Issues raised over how law enforcement access data

Victoria police is the "most prolific" agency to authorise employees to access data for purposes not covered by the law, according to a report by the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman reviewed how 21 Australian law enforcement and integrity agencies access telecommunications data and store information.

Authorities must comply with strict safeguards over how the data is obtained under the Telecommunications Interception and Access Act.

The covert electronic surveillance report said:

We identified a high number of authorisations that did not demonstrate that the access to data was for enforcing the criminal law or locating a missing person.

We also identified a significant number of authorisations where the alleged offences referenced incorrect legislation.

The report said this was a repeat finding for Victoria police:

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The incorrect use of authorisation provisions risks the legality of the data accessed by (Victoria Police) and the accuracy of their ministerial reporting.

Victoria police said it was working towards full compliance with the requirements of the act. A spokesperson said:

We acknowledge there have been a small number of circumstances where this has not occurred.

Over the past two years we have undertaken a number of steps across the organisation to ensure police are fully educated in relation to their requirements and responsibilities in relation to these requests.

- AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.23am GMT

block-time published-time 6.05am GMT

If you're just catching up on today's news, Luca Ittimani has our top stories here in our afternoon update:

Related: [Afternoon Update: one in 20 mortgage holders spending more than they earn; Reddit shares soar; and a crocodile in a service station](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.12am GMT

block-time published-time 5.57am GMT

Sydney summit held in effort to save state's koalas

The New South Wales environment minister, Penny Sharpe, has told a summit in Sydney that "nothing is off the table" in discussions about the plight of the state's endangered koalas.

Sharpe called the summit to bring together experts and communities as the Minns government reviews the NSW koala strategy.

Sharpe said koalas were being affected by "cumulative impacts every day and they continue apace", including fragmentation and loss of habitat on public and private land and the increasing effects of climate change.

She recognised there was "frustration" among some at the summit who felt the Minns government was not doing enough or moving fast enough to protect koalas. She said there were "ongoing conversations" with the NSW Forestry Corporation "about better protection of koalas across NSW".

Heading into the summit, the government was under pressure over continued logging of koala habitat in the north-east of the state.

Related: [Continued logging of NSW koala habitat is 'a profound tragedy', conservationist says](#)

The Nature Conservation Council (NCC) of NSW used Friday's event to renew calls for a moratorium on logging in all habitat within the boundaries of the proposed great koala national park. The government has so far ordered a stop to logging in 5% of the proposed park.

The NCC's chief executive Jacqui Mumford said the best way to prevent the extinction of the koalas in NSW was to stop native forest logging and address land clearing across the state:

We know that native forest logging and habitat clearing on freehold land are two major threats to koalas.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.11am GMT

block-time published-time 5.44am GMT

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Recognition of Palestinian state might pave way for two-state solution, say Australian and UK

The joint statement from Australian and British ministers after talks in Adelaide also suggested they had discussed how recognition of a Palestinian state might help give momentum towards a two-state solution. However, it did not give any detail about the timing of such a move.

The statement said:

Given the large number of displaced persons taking refuge in the area and lack of safe spaces in Gaza, Ministers shared deep concern at the potentially devastating consequences for the civilian population of an expanded Israeli military operation in Rafah.

They expressed the urgency of an immediate cessation of fighting in Gaza to allow aid to flow and hostages to be released as a crucial step toward a permanent, sustainable ceasefire. Ministers support ongoing diplomatic efforts to achieve this.

Ministers confirmed their commitment to provide increased support for humanitarian relief in Gaza.

Ministers reaffirmed both nations' commitment to a two-state solution in which Israel and a future Palestinian state coexist, in peace and security, based on the 1967 lines, and discussed how recognition might assist in giving momentum toward that goal.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.59am GMT

block-time published-time 5.43am GMT

Israel must allow humanitarian relief to reach Gaza, **Australia** and UK say in new statement

Australia and the UK have called on Israel to "allow immediate, safe, unimpeded and increased humanitarian relief to reach Palestinians in Gaza" and have also called for an immediate end to fighting "as a crucial step toward a permanent, sustainable ceasefire".

The [*joint statement issued by Australian and British ministers this afternoon*](#) included a passage expressing "deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Gaza".

Australian and British ministers "unequivocally condemned the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel as abhorrent acts of terror against innocent civilians, including heinous acts of sexual violence".

The ministers also "stressed that all parties must act within international humanitarian law and reiterated their calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and the protection of civilians at all times".

A week after **Australia** reinstated funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (Unrwa), ministers from **Australia** and the UK "recognised the vital role" of Unrwa:

The ministers discussed the progress of two investigations into Unwra and the steps taken so far to reform UN and Unrwa management practices.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.03am GMT

block-time published-time 5.25am GMT

Australia 'one of the most capable countries' to deliver submarine build, Cameron says

Asked what the minister's message is to critics who say **Australia** building nuclear-powered submarines should not happen, David Cameron responded:

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The first thing I would say is I think it should happen. Remember, these are nuclear-powered but conventionally armed submarines. And nuclear-powered submarines clearly have capabilities in terms of distance and endurance ... I think it is vital technology.

Australia is one of the most capable countries in the world when it comes to delivering big projects. This is a big project as we know that from our own experience. We will be working very hard to make sure we deliver it properly.

block-time updated-time Updated at 5.35am GMT

block-time published-time 5.15am GMT

Cameron says UK and Aukus will 'work with whoever becomes president' in US

The UK foreign secretary, David Cameron, is asked how he thinks a possible election of Donald Trump as president of the US could affect the future of the Aukus agreement.

He responded:

[It's] a very important principle and foreign policy not to involve yourself in other countries and actions. What we will do, as I am sure the Australian government will do, is work with whoever becomes president. We do it in the UK on the basis that we have a special relationship with the United States based on cooperating over defence and security and intelligence and incredibly close ways.

What I would say is: whatever relationship we're about, whatever part of the enterprise we are involved in, whether it is Aukus, which is a brilliant arrangement, or whether it is Nato arrangements, all of those things, whether it's president, the best thing we can do is get alliances, get projects into the best possible shape. Whoever is the new president can see they are waiting with a very successful set of arrangements.

Richard Marles responded the government is confident in "support across the political spectrum":

We feel confident to [what] we have seen particularly over the course of the last few months in Congress that the Aukus arrangements really do ensure support across the political spectrum in their own states and we move forward in complete confidence on what the future will hold.

block-time updated-time Updated at 5.31am GMT

block-time published-time 5.10am GMT

Following Wong, the UK secretary of state for defence, Grant Shapps, spoke; he described Aukus as "fundamentally about freedom of navigation".

He said:

Aukus is fundamentally about freedom of navigation. About ensuring the navy and oceans are capable of being sailed freely as they should be, including here in the Indo-Pacific. Including in the South China Sea. What we are about is maintaining global world-based order, something we hold particularly dear.

block-time updated-time Updated at 5.22am GMT

block-time published-time 5.07am GMT

Penny Wong echoes David Cameron's comments that Israel must allow aid to enter Gaza

Next up, the press conference turned to the foreign affairs minister, Penny Wong, who characterised the partnership as one "fit for the times".

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Wong said:

What happens in the Indo-Pacific reverberates in Europe, what happens in Ukraine, where we see Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine and I do want to say ... we commend the United Kingdom for its leadership on Ukraine. We are united in our unequivocal under nation of Russia's action.

As Richard [Marles] said, we are proud to support Operation Kudu ... and the training of Ukrainian personnel. Yesterday in Adelaide, David [Cameron] and I discussed formalising stronger cooperation when it comes to consular issues, crisis issues and gender-based violence, as he has spoken about.

She also echoed Cameron's statements on supporting small island states, and the importance of increasing humanitarian aid to Gaza and for the fighting to cease to enable aid flows.

We discussed other matters including, as David said; how we work together to enable ... small island, developing states to access climate finance, how we work together to ensure the multilateral development bodies respond better to the needs of developing countries, and how we ensure that the Commonwealth heads of government meeting in Samoa, a meeting of the Commonwealth in Pacific, such an important occasion, is something we both work together to support to ensure that it is a success.

We also discussed the situation in the Middle East. We know how many hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are starving. I echo David's comments about the importance of increased humanitarian aid, the need for Israel to allow that aid to enter, the importance of fighting to cease [to] enable that aid to flow.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.22am GMT

block-time published-time 5.00am GMT

David Cameron says **Australia** and UK will be 'working together' to 'fight the rollback of rights' globally

The UK foreign secretary, David Cameron, spoke shortly after Marles, saying now "is a time where friends and partners need to work even more closely together".

He continued:

We share [a] pretty concrete and clear plan of action that we are going to support Ukraine as you have just said. It is vital in resisting Russian aggression, working together to stabilise the Middle East, getting aid into Gaza and [bringing] about the solution to that conflict. We will work together at helping small island states particularly with green finance, and we are both going to be enhancing our presence in this region as we see the economic prosperity and stability and security that we know we will need.

