



[Energy bill passes – as it happened](#)

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Byline: Caitlin Cassidy and Amy Remeikis (earlier)

Highlight: This blog is now closed
 Albanese government's energy bill passes Senate as Dutton warns price caps will be 'catastrophic' for economy
 Katharine Murphy: Peter Dutton's politicking over power prices is as cynical as it is calculating
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Body

block-time published-time 7.41am GMT

What we learned: Thursday, 15 December

With that, we will wrap the blog for the evening.

You won't see Amy Remeikis until the new year but we'll be back first thing tomorrow to bring you all the latest. Here were the major developments of the day:

The [Senate has passed Labor's energy legislation](#) with 28 ayes and 22 noes during a special sitting of federal parliament. It will now adjourn until 6 February. The bill, capping gas prices and funding consumer rebates to deliver power price relief made it through despite the [Coalition](#) voting against the proposal. Still in Canberra, [Anthony Albanese and Peter Dutton offered an emotional tribute to the Queensland shooting victims](#). There was absolute silence in the house for the condolence motion. The president of Palau has signalled that his country is [not likely to switch its diplomatic relations from Taiwan to China](#), despite several Pacific leaders making the switch in recent years. The ACT can claim bragging rights as the jurisdiction with [the lowest unemployment rate](#). Last month it sank to 2.9% in trend terms from 3.1% in October, the ABS has confirmed. And the opposition's Senate leader, Simon Birmingham, [has conceded](#) during a visit to the Pacific that [Australia](#) should have strengthened its 2030 emissions reduction target sooner than it did.

block-time updated-time Updated at 7.46am GMT

block-time published-time 7.18am GMT

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Peta has released a statement following the Melbourne Cup-winning horse trainer Darren Weir admitting to three charges of animal cruelty yesterday, including using an electric prod on horses in 2018.

Darren Weir's admission that he used an electric cattle prod on three horses should shock racegoers into staying far away from the track. Horse racing encourages cruelty because it's a profit-dominated industry in which the horses' needs are too often an afterthought.

During the last racing year, 139 horses died on tracks, in addition to those who were sent to slaughterhouses because they weren't fast enough.

Related: [Melbourne Cup-winning trainer Darren Weir pleads guilty to animal cruelty charges over use of cattle prod](#)

block-time updated-time Updated at 7.23am GMT

block-time published-time 6.57am GMT

The foreign minister Penny Wong has posted some happy snaps on the bipartisan trip to Palau.

enlrIt's wonderful to return to Palau with the bipartisan delegation. Thank you to President Whipples for our constructive conversation. We deeply respect your powerful leadership on climate and on regional unity. pic.twitter.com/NGWhutKqit

— Senator Penny Wong (@SenatorWong) [December 15, 2022](#)

enlrAustralia will work with Palau, and the entire Pacific Family, to tackle our shared challenges. We're supporting Palau's transition to renewable energy, through the Palau Solar Project, which will deliver 20 per cent of Palau's energy needs. pic.twitter.com/wwOlplJsc8

— Senator Penny Wong (@SenatorWong) [December 15, 2022](#)

Related: [Coalition must listen 'carefully to Pacific island nations', Simon Birmingham says before bipartisan tour](#)

block-time published-time 6.41am GMT

AWU: '**Australia**'s orderly transition to a clean energy future will continue'

The Australian Workers' Union has delivered a strongly worded statement on the passing of the energy bill, urging the public to take note of "doom-laden" predictions of the gas industry and Coalition so they can be "contrasted with reality" in the future.

AWU national secretary Daniel Walton :

Here's my prediction for what will happen as a result of this apparently terrifying new legislation: the price of gas and coal will fall, consumers will feel relief, and the manufacturing industry will gain the confidence to keep operating and investing in **Australia**. The multinational energy exporters, who are currently hyperventilating and feeding the opposition talking points, will continue to make massive profits. The world will keep turning. **Australia**'s orderly transition to a clean energy future will continue. Those out there hyperventilating about 'a war on gas exporters' and 'Marxism' and whatever other nonsense they've pumped into the media this week will pull their heads in as they're forced to acknowledge the embarrassing size of their profits.

block-time updated-time Updated at 6.51am GMT

block-time published-time 6.26am GMT

Good news!

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Guardian **Australia**'s Afternoon Update is here, featuring all the major headlines of the day and some little treats, including a lovely personal piece from MasterChef winner Adam Liaw.

Read it, and sign up, here:

Related: [**Australia** to impose coal and gas price limits; NSW blocks Byron Bay short-term housing cap; and UK airports ease liquids rule](#)

block-time published-time 6.17am GMT

BoM projects 'below median' temperatures for much of eastern **Australia**

Outside of politics, the Bureau of Meteorology has issued its latest round of long-range forecasts this afternoon.

enltrThe Bureau's first look long-range forecast for January to March shows it's likely to be wetter than usual in eastern [#QLD](#) and drier than usual for parts of [#WA](#) and [#SA](#). Warmer days are likely for much of the country. Learn more: <https://t.co/5ShWjsYRWu> [pic.twitter.com/WstGQZkcHp](https://t.co/WstGQZkcHp)

— Bureau of Meteorology, **Australia** (@BOM_au) [December 15, 2022](#)

If you're getting ready to crack out your bathers and hit the beach – be warned. Below median temperatures are projected from January to March for much of eastern **Australia**:

Above median rainfall is likely for Cape York Peninsula and parts of the Queensland coast while below median rainfall is likely for the Eyre Peninsula and the West Coast of South **Australia** and isolated parts of Western **Australia**'s Gascoyne, Central West and South West coasts.

Maximum temperatures are likely to be warmer than median for much of **Australia** away from most of Victoria, New South Wales and south-eastern Queensland. Below median temperatures are likely for eastern New South Wales.

This forecast reflects the status and forecasts for several climate drivers, including La Niña, positive SAM and warm ocean temperatures around northern **Australia**.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.56am GMT

block-time published-time 6.09am GMT

A round of applause to Amy Remeikis for guiding us through the madness of Australian politics this year.

I'll be with you for the rest of the evening as she gets some well deserved rest.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.13am GMT

block-time published-time 6.05am GMT

Amy's handover for the day

Just PMO having a little joke there about press conferences when they should know NOW IS NOT THE TIME WE HAVE NO BRAIN POWER LEFT.