Cameron then turned to the focus for the year ahead:

I think perhaps particularly focusing on the Commonwealth heads of government meeting in Samoa where we are not just thinking about how we try and make sure that it is a successful heads of government meeting but also the agendas we can pursue helping Commonwealth colleagues with the challenges they face, working together in the G20 to enhance the status and lending of the development banks as they finance the sustainable development goals.

Working together as we fight the rollback of rights that tragically is happening in our world, whether it is women's sexual, reproductive and health rights, of gay rights and other rights, the rollback as to like-minded countries we should fight back against that rollback of rights. But above all, in the dangerous and uncertain and difficult world that we live in today, above all, focusing on our mutual security.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.15am GMT

block-time published-time 4.54am GMT

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Marles thanks UK for its 'leadership' in support of Ukraine

The defence minister, Richard Marles, is speaking from Adelaide now about the submarine strategic partnership announced this morning with the UK:

That announcement this morning again highlights the significance of Aukus within our bilateral relationship, and when you think about the fact that the most important defence capability that we operate now and will certainly operate in the future in terms of a long-range capable submarine, and in the future a long-range capable nuclear powered submarine.

We are meeting at a time where we are watching Ukraine continue its fight against the appalling Russian aggression, the appalling, unprovoked Russian invasion of its territory and as we meet today, we are all very cognisant that now is a time for us all to be continuing our support of Ukraine, to make sure we stay the course so Ukraine is able to resolve this conflict on its own terms.

We have been proud to announce that Australia will participate in the drone coalition as part of our ongoing support for Ukraine and we really want to thank the leadership of Britain in terms of supporting Ukraine in its resistance against Russia and we really want to thank Britain for the way they have engaged with us in terms of our support for Ukraine.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.04am GMT

block-time published-time 4.35am GMT

Vic government admits to stamp duty hardship

Victoria's deputy premier has recognised stamp duty is a major barrier for first home buyers to enter the market as the state considers scrapping the controversial tax.

The state government sent the strongest signal yet that it is open to major stamp duty reform, including the introduction of a broad-based land tax, on Thursday.

It comes a month after the state treasurer, Tim Pallas, warned Victoria's budget bottom line would take a \$30bn hit if stamp duty was scrapped.

The deputy premier, Ben Carroll, on Friday said the backflip was due to competitive property market conditions keeping many Victorians out of home ownership.

He told reporters:

I want to get options, and you have to add stamp duty into your price and when you're bidding.

I think particularly for first time buyers, stamp duty is really hard, because it's almost a double whammy.

Carroll said the state government had been presented with new evidence that supported the feasibility of stamp duty being scrapped.

I think what's changed is the parliament has now received a new report on stamp duty.

We have received reports most of the year and we will, in principle, agree to many of the recommendations.

I will leave that policy particularly to the treasurer, except to say obviously the treasurer is always looking at options.

- AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.46am GMT

block-time published-time 4.15am GMT

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Snappy customer: crocodile captured after walking into Queensland service station

A freshwater crocodile has surprised residents by wandering into a north [Queensland](#) service station, prompting an unusual call to police.

The snappy customer was spotted wandering into the Townsville business on Tuesday night.

Police received the call from surprised residents about the 1.4-metre crocodile's arrival at the service station after 7pm.

Senior wildlife officer Tony Frisby soon arrived to snap up the roaming reptile. Frisby said the freshie's motives were a mystery:

We do not know why the freshwater crocodile entered the service station.

But with recent heavy rainfall, crocodiles of all sizes and species are on the move.

More on this story here:

Related: [Snappy customer: crocodile captured after walking into Queensland service station](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.24am GMT

block-time published-time 4.05am GMT

NSW government departments issue joint statement condemning rise in racism

The leaders of government departments in New South Wales have issued a joint statement condemning rising rates of racism, along with harassment and bullying in the workplace.

The statement comes after the release of a survey of 230,122 state public servants. The survey found 5% of respondents – or 10,500 public servants – had experienced some form of racism.

Another 13% experienced bullying, 5% had reported sexual harassment and 10% had said they received a threat of violence.

Here's a section of the joint statement from the NSW secretaries board:

Over the past three years, reports of experiencing racism have increased, reaching 5% in 2023. This is impacting approximately 10,500 of our colleagues, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally diverse colleagues disproportionately affected.

In 2023, 17% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents and 8% of respondents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds reported experiences of racism.

Racism, whether it's discrimination, racist jokes, stereotypes or negative attitudes, has no place in our workplaces and will not be tolerated. We need to do more to prevent and respond to racism, both interpersonal and systemic. This includes open and honest conversations and the bravery to call out racism.

block-time published-time 4.05am GMT

Thanks Emily Wind, and good afternoon everyone. I'll now be with you until this evening.

block-time published-time 4.01am GMT

Many thanks for joining me on the blog today. The lovely Jordyn Beazley will be here to guide you through the rest of today's news. Take care, and have a great weekend.

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block-time published-time 3.57am GMT

Federal opposition criticises delay on gambling ad crackdown

The federal opposition has criticised the Albanese government's delayed response to a parliamentary inquiry that called for a total gambling ad ban, after a three year transition.

The inquiry report, led by former Labor MP Peta Murphy, was tabled nine months ago and the federal government had intended to formally respond by the end of 2023.

In May last year, Peter Dutton complained about a "bombardment of ads" that was "changing the culture of our country in a bad way and normalising gambling at a young age".

The Coalition's bill to ban gambling ads being aired during sporting matches, and an hour either side of broadcasts, was not supported by parliament.

The shadow communications minister, David Coleman, said the Coalition remained "deeply concerned about the impact on families of the deluge of gambling adverts during live sporting events":

It's been nine months since Labor joined with the Greens to slam the door shut on what was a sensible and measured plan. Had the Government supported our bill [in June], the restrictions on gambling adverts during live sport would already be in place and running by now.

The Coalition hasn't changed its position, and looks forward to carefully considering the government bill, when they finally get around to releasing it.

The communications minister, Michelle Rowland, has previously said the government was "firmly committed to minimising harms from online gambling" and was consulting widely.

In early January, an Albanese government spokesperson said:

The status quo of online wagering advertising is untenable and the Government will announce a comprehensive response in due course.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.00am GMT

block-time published-time 3.52am GMT

Man charged after fatal alleged hit-and-run in Sydney's east at the weekend

A man will appear in court tomorrow charged over allegedly failing to stop following a fatal crash in Sydney's east at the weekend.

NSW police officers were called to Fletcher Street in Tamarama shortly after 4am on Sunday after a man was found critically injured. He was treated, but was unable to be revived and died at the scene.

He has since been formally identified as a 28-year-old New Zealand man.

Related: [Tribute to young lawyer killed in suspected Sydney hit and run](#)

Following extensive inquiries, a 63-year-old Bexley man was arrested by investigators after attending Granville police station around 11am today.

He was charged with failing to stop and assist after a vehicle impact causing death, dangerous driving occasioning death – driving in a dangerous manner, negligent driving (occasioning death) and using a mobile phone when not permitted.

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He was refused bail to appear at Parramatta bail court tomorrow.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.23am GMT

block-time published-time 3.46am GMT

More on the Aussie Bird Count results:

The top four birds have remained the same over the last ten years. BirdLife **Australia** spokesperson Sean Dooley said if the count had begun in the 1950s or 1990s, "the top 10 would have been quite different".

One thread linking the most successful birds that have been recorded living in the places where we live, is that they tend to be bolder, more aggressive species with a broad, generalist diet. We are picking up a decline in reporting rates of smaller, more specialist bush birds that were once fairly common garden birds such as silvereyes and fairy-wrens.

The information we are collecting from the Aussie Bird Count is confirming what other research is showing about the challenges facing our native birds.

For further reading, Graham Readfearn recently wrote about how important the counting of bird populations is while looking at a mystery paralysis syndrome affecting lorikeet populations:

Related: [*What's paralysing thousands of rainbow lorikeets? Scientists search for the cause as volunteer carers are overwhelmed*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.53am GMT

block-time published-time 3.44am GMT

Rainbow lorikeet tops annual Aussie Bird Count

BirdLife **Australia** has released its 10th annual Aussie Bird Count data, with rainbow lorikeets once again topping the list.

What started in 2014 has now grown into **Australia**'s largest citizen science event, with more than 60,000 people tallying an astonishing 3.6m birds [*during one week last October*](#).

Participants spent at least 20 minutes outside during the week, identifying species and tallying their results using the Aussie Bird Count app.

The top ten birds **Australia**-wide were:

1. Rainbow lorikeet 2. Noisy miner 3. Australian magpie 4. Sulphur-crested cockatoo 5. Welcome swallow 6. Galah 7. Silver gull 8. Australian white ibis 9. House sparrow 10. Red wattlebird

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.48am GMT

block-time published-time 3.35am GMT

Faith leaders pen open letter to government rejecting ALRC report

24 faith groups from multiple denominations have penned an open letter to the federal government, rejecting the Australian Law Reform Commission's report.

The report, tabled yesterday, argues that blanket exemptions allowing religious schools to discriminate against staff and students on the basis of sexuality and gender identity should be repealed:

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Related: [Landmark report calls for removal of LGBTQ+ discrimination exemptions for **Australia's** religious schools](#)

The open letter says faith leaders are “deeply disappointed” with the proposed reforms, and said the recommendations will “prevent the overwhelming majority of faith-based schools from preferring persons who share and authentically live out their faith”.

The faith groups argue they are not seeking to “discriminate on the basis of a protected attribute” but want to employ staff “who share or are willing to uphold the religious beliefs of the school”.

We call on the Government to reject the Recommendations made in this ALRC Final Report and to seek a policy outcome that will preserve the rights of religious schools and educational institutions to build and administer faith communities in accordance with their doctrines, tenets and beliefs.

We again welcome your commitment to consult widely in an inclusive and constructive manner, in consultation with people of faith and religious organisations, including schools, as well as with all Australians interested in this important work.

The letter is signed by the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, Australian National Imams Council, Christian Schools **Australia**, Australian Baptist Churches, and more.

There are notable omissions from the letter, including the National Catholic Education Commission, which has separately expressed concerns about the ALRC report.

block-time updated-time Updated at 5.31am GMT

block-time published-time 3.18am GMT

Opposition will negotiate constructively on religious bill, Cash says

The shadow attorney general, Michaelia Cash, has responded to calls from the Albanese government for the opposition to offer bipartisanship on the religious discrimination bill.

Cash told Guardian **Australia**:

It is up to the government to explain what is in their bill and how it relates to the recommendations in the ALRC report and previous iterations of the bill from the former government.

The priority at the moment is ensuring that any bills put forward by the government address the very serious concerns raised by faith leaders and religious schools in the wake of the ALRC report.

We will negotiate constructively with the government to try and secure a position which takes faith communities forward, and not backwards. It is concerning that the government have already ruled out an inquiry on significant legislation like this.

block-time published-time 3.09am GMT

Police investigating fatal car crash in Tasmania

Tasmanian police are investigating a fatal crash overnight which left a young child dead.

Acting inspector Jason Jones said emergency services were notified of the crash at Lefroy about 1.20am, after somebody reported a woman and two children had been injured.

He said initial inquiries suggest a 24-year-old woman was driving a black Holden Barina on Bridport Road when she “lost control of the vehicle, and crashed into nearby trees”.

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A community member provided assistance before emergency services arrived and took the two injured children to George Town hospital.

A young boy was pronounced deceased a short time later, and the other child was then taken to Launceston general hospital with minor injuries.

The woman was also taken to Launceston hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

Jones said the incident would “understandably have an impact on the local community” and his “thoughts are with those affected”.

Police are continuing to investigate the circumstances surrounding the crash and will prepare a report for the coroner.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.11am GMT

block-time published-time 3.04am GMT

Police seize gel blaster firearm spotted on Sydney train

New South Wales police have seized a gel blaster firearm that was located on a Sydney train during this morning's rush hour.

Police said officers were called to Redfern station about 9am following reports a gel blaster had been located. The gel blaster was seized from station staff and police said inquiries are continuing.

Gel blasters shoot pellets and are deemed a firearm in NSW, meaning people would need a license to operate one and the same rules apply as with other licensed firearms.

The Sydney Morning Herald [spoke to passengers](#) travelling on the Eastern Suburbs and Illawarra line, who said a man stood up and exited the train just after 8am, leaving the firearm on his seat.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.07am GMT

block-time published-time 2.54am GMT

As Tamsin Rose and Catie McLeod [reported earlier](#), gay conversion practices have been outlawed in New South Wales after a marathon overnight debate in the state parliament.

In case you missed it (which most of us did, this was at 6.30 this morning!), here is the moment that the practices were officially banned:

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.59am GMT

block-time published-time 2.40am GMT

Ex-ministers face yearlong wait for corruption trial

A trio of former NSW Labor ministers will have to wait more than a year before facing trial on serious corruption charges, AAP reports.

Eddie Obeid, Joe Tripodi and Tony Kelly appeared in Sydney's Downing Centre district court on Friday, when they formally entered not-guilty pleas.

A trial date was set for 12 May 2025 – nearly three years after charges were laid against the men.

They each face one count of misconduct in public office over allegations they deliberately mishandled a major water infrastructure bid between 2009 and 2010.

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Obeid allegedly attempted to influence a series of parliamentary colleagues – Michael Costa, Nathan Rees, Morris Iemma, Philip Costa and Kristina Keneally – to promote the interests of a company, Australian Water Holdings.

Tripodi prepared a minute document for the cabinet standing committee on the budget that supported the company's bid for a public-private partnership, prosecutors allege.

Kelly, who at the time was minister for infrastructure, then signed and authorised the submission of the minute, according to court documents.

The minute allegedly contained information the men either knew to be untrue or had made no appropriate inquiries to confirm its accuracy.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.53am GMT

block-time published-time 2.34am GMT

RBA and the fire brigade: lessons from a lockup

The Reserve Bank, as you may have noted, has released its half-yearly financial stability review ([which we wrote about here](#)).

These sorts of reports (including the quarterly statement of monetary policy) can be dry affairs, particularly if they don't produce clear indications of whether the RBA is planning to cut or lift its cash rate. (Governor Michele Bullock [is keeping her options open](#).)

Journalists enter a "lockup" for these reports – in this case, one that ran from 10–11.30am AEDT.

What was unusual with today's lockup was not just that it was the first within the shiny office block at 8 Chifley Square in Sydney, rather than the brutalist asbestos-riddled RBA building not far away in Martin Square. (The latter might make a good set for a sequel to the Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy movie – Gary Oldman version, of course).

The new digs, with a stunning view out to the heads of Sydney Harbour, are certainly an improvement for staff and visitors alike, even if they are temporary. But what was odder yet was a fire alarm that got triggered a couple of minutes in the lockup.

The dozen or so journalists had just handed in their phones and were skimming through the 39-page document (no soft copies). And there were a bunch of senior RBA staffers on hand too, for any questions. (It would be nice if that transparency extended to RBA board meetings, but that's unlikely.)

What to do? Evacuate and take whatever secrets out into the wider world about an hour early? Or stay put and hope the alarm was a false one?

Perhaps not entirely according to the highest health and safety standards, everyone stayed put, even as the sirens of fire trucks could be heard wafting up from the city streets below.

Eventually the alarm ceased and an all-clear was issued by the building manager.

A happy ending this time. But what if there had been a fire...?

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.41am GMT

block-time published-time 2.17am GMT

Audi issues second electric car recall due to fire risk

More than 100 electric vehicles have been urgently recalled in [Australia](#) due to a serious battery fault that could "lead to a vehicle fire", AAP reports.

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The federal transport department issued the urgent recall for 123 Audi e-Tron vehicles on Friday, in what is the second major recall for Audi electric cars this year.

However, the government also warned that software to address the fault was still being developed and vehicle owners may have to wait months for a fix.

The latest Audi recall was issued for its e-Tron 55 and 55 Sportback SUVs manufactured between 2018 and 2022, with concerns its battery could catch fire.

The recall said:

Due to a manufacturing defect, the high-voltage battery may experience a thermal overload if charged over 80 per cent capacity.

If this occurs, the battery could overheat and lead to a vehicle fire.

Vehicle owners are advised to schedule an appointment with Audi to have their vehicle's battery inspected, and to "temporarily limit the charging target to 80 per cent capacity".

The recall noted that Audi had yet to develop a software fix for the battery defect, and owners may have to return their vehicle "every four months" for inspection until one is available.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.20am GMT

block-time published-time 2.02am GMT

Three NSW teenagers charged following pursuit of stolen car

Three teenagers have been charged after a pursuit in New South Wales' north-east yesterday.

After 11pm, police were patrolling Tamworth when they attempted to stop a Holden Commodore. Police said a pursuit was initiated when the car failed to stop, but this was later terminated due to safety concerns.

The Holden was located abandoned a short time later, and three teens were arrested in the area and taken to Tamworth police station. Inquiries revealed the Holden had been reported stolen overnight from a home on Vera Street.

A 13-year-old boy was charged with drive conveyance taken without consent of owner, police pursuit – not stop – drive recklessly, participate criminal group contribute criminal activity, and breach of bail.

Another 13-year-old boy was charged with be carried in conveyance taken without consent of owner, participate criminal group contribute criminal activity, and breach of bail.