Ahem.

We have made it to the end of the special additional session, called to pass the extraordinary energy intervention bill in what are pretty extraordinary times in the energy space.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

But the Guardian will not be resting – Murph, who is the best person you could learn from when it comes to these issues, is already at work on her weekend column (the last for the year, so make sure you catch it) as well as helping you make sense of everything which just went down.

Josh Butler and Daniel Hurst have all the news you could want and the rest of the Guardian team have been busy, as always, covering everything not happening in this building on the hill.

I'll be putting my general political news hat back on and leaving the blogging to the daily news experts – Natasha May and co will be back with you tomorrow morning.

Caitlin Cassidy will take you through the evening, so a big thank you to her.

And a very big thank you, as always, from me to Mike Bowers for all he does to keep everything rolling along smoothly.

Thank you everyone for joining me today – I am still getting back to questions you sent me, so I promise I haven't forgotten you if you haven't heard back yet. Until February 6 – take care of you.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.07am GMT

block-time published-time 5.58am GMT

No press conference!

We can all go lie down.

Huzzah.

Manager of government business in the Senate, Katy Gallagher, and the ACT senator David Pocock Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.02am GMT

block-time published-time 5.56am GMT

So the bill is through without needing to go back to the House, and everyone gets to go home – except for the government ministers who now have to do the talking on it.

Expect a press conference in about an hour or so.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.58am GMT

block-time published-time 5.55am GMT

There are some very cynical “Merry Christmas” greetings being thrown across the chamber. “See ya everyone, bye!”

And the president of the Senate, Sue Lines, gets some birthday messages. Wouldn't have taken Lines for a Sagittarius, but there you are.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.57am GMT

block-time published-time 5.54am GMT

Senate passes Labor's energy legislation

And it has passed.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Ayes : 28 Noes : 22.

The Senate will adjourn until 6 February.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.55am GMT

block-time published-time 5.53am GMT

Almost there peeps, bear with us.

Or the Senate, in this case.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.54am GMT

block-time published-time 5.44am GMT

We are almost through the bill's passage in the Senate.

So while you have some time, read this from Murph:

Related: [Peter Dutton's naked politicking over power prices is as cynical as it is calculating | Katharine Murphy](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.45am GMT

block-time published-time 5.38am GMT

One-minute bells (everyone is already in the chamber, it is just to make sure everyone is sitting where they should be) and then we are through the opposition amendments.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.39am GMT

block-time published-time 5.37am GMT

We are now getting to the last couple of sheets of amendments on the energy bill in the Senate.

Looks like the Senate will be done shortly. So far it is not looking like it has to go back to the House, but stay tuned

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.39am GMT

block-time published-time 5.24am GMT

Meanwhile, for anyone who hasn't seen the adjournment debate on the Senate page, it is looking a little different.

enltrThe senate adjournment debate is looking a little different today
<https://t.co/UJ0nfjTLzM> [pic.twitter.com/6f3NyGNwJB](https://t.co/6f3NyGNwJB)

— Amy Remeikis (@AmyRemeikis) [December 15, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.39am GMT

block-time published-time 5.23am GMT

Second reading agreed to in Senate

After three and a half hours of debate, the second reading has been agreed to in the Senate, 29 to 24.

A Senator – I think Liberal Jonno Duniam (originally Jonathon, now Jonno) from Tasmania – is now on his feet complaining about the bill. He says the test will be whether power bills are up or down. He says they will be up.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Which is true. They will be. No one is arguing that?

The government argues they won't be up by as much and the Australian energy regulator has said power prices are already coming down after the government began talking about intervention in October. Clare Savage said in NSW and Queensland, the regulator is already seeing prices come down by 40-50%.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.42am GMT

block-time published-time 5.18am GMT

Amendment calling for Medicare psychology session cuts to be reversed succeeds

There was one amendment agreed to by the Senate, as moved by the Liberal senator Anne Rushton :

But the Senate:

(a) notes that, the Government has prioritised this bill, at the same time it has halved the number of Medicare subsidised psychology sessions at a time when Australians are facing natural disasters, cost of living pressures and household energy bills are skyrocketing;

and (b) calls on the Government to reverse the cuts to these sessions until such time as Australians have adequate access to Medicare subsidised psychology sessions.

It is a symbolic amendment – it doesn't change the bill though

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.27am GMT

block-time published-time 5.14am GMT

Most second reading amendments defeated

Ok, all amendments there having been defeated, we are now moving on to the second reading division (which is one step away from the third reading).

There won't be a problem with the passage here.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.21am GMT

block-time published-time 5.08am GMT

There are two further lots of second reading amendments (the Senate is motoring through these).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.10am GMT

block-time published-time 4.59am GMT

So the Senate is dividing on the second reading of amendments – I don't think the government are supporting too many of these, and they appear to be going through as a group, so it won't take too long. In theory.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.06am GMT

block-time published-time 4.58am GMT

The Senate has reached the point of dividing on the bill.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.06am GMT

block-time published-time 4.48am GMT

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Gallagher finishes up debate in the Senate

Katy Gallagher is now wrapping up the debate in the Senate. She says the government senators did not speak on the bill to allow as many non-government MPs as possible to make their contributions in the short time frame set for debate.

A gag order was put on the debate to get it done in a set period of time, so it can return the bill to the house, and then everyone can go home.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.54am GMT

block-time published-time 4.45am GMT

Canavan opposes energy plan

Matt Canavan is now on his feet and feeling very passionately about not supporting the energy bill.

"This is a new opposition in this chamber today," he says.

It looks like the same opposition, but anyways.

Canavan says the opposition will not "cease, we will not rest until we get justice for the Australian people".

Canavan says while Labor will "win today", they won't let the government win in the future and will set up inquiries and everything else it can to hold the government to account.