A 14-year-old boy was charged with be carried in conveyance taken without consent of owner, and participate criminal group contribute criminal activity.

Two boys aged 14 and 13 were refused bail to appear at a children's court today. The other boy was given conditional bail to appear at a children's court on 2 April.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.07am GMT

block-time published-time 1.49am GMT

Australian airlines still running very late, according to new government data

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One in four flights around **Australia** are arriving or departing late, up from one in five at the start of 2022, continuing the industry's run of worsening results. Approximately 4% of flights were cancelled in February, double the long-term average, according to the [latest monthly report](#) from the transport department's research bureau.

Passengers between Melbourne and Darwin were more likely to run late than to arrive on time, and Mildura–Melbourne travellers left late almost as often as they left on time. Spare a thought for the people of Mildura, where less than 60% of planes arrived or left on time. Industrial action on Perth routes in February led to mass flight cancellations, hitting one in four trips between Perth and Broome and one in five trips between Perth and Darwin.

Bonza was the only airline to get more than 80% of its flights arriving and departing on time, while Virgin **Australia** Regional Airlines was the worst performer. QantasLink cancelled almost 7% of its flights, more than triple the proportion canned by best performer Rex. More planes are arriving and departing on time compared to the end of last year, but the industry is still a long way from returning to the more than 80% averages it achieved before 2022. Research from consumer advocate Choice found two in five Australians had a flight cancelled or delayed last year:

Related: [Two in five Australians had flight cancelled or delayed over 12 months, survey says](#)

In November 45% of flights between Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane were cancelled or delayed. Customer outrage has prompted the Coalition to [call for an airline passenger compensation scheme](#) that would make carriers pay delayed customers.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.20am GMT

block-time published-time 1.38am GMT

Candidates declared for Cook byelection

Six candidates have been declared for the Cook byelection, triggered by the resignation of former Cook MP and prime minister Scott Morrison.

The candidates are as follows, in the order they will be listed on the ballot:

Vinay Kolhatkar (Libertarian party)Natasha BrownRoger WoodwardMartin MooreSimon Kennedy (Liberal party)Simone Francis Gagatam

enltr6 candidates have been officially declared for the [#Cook](#) by-election. Check out the list of candidates in ballot paper order ?? - www.aec.gov.au/cook pic.twitter.com/RIKOCGzY6e

— AEC ?? (@AusElectoralCom) [March 22, 2024](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.53am GMT

block-time published-time 1.28am GMT

Workplace health and safety investigating fatal snake bite in north Queensland

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) is investigating a snake bite in north Queensland earlier in the week.

On Tuesday, [a man died in Townsville hospital](#) after being bitten multiple times by what is believed to be a eastern brown snake.

According to the ABC, the man did not have a permit and was bitten at a childcare centre, after attempting to catch and bag a snake.

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The man reportedly drove home where his wife administered first aid. Queensland Ambulance Service officers were called to the address and found him in a critical condition. He was taken to hospital, but did not survive.

WHSQ said in a statement it was “not able to provide further information at this time” as the investigation is ongoing.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.38am GMT

block-time published-time 1.19am GMT

Government should work with Greens to legislate ALRC recommendations: Shoebridge

During Greens senator David Shoebridge 's earlier press conference in Canberra, he accused the Albanese government of lacking political courage over what he called a “groundbreaking report” from [the Australian Law Reform Commission to end discrimination in schools](#).

Shoebridge insisted that the government should not insist on only proceeding with the Coalition's bipartisan support, and instead work with the Greens to legislate the recommendations:

We have a guaranteed progressive majority in both houses of parliament and we could end students being discriminated against in school because they're queer or trans. We could stop teachers being sacked because they're single parents, on the basis of religious discrimination. We could end that in a heartbeat if the Albanese government had the courage to legislate these recommendations into law.

Instead the Albanese government is handing Peter Dutton a veto on these laws.

That is a crucial lack of leadership from the Albanese government and we urge him and his team to join with the Greens, work through these recommendations and legislate them as soon as possible.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.24am GMT

block-time published-time 1.13am GMT

Keli Lane has capacity to cooperate in relation to location of child's body but has not utilised it, parole authority says

The NSW parole authority released its full parole determination for convicted baby killer Keli Lane, which reads:

In circumstances where [baby] Tegan's body has never been found, the Authority concluded that as a matter of statutory construction, the offender's case in respect of release to parole was to be determined solely by reference to s 135A of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 (NSW). That section, which incorporates the “No body, no parole” laws, provides that the Authority must not make a parole order unless it is satisfied that the offender has cooperated satisfactorily in police investigations or other actions to identify the location of the victim.

The authority concluded a report from NSW police “made it clear” Lane has not cooperated in relation to Tegan's whereabouts since her verdict and sentence.

The authority stated Lane has the capacity to cooperate, “at the very least since being sentenced”, but that capacity had not been utilised.

Lane has maintained she gave Tegan to the infant's father, a man named Andrew Norris or Morris, soon after giving birth at Sydney's Auburn hospital.

Extensive police investigations failed to locate Tegan or the man Lane named as her father, with whom the former champion water polo player said she had a brief relationship.

The body of the two-day-old baby has never been found.

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- with AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.26am GMT

block-time published-time 1.03am GMT

Convicted baby killer Keli Lane denied parole

Convicted baby killer Keli Lane has been denied parole, following the introduction of [“no body, no parole” laws](#).

In a statement, the NSW state parole authority said it held a meeting today to determine whether it would make a parole order for Lane.

Lane has served more than 13 years in jail for murdering her newborn daughter, Tegan, whose body has never been found.

Related: [Convicted killer Keli Lane loses bid to appeal to high court](#)

The parole authority said:

For all the reasons set out in the Determination, the Authority is not satisfied that the offender has co-operated satisfactorily in police investigations, or other actions, to identify the location of Tegan.

Accordingly, having regard to s 135A (2) of the Act, the Authority has concluded that it must not make a parole order directing the release of the offender.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.14am GMT

block-time published-time 1.01am GMT

Prime minister calls for bipartisan support on religious discrimination reform

Anthony Albanese has reiterated demands for bipartisanship on religious discrimination reforms, but also opened the door to passing two bills with crossbench support.

[As we reported earlier](#), Albanese told reporters in Eugowra the government would respond “in due time” to a report from the Australian Law Reform Commission.

Albanese said the opposition had been briefed and had the legislation, and Labor will “engage across the parliament”.

I think it should be possible to move forward with reform. But if that is not possible, the maths in our parliament, we don't have the majority in the Senate so we need the support of either the Liberal and National parties or the Greens political party in order to advance this issue ...

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.07am GMT

block-time published-time 12.58am GMT

Shoebridge says new Aukus deal signals ‘bad day for Australian taxpayers’

The Greens' defence spokesperson, David Shoebridge, has held a press conference in Canberra to blast news that [Australia](#) will send A\$4.6bn (£2.4bn) to the UK to [help clear bottlenecks at the Rolls-Royce nuclear reactor production line](#).

The figure, while previously unpublished, is understood to come from within the existing Aukus funding envelope. The Rolls-Royce plant is where the nuclear reactors will come from for [Australia's](#) submarines.

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Shoebridge – who has long opposed plans for **Australia** to acquire nuclear-powered submarines – said Aukus was “in deep water” because the US couldn’t produce enough nuclear submarines to make any available for **Australia** (the deal includes the sale of at least three Virginia class submarines in the 2030s):

How could we get a worse deal out of Aukus?

This is an extraordinarily bad deal and a bad day for Australian taxpayers ...

I think for anyone to suggest that this is not new money and somehow shouldn’t trouble Australians who are looking for an affordable home, who are desperately waiting to get their dental health sorted out, who are surviving on extremely low benefits – to tell those perhaps previous supporters of the Labor government that this \$4.5bn is already budgeted for, I think is a pretty poor answer from the Albanese government.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.32am GMT

block-time published-time 12.50am GMT

Inner West mayor labels NSW’s new bail laws as ‘inhumane policy’

Inner West council mayor Darcy Byrne has convened an emergency meeting of Aboriginal, legal and human rights organisations opposed to the NSW government’s new bail laws.

Changes to the Bail Act were passed in the state’s upper house overnight, making it harder for teenage offenders to get bail:

Related: [NSW outlaws gay conversion practices and makes it harder for young people to get bail](#)

Byrne, a senior NSW Labor figure, labelled the changes as “inhumane policy” and said the emergency meeting will be held next Wednesday.

The Aboriginal community have been brutalised in recent months by the referendum result and an increase in vitriol towards them. So for the NSW Government now to make locking up more of their kids its highest Indigenous policy priority is a real kick in the guts.

Locking up children will lead to more crime, not less, and we must now force the Government to actually look at the evidence and fund what’s been proven to work.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.59am GMT

block-time published-time 12.41am GMT

Severe thunderstorms forecast for south-west Queensland

The Bureau of Meteorology is forecasting severe thunderstorms in far south-west Queensland today:

enlr??Today's forecast: severe thunderstorms with heavy rainfall are possible in the far southwest. Thunderstorms are possible in southwestern and northwestern [#Qld](#) , as well as the east coast north of Port Douglas with moderate falls. Warnings if needed: <https://t.co/FBmpslnT9c> [pic.twitter.com/zSTRP966C](https://t.co/zSTRP966C)

— Bureau of Meteorology, Queensland (@BOM_Qld) [March 22, 2024](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.49am GMT

block-time published-time 12.34am GMT

One in 20 mortgage holders spending more than they earn, RBA review says

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About one in 20 mortgage holders are spending more than they earn because of higher interest rates and cost-of-living increases, but that share should halve by the end of 2025, the Reserve Bank said in its latest financial stability review.

Related: [One in 20 Australian mortgage holders are spending more than they earn](#)

The semi-annual report, released today, was generally upbeat about the financial health of households and businesses, finding “nearly all borrowers continue to service their debts on schedule” even though conditions are likely to remain challenging for many this year.

Most borrowers remain able to service their debts, even as debt servicing costs have risen about 30-60% since the RBA started hiking its cash rate in May 2022. However, about 5% of owner-occupiers on variable rate loans face expenses exceeding income, with lower-income borrowers most likely to be in this category.

However, many of those with negative cash flow still have savings to draw upon. Those with both low buffers and more money leaving than being received make up less than 2% of the total number of owner-occupiers with loans although the share has risen sharply over the past two years.

Less than 1% of all housing loans were 90 or more days in arrears, the report said.

block-time updated-time Updated at 1.12am GMT

block-time published-time 12.31am GMT

Q : If your government does not get bipartisan support, how will you protect these children?

Anthony Albanese :

It does not get carried without bipartisanship support. That's the maths. If you have any ideas about how we change composition of the Senate between now and the next election, let me know. But that's the maths... that you don't get support without having either the Greens plus other votes – independents and crossbenchers – or without the Liberal National Party. That is what we are dealing with, that is the Parliament that the Australian people voted for. I respect that. That is what we have to deal with. We have put forward our legislation... we have given it to the opposition. We await their response, hopefully it is constructive.

block-time published-time 12.27am GMT

Government will respond 'in due time' to law reform commission report: Albanese

The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, is speaking to the media from Eugowra, in the New South Wales central west.

As Josh Butler [flagged earlier](#) , this is his first press conference in a week.

Albanese is asked whether the government agrees with a report from the Australian Law Reform Commission, which says schools shouldn't be allowed to discriminate against staff and students on the basis of sexuality, gender identity or relationship status.

Related: [Landmark report calls for removal of LGBTQ+ discrimination exemptions for Australia's religious schools](#)

The PM said the government would respond “in due time” to the report:

What we have is legislation, two pieces of legislation. We want that to be pursued through the Parliament. We want to ensure, one, to amend the Sex Discrimination Act, the other to introduce legislation about religious discrimination. It includes measures for anti-vilification provisions as well, consistent with our long held view about

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respect for people regardless of who they are, their sexuality, but also respect for people to be able to have religious liberty and to express their faith.

Albanese said he doesn't want "to go through the old culture wars" when it comes to this issue.

I think Australians do not want to see the culture wars and the division out there. I want this to be an opportunity for unity going forward and that is why we have provided the legislation to the opposition ... we are happy to engage across the Parliament on all of these issues.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.50am GMT

block-time published-time 12.10am GMT

Hillsong founder denied payout over failed prosecution

Hillsong founder Brian Houston has failed in a bid to have his legal costs covered after unsuccessfully being prosecuted for allegedly covering up his late father's child abuse, AAP reports.

The 70-year-old was cleared in August of concealing a serious indictable offence for not reporting his father Frank Houston's abuse of Brett Sengstock to police.

Related: [*Hillsong founder Brian Houston acquitted of covering up his father Frank's abuse of a young boy*](#)

Magistrate Gareth Christofi refused Houston's application for costs during a hearing at Sydney's Downing Centre today. Christofi said he was not convinced police conducted their investigation of the Pentecostal church leader in an unreasonable manner:

I am not persuaded on balance that these proceedings were initiated without reasonable cause.

Lawyers for Houston earlier argued the existence of a cover up was "contradicted by a substantial body of evidence" including that the Hillsong founder publicly disclosed the allegations to police, his congregation and segments of the media.

They also argued police had failed to speak to key witnesses who could have substantiated his innocence.

Christofi said it was appropriate to litigate Houston's state of mind at the time:

In this case the applicant was the son of the man who committed these offences. The applicant was in a position of authority and had the potential at least to influence how the matter would be dealt with.

Houston did not report his father to police after he admitted in 1999 to abusing Sengstock as a child. The former leader of the international mega-church has said in the past he feels genuine sadness about what the elder Houston did to Sengstock and others, describing his father as a serial child abuser.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.38am GMT

block-time published-time 11.57pm GMT

Defence industry minister postpones visit to Fiji amid flooding

Defence industry minister Pat Conroy has postponed his upcoming visit to Fiji as the island nation faces heavy rain and flash flooding.

In a post to X, Conroy said:

Due to adverse weather in Fiji impacting communities there, I've postponed my planned visit. I would not want my visit to detract from the critical work of local authorities assisting those affected by flooding.

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I have spoken with PM [Sitiveni] Rabuka to assure him that **Australia** stands ready to assist. I look forward to visiting at a later date. My thoughts are with all those impacted at this time.

enltrDue to adverse weather in Fiji impacting communities there, I've postponed my planned visit. I would not want my visit to detract from the critical work of local authorities assisting those affected by flooding.

— Pat Conroy MP (@PatConroy1) [March 21, 2024](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.00am GMT

block-time published-time 11.47pm GMT

Bail laws are no 'betrayal' of Indigenous youth, Minns says

Tougher bail laws aimed at curbing youth crime in New South Wales regions do not represent a betrayal of young Indigenous people, premier Chris Minns has said.

The controversial laws, which make it harder for older children to be released if charged for some serious offences while similar charges are pending, passed NSW parliament's upper house during a marathon sitting last night:

Related: [NSW outlaws gay conversion practices and makes it harder for young people to get bail](#)

Sparked by community concerns about a rise in violent break-ins and car thefts in regional areas, the laws faced widespread opposition from youth advocates and legal groups amid concerns they could lead to more Indigenous children being put behind bars.

But Minns said the government had struck the right balance with the laws only applying to "two offences and that is break and enter into a premises and theft of a motor vehicle".

Minns told ABC Radio today:

It's in response to the data and information particularly from regional communities that's showing, for example in Moree, that break and enter into a home is 800% higher than the average.

He said he did not accept the suggestion the changes were a "betrayal" of young people, despite criticism from within his own party about the fresh provisions.

- from AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.00am GMT

block-time published-time 11.37pm GMT

City of Sydney grants \$3m for redevelopment of William Booth House

The City of Sydney has given a \$3m grant to the Salvation Army to redevelop Surry Hills' historic William Booth House.

The redevelopment will allow people recovering from drug and alcohol addiction to access improved facilities, a statement from the council said. Multiple shared living spaces and dormitories for 45 people will be transformed to 51 single rooms with ensuites.

Larger shared living areas will be replaced by a residential kitchen, lounge and dining area on each floor.

The funding is part of a broader \$28.6m overhaul of the building. The \$3m grant is from the council's affordable and diverse housing fund.

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William Booth House will also expand its non-residential rehabilitation programs to enable increased community treatment, the statement said.

NSW public relations secretary at the Salvation Army, Andrew Hill, said:

We employ a best practice model in addiction treatment, informed by decades of experience working in this area. This facility will promote human dignity and independence and the redevelopment will make a positive difference to people and community for decades to come.

Construction is expected to begin towards the end of the year.

block-time published-time 11.16pm GMT

Prime minister to inspect flood recovery at Eugowra

The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, will visit Eugowra, in the New South Wales central-west outside Bathurst, to inspect the community's recovery from recent devastating floods. He says the government may consider further disaster recovery funding, after a request from the local mayor.

Albanese is expected to hold a press conference in Eugowra sometime this morning – his first in a week. The PM didn't front the media during this past sitting week in Canberra, and hasn't fielded questions yet on, for instance, his decision to sideline Labor's promised reforms to the religious discrimination act unless the opposition agreed on bipartisanship.

"We'll always examine proposals that come forward. We've provided \$20m from each level of government for the Resilient Homes type program there for the central west local government areas that were impacted," he told the local ABC station in a radio interview this morning, when asked about further disaster funding for Eugowra.

I know the mayor, Kevin Beatty, raised with me this morning the issue of potential additional funding – he's going to pop into Canberra sometime in coming weeks to meet with myself and with Murray Watt, the minister, as well. And we're always open, my government, to engaging with communities.