Katy Gallagher looks tired.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.47am GMT

block-time published-time 4.39am GMT

Covid taskforce seeks alternative funding to continue work

Earlier this week the national Covid-19 clinical evidence taskforce was told by the federal health department that it would not be funded from next year. A collaboration of 35 health organisations, the taskforce was formed to continuously and rapidly look at the data and research emerging about Covid-19 to provide national, evidence-based clinical guidelines to make sure patients received the best care. Hundreds of clinicians worked together to make more than 200 recommendations for managing mild, moderate, severe and critical disease. Taskforce members also developed guidelines for people after they recovered, and for those with long Covid. The guidance from the taskforce also meant specific groups were examined and given evidence-based advice, including children [and pregnant women](#). Because of the taskforce, health workers had the latest information about how to care for those with Covid, including vulnerable populations. There is still a lot that is unknown or little understood about Covid and new research is frequently emerging, making translation of this research into care guidelines critical.

The taskforce is now seeking alternative funding sources so it can keep doing this work. It said in a statement:

We believe up-to-date guidance to support clinicians caring for people with Covid-19 continues to be vital, especially at a time of rising cases and increasing pressure across the health system.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.44am GMT

block-time published-time 4.22am GMT

Meanwhile in the Senate, Bridget McKenzie says that Chris Bowen and Adam Bandt will be knocking on your door with their spanners in hand to take away your gas cooktops, gas BBQs and the BBQ canister you have in your garage.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

She then refers to what the government is doing as “institutional gaslighting” and accuses the Greens of being socialists.

So just having a normal one then.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.28am GMT

block-time published-time 4.20am GMT

Mike Bowers has been very busy – here is how he has seen some of today:

Paul Fletcher, the manager of opposition business, talks to teal independents in the house. Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian Anthony Albanese speaks on the Treasury Laws Amendment (Energy Relief Plan) Bill 2022. Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian Michaelia Cash in the Senate. Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian Mark Butler, deputy house leader, with the teal independents, Greens and crossbench. Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.31am GMT

block-time published-time 4.00am GMT

Key event

Palau president suggests diplomatic switch from Taipei to Beijing unlikely

The president of Palau has signalled that his country is not likely to switch its diplomatic relations from Taiwan to China, despite several Pacific leaders making the switch in recent years.

During a press conference alongside visiting Australian politicians, Surangel Whipps said Palau had been “very consistent that we are friends to all and enemies to none”. He said China had put pressure on Palau to end its diplomatic relationship with Taiwan by restricting tourist numbers.

What we’ve told China is that, as friends, you shouldn’t tell your friends who their friends can be. And so we’ve made a very clear statement that we have diplomatic relations with the Republic of China [Taiwan]. And if you want to be our friend, they’re our friend also. But you’re not going to tell us we can’t be their friend, which is what they want to tell us to do. And that’s why they say, you know, we can give you all the tourists you want, just switch, and we say, that’s OK.

That’s what they’ve done – they’ve turned off the faucet [to] play games with us. But I don’t think that’s the way you treat true friendship and true partnership ... nobody else should tell us that we should dissolve that relationship.

Whipps also backed calls for Taiwan to be allowed to participate in international events, such as UN climate talks and World Health Organisation talks. He said the 23 million people who lived in Taiwan “need a voice”.

Palau’s President Surangel Whipps earlier this year. Photograph: Ahmad Gharabli/AFP/Getty Images

At the same press conference, the Australian foreign affairs minister, Penny Wong, cautiously backed the calls for Taiwan to have input into problems that require global solutions (while also restating ***Australia***’s bipartisan position that it has diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China but unofficial engagement with Taiwan).

She said:

Every country makes its own sovereign decisions about recognition and so forth. I think President Whipps answered the previous question very clearly on that front.

In relation to Taiwan, obviously, the bipartisan position we have is a ‘one-China’ policy. But what that means is we will continue our unofficial people to people, economic, relationships and engagement with Taiwan.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

And I make this observation – and obviously these matters have to be worked through in the WHO, or through the Conference of the Parties or whatever fora: you're talking about problems here which require the whole world to resolve them. So whether it's Covid or climate, we need everybody to be part of the solution. So we want to work through how that can occur in those forums. But I think the reality is they are issues that require the whole of the world to tackle them.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.12am GMT

block-time published-time 3.55am GMT

PM 'hopeful' Indigenous voice will be voted in

Does Anthony Albanese think the voice referendum will be able to pass given it doesn't have bipartisan support (the Nationals have said they will not be supporting it)?

Well, I'm very hopeful that Australians, who are optimistic Australians, who are generous, will accept this gracious offer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

There were five years spent in the lead-up to the Uluru statement coming out in 2017. Five years of extensive consultation since then, which been another five years in which we know, for example, that Ken Wyatt, the former minister in the Morrison government, took on two occasions a more than 200-page document about the structure and operation of the voice to the Morrison cabinet.

So there's been a lot of discussion, a lot of detail to make sure that this has got it right, but essentially it will do just two things. One it will recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our constitution, which is important.

And secondly, it will say that when issues affect directly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, they should be consulted.

And we know that that will have a practical impact because when you consult people about issues that affect them about their education, their health, their housing, their life expectancy, justice issues, then you'll get better outcomes; if you're consulting, rather than just seeking to impose things on any section of society.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.02am GMT

block-time published-time 3.48am GMT

Asked if he would consider going to Beijing next year, Anthony Albanese says he would of course examine any invitations which may come it.

But he says there have been meetings at the leaders' level, as well as foreign minister level and a meeting of defence ministers, pointing out that the lines of communication are once again open.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.52am GMT

block-time published-time 3.46am GMT

Back to the prime minister, Anthony Albanese is asked about the Queensland shooting.

Albanese says the nation will continue to mourn the two police officers and neighbour who were killed and the government will examine any recommendations which may come from the investigation into the shooting and siege.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.51am GMT

block-time published-time 3.44am GMT

Sydney driver charged over allegedly using phone while child on lap

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Dipping out of politics again for a moment for this report from NSW police media:

A woman has been charged after she was allegedly detected driving while holding a mobile phone, and with a small child seated on her lap in Sydney's west.

Earlier this month (Wednesday 7 December), Georges River traffic and highway patrol received a referral from Transport for NSW regarding an image taken on a mobile phone detection camera situated in Bankstown.

The image allegedly depicted a female driver in a Queensland-registered motor vehicle holding a mobile phone with a small child seated on her lap, unrestrained, on Tuesday 1 November.