Albanese detailed that affected local government areas were also eligible for the \$25m community assets program:

We've provided jointly some \$600m for flood affected communities since late 2022. So, there has been substantial Commonwealth dollars, as well as NSW government funding has flowed through.

And he reflected on his visit there in 2022 soon after the floods, saying:

I'll never forget houses that literally had been moved hundreds of metres and some that they just effectively had been destroyed. There was a steel type bridge that was no longer over the waterway. It was a devastating impact.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.23pm GMT

block-time published-time 11.09pm GMT

Evacuations continue for remote NT community facing 'one-in-a-hundred-year flood'

More than 370 people have been evacuated from Borroloola as rising flood levels have left residents stranded to take shelter in higher buildings.

The town is facing a "one-in-a-hundred" year flood, according to NT police commissioner Michael Murphy, with flood levels expected to peak at 18 metres – three metres higher than the 2001 record.

The town was lashed with the flooding after Tropical Cyclone Megan tore through the community just days earlier.

In a statement, the Australian Defence Force said more than 370 people had now been evacuated.

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Additional flights are planned for today to “deliver critical stores” to residents and emergency shelters, the ADF said.

Borroloola has around 800 residents. Evacuations were prioritised for the medically vulnerable, and those who stayed behind were able to take shelter at the local school, and other locations on high ground.

Related: [Ex-Tropical Cyclone Megan: evacuations in NT ahead of 'one-in-a-hundred-year flood'](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.49pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.57pm GMT

Accused killer Beau Lamarre removed from the New South Wales police force

Police officer Beau Lamarre, accused of murdering Jesse Baird and Luke Davies, has officially been removed from the NSW Police Force.

In a statement, NSW Police said an off-duty officer charged with two counts of murder in Sydney's eastern suburbs had been removed from the force today.

A statement reads:

Under section 181D of the Police Act 1990, the Commissioner has the ability to remove officers if she has lost confidence in their suitability to continue as a police officer.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.10pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.46pm GMT

Solar farm in NSW central west to power 200,000 homes

A solar farm in the New South Wales central west is expected to power 200,000 homes in the state, AAP reports.

Environment and water minister Tanya Plibersek has announced the federal government had approved the Sandy Creek Solar Farm, which was set to be built about 25km south-west of Dunedoo.

The project would include an 840MW solar farm and battery energy storage system, and represented another big step in the government's plan to make **Australia** a renewable energy “superpower”, Plibersek said.

I've now ticked off 45 renewable energy projects with another 128 in the approvals pipeline. This is an exciting time. As well as lower emissions, it means cheaper, cleaner power for all Australians.

The solar farm in the NSW central west was expected to save up to about 1,400,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions, Plibersek said. That equated to taking 440,000 cars off **Australia**'s roads for a year.

The Sandy Creek project would create up to 600 jobs during construction and 10 ongoing jobs once it was built, according to Plibersek.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.51pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.38pm GMT

US ambassador to **Australia** welcomes 'new era for Aukus' in Adelaide address

The US ambassador to **Australia**, Caroline Kennedy, also addressed the media from Adelaide just earlier. She said:

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It is an honour to represent the United States here with the senior leaders of our two closest allies, the United Kingdom and **Australia**, and to be here with all the people in the shipyard who are going to be part of this incredible work force of the future.

It has been an historic year. [We were in San Diego just last March](#) and now we are here to announce the beginning of this new era for Aukus, building submarines here in **Australia**.

There is so much to come but this has been a really historic year and contributions to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific will start now, and build.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.43pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.34pm GMT

Aukus deal signals 'completely new approach to global security', UK defence secretary says

UK defence secretary Grant Shapps spoke to the media from Adelaide just a little while ago. He said this is an "auspicious moment in time" when the world is going through a "dangerous" and "trickier" period.

I described it previously as going from a post-war to a pre-war era. But not because we want to be at war, in fact we want exactly the opposite. And that is why Aukus is so important.

Shapps said the SSN Aukus submarine is "not something you would normally see done between three different ... partners" and this signals a "completely new approach" to global security.

This announcement today is extremely important and it's going to mean ... there are jobs provided both here but also home in the United Kingdom.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.35pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.28pm GMT

Australia, UK and US release trilateral statement on Aukus deal

A trilateral statement on Aukus was released just earlier from **Australia**, the UK and US, outlining the latest developments. Daniel Hurst had all the details about this earlier:

Related: [Australia moves to prop up Aukus with \\$4.6bn pledge to help clear Rolls-Royce nuclear reactor bottlenecks in UK](#)

[The statement](#) from deputy PM Richard Marles, UK defence secretary Grant Shapps and US defense secretary Lloyd Austin essentially says that all is on track. It reads:

Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States remain fully committed to this shared endeavour.

These steps to grow **Australia**'s submarine construction and maintenance capability are critical to the Aukus partnership, expanding trilateral industrial capacity and building the collective resilience of Aukus partners to produce and sustain conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarines for decades to come.

block-time published-time 10.17pm GMT

'We can have both': premier Rockliff argues case for new stadium amid cost-of-living concerns

Just earlier, Jacqui Lambie [made the case](#) for why Tasmania shouldn't have a new, proper AFL stadium.

Here is premier Jeremy Rockliff 's opposing case, arguing for the stadium:

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Tasmania is a fantastic place to live, work, raise a family and invest. I have to say the Tassie Devils up and running, 125,000 or more foundation memberships, it's a fantastic opportunity.

Yes, we need to invest in our health system and support Tasmanian's with the cost of living, health and housing, but we can have both. There's been generations of Tasmanians that have fought for their own Tassie team. In the future we'll have generations of Tasmanians playing for their own Tassie team in the AFL. That's really exciting. We've fought hard for it. Yes, it's been difficult, but we'll get there.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.27pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.13pm GMT

Tasmanian premier Jeremy Rockliff appeals to voters ahead of weekend election

Tasmanian premier Jeremy Rockliff was also up on ABC News Breakfast, and was asked why voters should stick with their government after they've held power for ten years:

He argued the Liberal party is the "only party that can win majority" in the state, and said he wants to restore "certainty and stability" for the future.

Tasmanians voted for majority government in 2021 and we're just within a whisker of majority government tomorrow, and will work very hard over the course of the next 24 hours to achieve that because Tasmania does better under majority government.

Host Michael Rowland questioned whether Rockliff can say its been a stable government, after two former Liberal MPs left – prompting the early election.

Rockliff said they have "got on with the job".

I'm proud of the fact we have record low unemployment, more people in work than ever before. That's what it's all about ... Tasmania is the best place to live, work and to raise a family.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.16pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.02pm GMT

'Not sure how new stadium will have a positive effect' on Tasmanians' lives, Lambie says

Host Michael Rowland :

We have two great Tassie AFL teams to be rolled out in four years time. Why shouldn't this state have a proper AFL stadium?

Jacqui Lambie :

I don't know but maybe he can tell me why, when it comes to emergency housing that my office can no longer get [housing for people] that come into my office on their hands and knees begging for a roof over their head, but he is more interested in putting a roof over a stadium.

... When I wiped the housing debt and we got them an extra 1200 houses, why has our housing crisis down here [gotten] worse?

We have got [hospital] ramping out there that is so bad, kids not attending school – It is about priorities and it's about priorities with peoples' lives, and I am not sure how a new stadium will have a positive effect on lives here in Tasmania.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.08pm GMT

News live: Israel must allow humanitarian relief to reach Gaza, Australia and UK say in new joint statement

block-time published-time 9.58pm GMT

Jacqui Lambie says Tasmanians are 'ready for a change' ahead of weekend's election

Moving now to the Tasmanian election, and senator Jacqui Lambie was on ABC News Breakfast earlier, sharing how she feels as voters head to the polls tomorrow:

She doesn't want to feel "too confident" and get all her candidates hopes up, but said there is a level of confidence and she hopes Tasmanians "are ready for a change".

I've given them choice out there. Now it is up to the voter.

Lambie's party, who is running candidates in four electorates, could be kingmakers on Sunday if the Liberals return with a minority government. Host Michael Rowland asked Lambie for her thoughts on a comment made by premier Jeremy Rockliff, that "a minority government full of cross benchers would make the Star Wars bar scene look boring".

Her response: "Rockliff has had ten years."

That is rubbish. We have seen it works very well up there on the federal scale. You can see the senators up there like myself and Senator Tyrrell holding them accountable, making sure they have been called out when they need to be. Holding them on integrity [and] their values and I think that is where we need to be.

As for whether Lambie would be prepared to deal with the Liberal party, in terms of a minority government? She said this would be up to the candidates.

Until that make-up is done, my people will continue to work right up until late this afternoon and we will see what happens in two or three weeks.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.37pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.44pm GMT

Australia has 'contributed to international pressure' calling for ceasefire in Gaza: **Anne Aly**

Aly acknowledged there is a "level of disappointment" in the Labor government from Muslim leaders. She said **Australia** can make the most difference when it comes to aid, and calling for a ceasefire, "which we have".

But essentially, the pathway to a ceasefire is going to be through the negotiations that are currently being undertaken by Egypt and Qatar. Those negotiations require both Israel and Hamas to come to the table and accept conditions that are what the other party is asking for in order to achieve that ceasefire. That is the absolute fact.

I note that today, the US government is also stepping up their calls for an immediate ceasefire. And increasingly, countries around the world are also stepping up their calls for a ceasefire. **Australia** has played a role in contributing to the international pressure and the international voice in calling for a ceasefire.

block-time published-time 9.40pm GMT

Aly says she's well educated on Palestine having been born there and campaigning since the 1980s

Anne Aly was asked about criticism from the protestors at the weekend, who were demanding she call what is happening in Gaza a genocide.

Responding to this, Aly argued that social media can become an "echo chamber" and that she has educated herself on the issue:

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Often when people say 'you haven't said anything, and you haven't done anything, and you don't know anything ...', when I present them with the fact that yes, I have spoken out and actually in terms of educating myself I actually was born in the region, I lived in Egypt in the 1980s and was campaigning for Palestine back from in the 1980s. I visited Palestine and as part of our counterterrorism and International Security, have actually written book chapters and articles on you know, the history of Gaza and Palestine and Israel.

So I think I'm pretty educated on the subject. I don't know, maybe there's more that I could do. But you know, I think that there is this kind of misinformation and disinformation out there and when people are presented with the facts, many of them do take a step back, go, oh, I didn't know that.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.47pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.28pm GMT

Anne Aly responds to clash with pro-Palestine protesters at the weekend

Minister for youth, **Anne Aly**, has responded to [a clash between herself and pro-Palestine protesters](#) at the weekend, during a meet and greet she held with constituents in Perth.

Aly said she "fully support[s] the right to peaceful protest" but believes the way these protesters put forward their argument was "quite aggressive".

The MP said feelings of distress are "incredibly valid" given what is happening in Gaza, but said she has not seen this level of tension in her political career before.

Her message to protesters was that "there are people on your side" and the best way to discuss these matters "is for us to elevate each other's voices, not to try and drown each other out".

ABC RN Breakfast host Patricia Karvelas asked if this was having a chilling effect on politicians and their ability to do their work, and Aly said it was.

I want to be able to speak up ... and I want to be able to have those conversations in a manner that engages people, and that answers the questions that they have about the situation and that allows us to move forward and progress make progress towards peace.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.32pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.09pm GMT

Optus outage review report goes to federal government

The federal government has received a report on last year's Optus network outage that left millions of Australians without phone and internet services, AAP reports.

But the findings haven't been publicly released, beyond the government saying it makes recommendations "aimed at ensuring the telco industry learns from this outage".

Communications minister Michelle Rowland has said in a statement:

We will consider the recommendations from the review, and publicly release both the final report and the government's response in due course.

The Optus outage in November left more than 10 million customers without phone and internet access for up to 14 hours and sparked hundred of complaints to the industry watchdog.

The broader review, led by former deputy chair of ACMA, Richard Bean, examined emergency call arrangements, customer communications and complaints handling following the outage. The communications department said:

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While the technical cause of the outage was not within scope of the review, the government understands that the disruption to some Triple Zero calls was predominantly caused by a failure of Optus 3G towers to wilt.

Wilting is an industry practice where signals from mobile towers are powered down during disruptions to allow Triple Zero to be carried by another network. Rowland said:

We want industry and government to learn the lessons from this event, and take steps to prevent this type of disruption occurring again.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.19pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.01pm GMT

Penny Sharpe thanks campaigners and politicians who advocated for conversion therapy to be outlawed

Circling back to news that New South Wales has outlawed conversion therapy, after a marathon overnight debate in the state parliament:

State environment minister and leader of the government in the upper house, Penny Sharpe, thanked campaigners and politicians who helped along the way to outlawing conversion practices.

Speaking in the chamber after the bill was passed, she said:

What NSW has done today is to say to LGBTQ community that you are fine just the way you are and that we will look after you and then we will protect you.

We also have said that harmful practices have no place in NSW. I want to, on behalf of the government, thank all of those people who have got us here today... NSW is better today as a result of the passing of this legislation.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.05pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.57pm GMT

Kevin Rudd can advocate for **Australia** 'irrespective' of US president, Richard Marles says

Marles was also asked about comments Donald Trump made earlier in the week about US ambassador Kevin Rudd.

(You can read all about this below, in case you missed it):

Related: [Donald Trump calls Kevin Rudd 'nasty' and says he 'won't be there long' as **Australia's** ambassador to US](#)

Marles said Rudd is "doing a great job representing **Australia** in the US ... across the political spectrum".

I think Kevin is well received across the political spectrum and he's doing a great job in representing **Australia's** interests. I'm not about to go into the specifics of communications I've had with Kevin, [I'm expressing] my support for Kevin right now.

Q : If Trump is elected, can Rudd repair that relationship?

Marles:

I think Kevin is doing a great job on behalf of **Australia** and I think he will be able to do that job, irrespective of who is governing America this time next year.

Really how I see it is that the alliance has endured over decades across governments of both persuasions in the US and both persuasions here in **Australia**. It exists right through the administration of Donald Trump previously ... I

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think Kevin has role in being able to advocate for Australia in the context of that can absolutely be maintained, irrespective of who wins the election in November.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.04pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.48pm GMT

Julian Assange's case 'needs to be resolved', Marles says

Richard Marles has been speaking to ABC RN about the latest Aukus developments, but has also been asked whether Julian Assange will form part of the talks with the UK.

Marles said he wasn't "in a position to comment about all of that", but said:

What I would say is that as an Australian citizen abroad, we have engaged in advocacy for Julian Assange. Whatever one thinks about what Julian Assange has done over the years, this needs to be resolved, his case needs to be brought to resolution and that is the advocacy that we've been engaging in, both in the UK [and the US] and we do that with with great respect for the independence of their judicial systems.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.56pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.39pm GMT

Gay conversion practices outlawed in New South Wales

Gay conversion practices have been outlawed in New South Wales after a marathon overnight debate in the state parliament.

The Minns government law will ban conversion practices such as religious "straight camps" that attempt to change someone's sexual orientation.

The ban was one of Labor's election promises and was welcomed by equality groups.

The upper house debated the issue overnight before the legislation passed unamended after around 6.30am. Sydney MP Alex Greenwich said:

The sun rises today on a state that is safer for LGBTQ people. LGBTQ people are loved and beautiful, and futile attempts to change or suppress who we are will now be illegal in NSW.

Greens upper house MP Cate Faehrmann said:

The archaic and cruel practice of conversion therapy will now be banned in NSW. It was worth one hell of a late night to be one step closer to full equality.

block-time published-time 8.36pm GMT

Government to consider calls to legislate Law Reform Commission report, Marles says

Moving to another issue, Richard Marles was asked for the government's position on a report put forward by the Law Reform Commission (we had all the details around this earlier in the blog).

Marles said the government had received the report and will "take our time to consider that", and said consensus on the issue would be needed across the parliament:

The important point here is, we want to see the reforms in relation to dealing with issues of religious discrimination but it is really important that we are walking forward with consensus. The attorney-general has been doing a great job in speaking with people and stakeholders across community, including religious schools. They will continue to

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do that in respect of this report but we need to try and build consensus in this country around moving down the path we eventually do and that involves also building consensus across the parliament.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.41pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.33pm GMT

Australia to give \$4.6bn to UK for Aukus developments

As part of the latest Aukus developments, **Australia** will send A\$4.6bn to the UK to clear bottlenecks at the Rolls-Royce nuclear reactor production line.

Richard Marles was asked why it costs so much, and why this component needs to be done in the UK. He told ABC News Breakfast:

We made clear a year ago that we wouldn't be building the nuclear reactors in **Australia**. They will be built by Rolls Royce at its facility in Derby in the UK and once the sealed reactors are built, they will be taken here to the Osborne Naval ship yard and placed in the submarines which the rest of which will be built here at Osborne.

Building nuclear reactors is difficult to do and in order for this to play out, that facility in Derby, which is building nuclear reactors for Britain's navy, that needs to be expanded and that is what this contribution is for.

I was at that facility last year and they are readying themselves to build the Australian reactors there already. There are parts being made as we speak, which will be on the submarine that will eventually first roll off the production line here in the early 2040s.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.38pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.30pm GMT

Deputy PM Richard Marles outlines today's Aukus announcement

Deputy prime minister and defence minister Richard Marles has been speaking to ABC News Breakfast about the latest Aukus developments, as high-level talks between Australian and UK defence and foreign ministers start in Adelaide today.