Following inquiries, police attended Padstow about 7.30pm yesterday (Wednesday 14 December) and spoke with a 28-year-old woman, who holds a Queensland 'learner' licence.

She was issued a field court attendance notice, where she was charged with five offences, including:

Drive recklessly/furiously or speed/manner dangerous
Driver use mobile phone when not permitted
Drive with 6 months-4 years old not restrained as prescribed
Learner not accompanied by driver/police officer/tester
Driver not wear seatbelt properly adjusted/fastened

The woman is due to appear before the Bankstown local court on Wednesday 25 January 2023.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.49am GMT

block-time published-time 3.43am GMT

PM says balance right on energy package

Sky News has just wrapped up an interview with Anthony Albanese.

Albanese was talking about the energy legislation, which he says has got the balance right.

He also says (to paraphrase the Mark Twain misquote) reports of the gas industry from this legislation is premature.

Well, if you go there and you say 'oh, this will inhibit investment, this will will create issues for for us going forward', then you're essentially talking down your industry and I see no reason there's nothing in this legislation that should require that sort of compensation.

We saw it before the Industrial Relations legislation, where some were out there saying it would immediately result in all this chaos and dysfunction. The legislation passed, the world's gone on, it's dealt with things, just like the world dealt with the Carpenter (WA) government's reforms that were put in place and frankly they'll deal with these reforms as well in in a constructive way,

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.44am GMT

block-time published-time 3.31am GMT

The Department of Veterans' Affairs has a new secretary. Alison Frame, the current deputy secretary for social policy in prime minister and cabinet, has been appointed to the role and will start her five year tenure in January.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.39am GMT

block-time published-time 3.29am GMT

Burke brushes aside opposition's IR law complaints

Energy bill passes – as it happened

In his press release on the unemployment figures, Tony Burke doesn't directly address Angus Taylor and Michaelia Cash, but he does sort of sub-tweet them. Or sub-press release. It's hard to say. Taylor and Cash say the IR legislation passed by the government will lead to job losses.

Burke says:

The number of Australians in jobs remains at record highs and more of them are in secure full-time work – but there's still more to do.

New labour force figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) today show that total employment increased by 64,000 in November 2022.

The unemployment rate remained steady at 3.4%, while the participation rate rose to an equal record high of 66.8%.

The government welcomes the increase in both full-time employment and part-time employment, as well as the youth participation rate hitting its highest rate since 1990.

While the historically low unemployment rate and high rates of participation are welcome news, we're only just starting to see green shoots when it comes to wages growth.

Due to a decade of deliberate wage stagnation under our predecessors and the rising cost of living, workers' real wages are still going backwards, which is why our plan to fight inflation and get wages moving again is so important.

This government believes in getting wages moving again – that's why one of the first things we did after the election was help secure a pay rise for Australia's lowest-paid workers.

We backed up this commitment by supporting and securing a wage rise for aged care workers.

The government Secure Jobs, Better Pay legislation will also help get wages moving. By modernising the bargaining system, we will see more workplace agreements, delivering better productivity and flexibility for employers and better pay and conditions for workers.

Employment minister Tony Burke: 'we're only just starting to see green shoots' on wages growth. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.43am GMT

block-time published-time 3.26am GMT

The condolence motion has been suspended until the next sitting.

The house is now suspended until it hears back from the Senate about the energy bill.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.28am GMT

block-time published-time 3.18am GMT

Labor minister says extremism's 'warning signs' must be better recognised

Anne Aly, who has spoken about her stepdaughter, who recently graduated from the WA police college, also speaks about violent extremism.

Before becoming a parliamentarian, this is what Dr Aly did – she was a counter-terrorism expert, who worked to pull people away from violent extremism.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

I think it's worthy to also comment that this is a sad, very timely reminder about how vigilant we have to be about violent extremism and the rise of violent extremism in **Australia**, and how important it is that we are able to identify individuals who are down that path towards violent extremism who are becoming operative, and to intervene.

Like many Australians, I've been reading the reports coming out and some of the coverage on the back stories of the perpetrators whose name shall not be spoken.

And it's very clear to me as somebody who was a professor in this field, and I studied this field, that their trajectories were very people have a trajectory to violent extremism.

Human behaviour is actually quite predictable. There are warning signs. From the reports that I've read, there were warning signs, signs with these perpetrators.

There are warning signs.

We have to get better at recognising those warning signs. We have to get better at intervening early, we have to get better at early identification.

We, all of us, have to take more seriously the warnings that our security agencies have been giving us about the rise of violent extremism in this country.

Anne Aly in parliament last month. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

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block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.28am GMT

block-time published-time 2.59am GMT

MP calls out 'purveyors of hate and misinformation'

Moreton MP Graham Perrett is one of the MPs who is speaking on the condolence motion.

He finished his speech with this:

The last part of my speech I want to particularly call out this rise that we're seeing in terms of conspiracy theorists and anti-vaxxers and sovereign citizens and the purveyors of hate and misinformation who cultivate some of these things.

I'm not jumping to a conclusion, saying this is what happened here. But I am seeing it on the rise and I know people in the police service, people ... who work as magistrates tell me that there is a rise of this sort of misinformation.

And I particularly, while in here in Canberra and this building, call out for politicians who harvest mistrust as part of their business model and go on Sky After Dark and dog whistle or dog trumpet these conspiracy theories and the shadowy conspiracy theory groups who are actually praising these killers of police officers and encouraging others to take up arms. We need to shine a light on that behaviour.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.12am GMT

block-time published-time 2.56am GMT

Over in the Senate, and the debate over the energy legislation has Michaelia Cash very agitated.

The government does not need the Coalition's votes here. And Cash's last big fight was over the IR bill, so this has given her a new fight.

Michaelia Cash (left) in the chamber. Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian

Energy bill passes – as it happened

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.58am GMT

block-time published-time 2.34am GMT

Shadow treasurer condemns Labor's energy package

Angus Taylor has taken advantage of today being unemployment figure day to bring together a few grievances against the government. From his statement (with Michaelia Cash):

The clear test for the Albanese government is to maintain the high number of Australians in work, as revealed in the latest Labour force figures.

The figures saw the unemployment rate remain steady at 3.4%, a result of policies put in the place by the former Coalition government, which grew the economy and helped jobs to be created.

Shadow treasurer Angus Taylor said today's figures come on a day that Labor has rammed yet another appalling piece of legislation through the parliament that will cost jobs and provide uncertainty for businesses.

Mr Taylor said: "Just as Labor's toxic IR bill is bound to kill jobs, so too will its diabolical energy deal.

"This is yet another piece of shambolic legislation dumped on the Coalition at five minutes to midnight that will destroy future gas supply and the jobs and businesses that depend on it.

"Labor has struck a sweetheart deal with the Greens and has provided absolutely no detail on how much it will add to the budget bottom line.

"Now is not the time for reckless spending. A responsible government should be tightening its budget belt to put a lid on inflation so that the Reserve Bank can take a break on raising interest rates.

"It's becoming clearer by the day that this is a party which had a plan to get elected but no plan to govern."

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.53am GMT

block-time published-time 2.25am GMT

Chamber of commerce concerned over Labor's energy plan

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has released its submission to the government on the energy package.

You can find that [here](#).

ACCI chief of policy and advocacy David Alexander said the ACCI supported the targeted relief but wasn't too crash hot on the market intervention.

Business welcomes targeted price relief that government can provide in the face of soaring energy bills. However, we are greatly concerned about the market interventions set to pass parliament, as they risk reducing investment and exacerbating supply problems.

While targeted relief will take the sting out of forecasted energy price increases, there is little detail over who will benefit from temporary assistance, and this won't be settled with state and territory governments until March next year.

We are concerned about the establishment of price caps because they reduce incentives for supply and investment and create larger problems over time.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

We are also concerned that the mandatory code of conduct in which the government determines 'reasonable prices' would be a significant impairment to the efficient operation of the market and would further deter future investment.

For many years short-term 'fixes' by governments have created larger second-round problems – investment is deterred, supply is reduced and prices are higher than they would otherwise be. Price-capping is another policy that fits into this pattern.

The government needs to prioritise getting the fundamental settings for energy policy right, as this is the only way to ensure affordable prices and secure supply while meeting emissions targets.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.35am GMT

block-time published-time 2.06am GMT

The Senate has begun debating the energy legislation.

That will take up the afternoon – there are quite a few amendments, but no one is in the mood to go too late with this.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.07am GMT

block-time published-time 1.59am GMT

Peter Dutton finished with:

I want to... acknowledge the work of all of those who attended the scene: forensic officers, special emergency response team officers – those included the many police officers who will be scarred from this experience.

By chance I returned from Toowoomba earlier this week. We came on to the highway to return from Toowoomba back to Brisbane and the motorcade was there and carrying the bodies of the officers and the highway blocked as they progressed down to Brisbane to the John Tonge Centre.

It was a... reminder of the good and the bravery that they displayed.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank the prime minister for the condolence motion today. I want to say thank you to all of those that had provided support and comfort to the families involved; all of those that have attended police stations. There are many reports of local communities, particularly in western Queensland, that are running out of flowers, and the tributes will continue for some time to come.

Our thoughts are obviously also with the officers of the Tara and Chinchilla police stations, but the Queensland police service more broadly, the Wieambilla community, represented by the leader of the Nationals here today.

[It's] particularly difficult as we head into Christmas, as we should all spare a thought and a prayer for those who have lost their lives, but for those who continue to serve over Christmas to keep us and our families safe.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.17am GMT

block-time published-time 1.58am GMT

Peter Dutton:

Australians have always been able to rely on those who wear the uniform at a state and federal level. They go into the line of fire and into danger zones so that we don't have to.

And I hope that the virtues displayed by constables McCrow, Arnold, Kirk and Brough, continue to inspire the next generation of police officers.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Mr Speaker, I want to acknowledge the work of commissioner Katarina Carroll and her bravery and her leadership, her inspiration. Equally, I want to acknowledge the contributions and support of the Queensland Police Union, led by Ian Leavers, and the associations and the federation that do great work around the country in providing that day-to-day support, and the support in years to come.

The depravity of this incident is what has struck hardest. On September 29, many of us went to police memorials around the country for the commemoration day to mark those who had lost their lives in the service of their state or the commonwealth.

Every one of them a tragedy. But in this instance, what has hit hardest across the country is the execution-style and the complete disregard for the human beings that these officers were.

The premeditated nature of the attack, the callous lack of heeding the pleas that ... would have echoed in between the gunshots.

An emotional Peter Dutton during the condolence motion for victims of the Queensland shooting. Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.18am GMT

block-time published-time 1.57am GMT

Peter Dutton:

And for those many, of course, there will be much pain and sadness now and enduring.

For those of us who didn't know Constable McCrow or Constable Arnold and Mr Dare, we'll continue to hear about their lives in many tributes.

Our nation clearly has lost three wonderful Australians.

Three people who embodied compassion, commitment... And courage during their lives and in their final moments. Certainly, those qualities are that which we will remember.

And in which we will review.

It's those qualities which will continue to inspire confidence in us to confront evil wherever it lurks. Mr Speaker, I want to also acknowledge and pay tribute to Constable Randall Kirk and Constable Keely Brough.

As the prime minister pointed out and others have said, their quick thinking and bravery has helped to save their own lives as well as others in calling for back-up.

And we certainly wish Constable Kirk a speedy recovery from his wounds.

Mr Speaker, at the National Police Memorial here in Canberra, there is a walkway, and engraved into that walkway are the words of loved ones, fellow officers and community members, in memory of those they have lost.

There are these tributes – "She had special quality... and community spirit." And another: "That man was a godsend to the area. It needed someone just like you."

And whilst those words speak... to specific individuals, of course, they also capture the ethos of Australia's law enforcement community.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.22am GMT

block-time published-time 1.53am GMT

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Peter Dutton also then spoke. He made many pauses as he worked to get through his statement without being overwhelmed with emotion.

I join with the prime minister in his fine words and acknowledge in the gallery today representing the police family, acting commissioner Ian McCartney, acting deputy commissioner Lisa Gale and acting assistant commissioner Steven Dometo.