Related: [**Australia moves to prop up Aukus with \\$4.6bn pledge to help clear Rolls-Royce nuclear reactor bottlenecks in UK**](#)

Marles outlined today's announcement:

Today we will announce that ASC, an Australian government-owned company, will enter into a joint venture with BAE, which is [behind] the building of Britain's nuclear powered submarines, to form a joint venture to build submarines for the Royal Australian Navy right here at the Osborne naval ship yard ... It is an important step towards **Australia** acquiring this capability and it is a big moment in terms of Australian industry.

Marles said this move would create 4000-5000 local jobs, with around 4000 people required to build the actual yard, enabling the construction of the submarines:

We will be building here at Osborne a skills academy which will focus on making sure that we get the skills base up to the speed that we need to have it at, in order to build the submarines.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.36pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.23pm GMT

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Human Rights Commission welcomes landmark report removing LGBTQ+ discrimination exemptions for Australian religious schools

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has welcomed the tabling of a report from the Australian Law Reform Commission this week, which says schools shouldn't be allowed to discriminate against staff and students on the basis of sexuality, gender identity or relationship status.

Sarah Basford Canales has all the details about the report below:

Related: [Landmark report calls for removal of LGBTQ+ discrimination exemptions for Australia's religious schools](#)

In a statement, the AHRC said the report's recommendations would ensure students and staff are "protected from discrimination ... regardless of which school or educational institution they attend".

The report also recognises the right to freedom of religion and that religious schools should be able to preference the employment of people who share the same religion, where this is reasonably necessary and proportionate to the aim of building or maintaining a community of faith.

The AHRC is calling on the federal government to introduce legislation consistent with the report. Sex discrimination commissioner Anna Cody said:

Our federal laws must not allow discrimination against students or teachers at any school on the basis of their sex, sexuality or gender identity, and I encourage the government to amend the Sex Discrimination Act accordingly.

Our laws should also ensure that the allowance of preferential employment by religious institutions should only occur where it is necessary to maintain a community of faith, and any such allowances should be reasonable and proportionate. This is in keeping with international human rights law.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.35pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.15pm GMT

Call for education ministers to address growing threats to principals

Some more on that ACU study: ACU investigator and former principal, Dr Paul Kidson, called on education ministers to take urgent action to address threats to principals.

Incidents involving principals included students "physically lashing out"; getting caught in yard scuffles; being pushed; being intimidated by parents and by the presence of knives in schools.

He said it was "remarkable" principals had been absent in policy discussions when the trend towards considering quitting had been long term.

He said great policy initiatives rolled out by the federal government wouldn't be achieved without principals staying in their jobs and reporting high job satisfaction and that many of the issues facing educators came down to resourcing, including the increased burden of administrative tasks and schools falling short of full funding:

If we see numbers [of principals] walking it will critically collapse parts of the government's agenda.

The sheer quantity of work remains at its highest, which means a lack of time to focus on teaching and learning.

The best people to advise on these requirements are those in the situation, centralised bureaucracies do what they do best - which is scale. Ask principals what they need - get implementation in hands of those who know their communities.

There are very optimistic signs right now - consultation and inclusivity I've not seen in a long time, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. This needs to be manifested into policy change.

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block-time published-time 8.10pm GMT

Physical violence towards school principals up 76.5% since 2011, report says

Almost half of **Australia**'s school principals were subjected to physical violence – mainly from students – while more than half were threatened with violence, according to a new report.

The Australian Catholic University surveyed 2300 principals for its latest Institute for Positive Psychology and Education survey.

It found instances of physical violence have increased 76.5% since 2011.

Co-lead investigator, Prof Herb Marsh, said teachers were remarkably resilient in the face of violence, as well as the risk of burnout, increasing job demands, and anxiety. He said:

It is deeply concerning that offensive behaviour towards school leaders and teachers persists and appears to be on the rise.

Around 48% of principals were subjected to physical violence, of which 96.3% was at the hands of students, and 53.9% received threats of violence. More than half the principals intend to quit or retire early. Marsh said:

Assuming only half of those who agreed or strongly agreed to quit acted on this response, there would be an exodus of more than 500 school leaders – the data strongly suggests this would be experienced school leaders.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.29pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.06pm GMT

Emily here, reporting for blog duty! Many thanks to Martin for kicking things off. I'll bring you our rolling coverage today.

As always, you can get in touch if you see something that needs attention on the blog: via X, @emilywindwrites or you send me an email: emily.wind@theguardian.com

Let's go.

block-time published-time 8.01pm GMT

Fewer Australians claiming welfare as jobs market improves

More Australians are leaving income benefit schemes after just a year despite widespread perceptions of a nationwide increase in welfare dependency, research from e61 Institute showed, Australian Associated Press reports.

Data showing nearly half a million people were on unemployment benefit schemes for two or more years in 2023 can be misleading “at first glance”, economist Matt Nolan says.

Nolan said:

The narrative of increasing dependency is actually quite false.

The overall number of long-term welfare recipients has fallen to “record lows,” according to e61, which bills itself as a non-partisan economic research institute.

“Individuals are being shifted from, or deemed ineligible for, other benefit payments and folded into the JSP,” e61 said, describing JobSeeker as a “catch all” program.

More than 50% of people on JobSeeker have exited the scheme after one year, according to e61.

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Roughly 2.7% of those between the ages of 22 and 60 are now long-term recipients of JobSseeker payments, e61 says.

An improving jobs market is also helping cut welfare recipient numbers.

Australia's unemployment rate fell to 3.7% in February, down from the 4.1% reported in January.

block-time published-time 7.48pm GMT

Tasmanian boy dies after single vehicle crash

Tasmania police say a young boy from the state's north-east has died after a single vehicle crash in Lefroy.

The crash was reported just after 1.20am today. The cause of the crash is being investigated, police said in a statement.

A report will be prepared for the Coroner.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.27pm GMT

block-time published-time 7.41pm GMT

Federal government joins Nasa satellite program to 'monitor **Australia**'s lands and coasts from space'

Australia's vast spaces will be analytically mapped by satellites after the federal government agreed to join a US satellite program led by Nasa, Australian Associated Press reports.

The government has agreed to join Landsat Next, a program that maps and observes the changing surface of the earth.

Minister for resources and northern **Australia**, Madeleine King, signed an in-principle agreement for **Australia** to partner in the Landsat Next program in Washington this month.

It supports mining exploration, monitoring of the earth's climate, water, environment and crops, as well a management of floods, fires and natural disasters.

Landsat Next develops on a previous program - Landsat 9 - with three identical satellites expected to make up the fleet that can detect 26 spectral bands spanning visible and infrared light.

The satellites will aid scientists, farmers and businesses better observe and predict weather patterns and changes to bushfires.

Higher-resolution and detailed images of the earth's surface as small as the width of a tennis court can be taken by the satellites.

The government will commit \$207.4m over four years to the project, and ongoing funding, that will enhance satellite ground station facilities in Alice Springs.

Ms King said the agreement is vital for minerals and agriculture industries and will be an essential tool in managing natural disasters.

She said:

Landsat data supported emergency services in Queensland in January to help mitigate potential flooding in Queensland ahead of Cyclone Kirrily.

I am delighted that we will continue this partnership with the US for decades to come.

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The Landsat Next satellites will mean we can monitor [**Australia's**](#) lands and coasts from space. It is the biggest and best selfie we could take of our great country.

It is expected the Landsat Next program will launch in 2030.

block-time published-time 7.35pm GMT

Welcome

Good morning and welcome to our week-ending rolling news coverage. I'm Martin Farrer and I've got some of the top overnight stories before my colleague Emily Wind takes you through the rest of the day.

With high-level talks between Australian and UK defence and foreign ministers starting in Adelaide today, the government will seek to [prop up the Aukus pact](#) by sending \$4.6bn to clear bottlenecks at the Rolls-Royce nuclear reactor production line in Derby. We'll have every development from the meetings as they happen.

Dennis Richardson, a former Australian ambassador to the US, has weighed into the debate about the fallout of [Donald Trump's broadsides against Kevin Rudd](#) by indirectly warning the Coalition not to try to make political capital out of the row. The respected former senior bureaucrat and head of mission in Washington DC [has cautioned](#) that the greatest diplomatic risk lies in political point-scoring around the former US president's comments, and not in the comments themselves. "Those who pursue this matter will be doing so for political reasons, divorced from the national interest," Richardson said.

Koalas are among the most recognisable creatures on earth, a symbol of [**Australia's**](#) unique wildlife and frequently used as a tool of soft power. But the eucalypt-munching marsupials once killed in the millions for their fur, are dwindling in number and under serious existential threat from the global heating and land clearing that is destroying their habitat. The New South Wales government is due to host a ["koala summit"](#) today to hear what can be done to halt the alarming fall in numbers.

Load-Date: March 22, 2024