In the aftermath of a tragedy, we reflect on what we've lost and what we've learned. Constable Rachel McCrow was sworn in as a police officer last year. Her friends said she was a selfless-natured person, a genuine carer for others. She was a person who always went above and beyond and took pride in her job.

Constable Matthew Arnold... was a triplet. His former principal said that he was a talented athlete and that he will be remembered as a man of service and integrity and compassion.

Alan Dare was due to celebrate his 26th wedding anniversary on Wednesday. A resident of Tara described him as a kind man who looked after disadvantaged teenagers.

Constable McCrow, Constable Arnold and Mr Dare meant so much to so many.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.23am GMT

block-time published-time 1.51am GMT

Anthony Albanese finished his speech with:

It is true that every police officer knows the risks that they face in their line of duty. They are all too aware of the dangers.

And yet they do their job each and every day, regardless. They do it for us, for our communities, for our nation. That is courage. It is public service at the highest level.

And today, and every day, we pay tribute to each and every one of the police officers who serve us and protect us.

Last night, the attorney general and I went to the police memorial here in Canberra at that overshadows the lake to lie a wreath with, as well, the acting commissioner of the Australian federal police, Ian McCartney, who is here with us today.

And I welcome you, sir, and I thank you and all of your fellow officers for their service.

I also acknowledge today in the gallery, joining us, acting deputy commissioner Lisa Gale and the acting assistant commissioner Steven Dometo.

Mr Speaker, we grieve for Alan Dare. And we grieve for Matthew Arnold and Rachel McCrow, who have paid a price that no one who puts on the uniform should ever have to pay. We can never count the true cost. We can never repay the full debt.

All we can offer is the humble thanks of a grateful nation and the heartfelt condolences of the Australian people.

With honour they served. May they rest in peace.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.05am GMT

block-time published-time 1.50am GMT

Anthony Albanese:

Part of the responsibility that all of us have is not just a solemn duty of remembering and honouring those who were killed. It is examining what drove their killers and finding a way to draw that poison out of their nation.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Our nation mourns with all those who loved Matthew Arnold, Rachel McCrow and Alan Dare.

We know that for their families, this Christmas, there will be a place not taken. An empty space of grief and loss that the years will never be able to fill. To those families, we say again, today, **Australia** mourns with you. And we mourn also with the bigger community and the larger family to which all police officers past and present belong – including, I want to note, the leader of the opposition, who served as a Queensland police officer.

Because we understand that every death in the line of duty strikes in the heart of all those who serve, and casts a shadow over all of those who wait for their loved ones to come home from work.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.25am GMT

block-time published-time 1.49am GMT

Anthony Albanese:

It is a miracle that Keely survived. Tragically, Alan Dare did not.

A neighbour, who came to the property's front gate, driven by that great Australian instinct to help, an innocent Australian who paid for his kindness and concern with his life.

Police officers in regional **Australia** are servants of the community and they're part of its fabric.

I've been speaking with the mayor, Paul McVeigh, and also, I had discussions with the local MP, the Leader of The Nationals, David Littleproud, about the nature of their communities.

Over 200 Tara residents gathered at their police station to observe a minute's silence for Matthew and Rachel.

The Queensland Police Union chief executive Ian Leavers said: "In Chinchilla, they've run out of flowers. They had such a close-knit and caring communities and the loss of these lives has fallen hard on a great many people."

The community are gathering.

Community tomorrow night will hold events in both Tara and Chinchilla. I'm advised by the Mayor that they are taking measures such as the local car wash is donating every dollar that goes through there to the families.

The community are donating everything from sausages and other food and beverages so that they can gather together to mourn together.

Locals have been saddened by these deaths and shocked by such a senseless atrocity.

An act of violence and bloodshed so sudden, so cruel, so alien to the community and country that they know, and so far beyond rational comprehension.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.56am GMT

block-time published-time 1.48am GMT

Anthony Albanese:

Monday December 12 should have been an ordinary summer's day on the Western Downs.

A day of warmth under that big blue sky.

A day of peace.

Instead, that quiet was shattered by the gunfire of an atrocity. A vicious and deadly atrocity that has stolen lives, broken hearts and shocked our nation.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

On Monday afternoon, four Queensland police officers from the Tara Police Station all still just in their 20s, young people serving their community, a rich and full life ahead of them, were sent out on what was supposed to be a routine check.

Just an ordinary part of the job that they were so proud to do.

But the property they were visiting was no normal home or farm. It was, unbeknown to them, a fortress and an armoury.

As the Queensland Police Commissioner Katarina Carroll, has said, they did not stand a chance.

Constables Matthew Arnold and Rachel McCrow were murdered. Constable Randall Kirk was shot and wounded, and Constable Keely Brough assumed that she, too, would die. Either shot by her pursuers, or burned alive when they set the grass that she was sheltering in on fire to try to drive her out.

Constable Brough grabbed her phone to seek assistance for her colleagues. And then, she texted her loved ones, what she imagined would be her final goodbyes. Even then, surrounded by danger and death, her first thought was for her fellow officers.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.56am GMT

block-time published-time 1.37am GMT

ACT records country's lowest unemployment rate

Among the states and territories, the ACT can claim bragging rights as the jurisdiction with the lowest unemployment rate. Last month it sank to 2.9% in trend terms from 3.1% in October, the ABS said. (Seasonally adjusted it was down to 2.5%.)

Most states held their own in trend terms, with NSW the lowest among the big states, remaining at a jobless rate of 3.2%, while Victoria's edged higher to 0.1 percentage points higher to 3.6%.

The total numbers in work continued to swell last month, hitting 13.77m, seasonally adjusted – another record. While it's remarkable how conditions have return to pre-pandemic trends, it's also a reminder that as the population keeps growing it's not uncommon for new highs to be scaled.

enltrAustralia's workforce keep nudging new highs, regaining the trajectory it had before the pandemic disruptions. (Source: ABS.) pic.twitter.com/CHBIBLUbX2

— @[phannam@mastodon.green](https://twitter.com/phannam@mastodon.green) (@p_hannam) [December 15, 2022](https://twitter.com/phannam@mastodon.green/status/1604444444444444444)

If you tally unemployment and underemployment, both are now about two-thirds what there were in March 2020 before the pandemic really got going.

Still, we can't really say we're in post-pandemic times (ask China). Covid case numbers aren't falling (all those Christmas do's where you have to yell into each other's ears to be heard over the din don't help).

According to the ABS, those working fewer hours rose because of illness rose by 50,000 to 520,000. That's about a third higher than would be typical for this time of year.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers, meanwhile, welcomed the latest jobs figures, but added his usual qualifiers with an eye to less happy times ahead.

We know **Australia** won't be immune to the volatile global economic environment driving higher global inflation and slowing growth. International developments and cost of living pressures will inevitably have an impact on our economy and labour market.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

And, of course, “we’re only just starting to see the beginnings of wages growth”.

block-time updated-time Updated at 1.57am GMT

block-time published-time 1.34am GMT

Birmingham sends climate message to Coalition

Simon Birmingham has acknowledged in Palau today that the Coalition had been too slow to adopt more ambitious climate policy. It is still couched in a defence of the former government and the familiar language about meeting and beating targets, but you will see he has a clear message to his Coalition colleagues back home.

A quick reminder that earlier this year, the Coalition voted against the Albanese government’s bill to enshrine the new 43% 2030 target and net zero by 2050 pledge in law. The former Morrison government also resisted domestic and international calls to lift its 2030 target beyond the 26% to 28%, after the Nationals signalled they would veto such a move.

When asked today to reflect on the Coalition’s climate policy over the years and how that affected Australia’s relationship with the region, Birmingham said:

We’ve taken important steps over the years. We have obviously most recently taken the steps towards making a firm commitment, as was taken to Glasgow, for net zero by 2050.

In terms of the targets that had been set for 2030, we put Australia on track not just to meet those targets, but to exceed those targets, as indeed Australia had met and exceeded its Kyoto 1 and Kyoto 2 commitment period targets as well.*

Frankly, when you’re clearly on track to exceed targets, it makes sense to raise and to elevate those targets. And that probably should have occurred at an earlier stage. What’s clear to me from the few days that I’ve had from engagement with Pacific leaders like President Whipps is that it is critical for us to listen carefully and attentively to our Pacific partners and not just to listen, but to ensure that we act in concert with them.

We do so in ways where we also show the maturity of explaining the challenges that Australia has. The change that is underway in Australia. We’ve seen record levels of investment in renewable energy in Australia, yet at times the domestic element of political debate - that hasn’t enabled us to convey that message as clearly as would have been ideal for all of our relations. And so ensuring that we have the types of dialogue that we’ve had through these last few days is important. And when it comes to domestic politics, ensuring that the voices that we hear from the Pacific are heard, and that we say the same things at home as we say here is equally critical in that regard. And that means, as I say, explaining the difficulties and the challenges when here, but also taking the difficult decisions when at home...

When you lose elections, it’s important to listen, to understand the reasons why you lost. And, so of course, that’s about listening to the Australian electorate but as shadow foreign minister it’s also about listening to all of our partners who we value in the region and globally to understand how we can most effectively shape policy to work with them as even deeper, stronger partners in the future.

Simon Birmingham: raising emissions targets ‘probably should have occurred at an earlier stage’. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

Earlier this week, Guardian Australia [published an interview with Birmingham](#) in which he conceded that the Coalition must listen “carefully to Pacific island nations” as part of what needs to be a “rock solid” bipartisan commitment to climate funding for the region.

* Australia’s first Kyoto target allowed an 8% increase in emissions between 1990 and 2010. The Howard government also negotiated what became known as “the Australia clause” to allow the factoring in of emissions

Energy bill passes – as it happened

from land clearing. As [analysts have explained](#), the base year for the first target had a very high level of land clearing, which made the target easier to meet.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.54am GMT

block-time published-time 1.33am GMT

Mark Dreyfus and David Littleproud are also giving speeches. Littleproud is not just the leader of the Nationals here – he is also the local member for where it happened.

I will bring you more of the speeches very soon.

block-time published-time 1.22am GMT

Dutton vows to 'confront evil wherever it lurks' in condolence motion

Peter Dutton is now reading his speech. He is obviously very emotional and is having to stop frequently in order to get through his words.

Our nation clearly has lost three wonderful Australians. Three people who embodied compassion, commitment and courage during their lives and in their final moments.

Simply those qualities that we will remember in which we will reveal, those qualities which will continue to inspire confidence in us to confront evil wherever it lurks.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.30am GMT

block-time published-time 1.20am GMT

PM offers 'thanks of a grateful nation' in tribute to Queensland shooting victims

There is absolute silence in the house for this condolence motion. We will bring you some of Anthony Albanese and Peter Dutton, a former Queensland police officer, very soon.

Albanese has finished his speech with:

We grieve for Alan Dare, and we grieve for Matthew Arnold and Rachel McCrow, who have paid a price that no one who puts on the uniform should ever have to pay. We can never count the true cost. We can never repay the full debt. All we can offer as a humble thanks of a grateful nation, and the heartfelt condolences of the Australian people with honour they served. May they rest in peace.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.31am GMT

block-time published-time 1.11am GMT

The house is now turning to a condolence motion for the three people, including two police officers, killed on Monday in Queensland.

There is a very big speaking list for this. Given the house's condensed hours, not everyone will get a chance, so the debate will be suspended and picked up again when parliament resumes in February.

block-time published-time 1.09am GMT

The bill is being read a third time and there is applause in the chamber from Labor and the Greens.

Off to the Senate it goes.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.12am GMT

Energy bill passes – as it happened

block-time published-time 1.06am GMT

The house is dividing on the legislation.

We will have the final vote for you very soon (and then once passed, the house it will be off to the Senate).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.17am GMT

block-time published-time 1.03am GMT

Perrottet won't rule out small nuclear reactors

The New South Wales premier, Dominic Perrottet, has refused to rule out small modular nuclear reactors after the treasurer, Matt Kean, earlier today said they were "exciting".

Asked about the comments made by his deputy later in the day, Perrottet said:

When it comes to technology, well, I'm agnostic. What we're focused on is making sure we have downward pressure on prices in the short term and energy security in the long term.

I'm not ruling anything in or out.

He agreed that energy was exciting and that new technologies should be embraced.

When it comes to energy security, you can't rule anything out, you've got to be open-minded right across the board.

We're not close-minded to any forms of energy generation, we're completely open-minded. It's about making sure we have energy security in the long term and put downward pressure on prices in the short term.

Earlier in the day, Kean told 2GB the state would be "open to looking at options like nuclear if they were commercially available".

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.07am GMT

block-time published-time 1.02am GMT

For those following along, Ted O'Brien had some questions about the legislation for Jim Chalmers – what specifically in the legislation excluded Western Australia etc – but it does not seem that Chalmers answered them.

block-time published-time 1.01am GMT

Simon Birmingham concedes Australia should have strengthened its 2030 emissions target earlier

The opposition's Senate leader, Simon Birmingham, has conceded during a visit to the Pacific that Australia should have strengthened its 2030 emissions reduction target sooner than it did.

He also says the Coalition needs to learn the lessons of its election loss, and that would involve listening not just to the Australian electorate but also valued Pacific partners. We'll bring you the full quotes shortly

block-time published-time 1.00am GMT

While we wait for this to play out, here is another question:

Why don't we ever read anything about the Federation Chamber?

It's a good question and the answer is – we don't usually have time. Because it is the spill over chamber, for ongoing, without interfering with the house business, we usually focus on what is happening in the house – as that is where the main action is.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

We do try and go back and read the federation chamber debates, and there are often some very good contributions from members – and usually more thoughtful ones, as there is not the same pressure as the house – but in terms of the daily focus, it remains in the house.

block-time published-time 12.56am GMT

Back in the chamber and Ted O'Brien has moved on to questions for Jim Chalmers.

There is still a bit to go here.

block-time published-time 12.54am GMT

Wong says Australia's push to co-host a UN climate conference in partnership with the Pacific would provide an opportunity for the voices of the Pacific to be heard more loudly:

Our motivation for hosting this is because we want to keep the world on track to stay below 1.5 and to make sure that the Paris and Glasgow commitments are met - that is our motivation... We accept we have to do more and I've been honest about that.

The opposition's foreign affairs spokesperson, Simon Birmingham, who is also part of the bipartisan trip, says: The delegation that we bring of government and opposition from Australia is one of standing together... in support of the friendship and the partnership we have with Pacific island nations.

block-time published-time 12.54am GMT

Climate transformation 'a big job for us', Wong tells Pacific

The foreign affairs minister, Penny Wong, says Australia is undergoing a "necessary" and "overdue" transformation of its emissions-intensive economy.

Speaking in Palau, Wong pays tribute to the president of Palau, Surangel Whipps, for his leadership. She says:

When I was climate minister one of the things which struck me and was which moved me was the authenticity and power of the voice of the Pacific, for the reasons that you outlined, President: you are living it.

At the time and for, unfortunately, the subsequent decade, my country was involved in a domestic political debate about climate along political partisan lines. And what struck me about visiting Palau and Vanuatu and Solomon Islands and Tuvalu was that this was not a political issue for the people of the Pacific. It was an existential issue and it is an existential issue - it is about culture, land and sea, [it is] the number 1 security issue for the Pacific.

Wong says to Whipps:

Your contribution to the conference of the parties [COP] where you talked about [how] it's like bombing us - it's a profoundly important thing to say to the countries of the world.

Wong adds that the Labor government was elected "with a greater ambition on climate" but she also acknowledges it is "a big job for us". She says Australia has had an emissions-intensive economy, with the majority of power from coal.

She says Australia's 2030 target is a 43% cut in emissions, but embedded within that is to move from majority coal to renewable energy comprising in excess of 80% by 2030. Wong asks for the Pacific's understanding that "we're pushing the rudder" and it will "take a while for the boat to turn".

block-time updated-time Updated at 12.56am GMT

block-time published-time 12.53am GMT

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Woman, 74, dies after being hit by bus in Sydney

Moving away from politics for just a moment to update you on something the Guardian news blog posted yesterday.

NSW police have confirmed a 74-year-old woman died after she was hit by a bus in Sydney's CBD yesterday afternoon.

From the NSW police media release:

NSW Ambulance paramedics treated the 74-year-old woman at the scene. She was taken to St Vincent's Hospital but died later that evening.

Officers from Sydney City Police Area Command established a crime scene that was examined by specialist officers from the Crash Investigation Unit.

The male bus driver – also 74-years-old – was taken to Sydney Hospital for mandatory testing.

He was later taken to Day Street Police Station and charged with dangerous driving occasioning death-drive manner dangerous, negligent driving (occasioning death) and not give way to pedestrian (right turn).

The Dulwich Hill man has been granted condition bail to appear at Downing Centre Local Court on Wednesday 11 January 2023.

His driver's licence has been suspended.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.56am GMT

block-time published-time 12.51am GMT

Seasonally adjusted jobs participation rate up to 66.8%

The November labour market numbers are mostly on the upside. The jobless rate stayed put at 3.4% even as the economy added 64,000 jobs (more than half of them fulltime) because more people were looking for work, the ABS said.

Indeed, the seasonally adjusted participation rate crept up to 66.8%, a record level. (Had it stayed at the devilish forecast rate of 66.6%, the overall jobless rate would probably have dropped to a fresh half-century low of 3.3%.)

Monthly hours worked sank to 1.9bn to be one down arrow.

"The participation rate increased by 0.2 percentage points to 66.8% November, returning to the record high we saw in June 2022," Bjorn Jarvis, head of labour statistics at the ABS, said. "It was 1.0 percentage point higher than before the pandemic."

That recovery in those looking for work in **Australia**, post pandemic, is in contrast to the US, for example. A lot more people haven't returned to the labour market, which partly explains that country's much faster wage growth.

Women's participation rate is also back to matching its historical high of June at 62.4%. For men, it was 71.3%.

"The record high participation rate continues to show that it is a tight labour market, especially when coupled with very low unemployment," Jarvis said.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.56am GMT

block-time published-time 12.50am GMT

Jim Chalmers sums up government's position on energy bill before vote

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Jim Chalmers is now summing up the government's position on the energy bill, ahead of the vote and is using the opportunity to accuse the opposition of "selling out" Australians by not supporting the legislation. The Coalition is very agitated over this and there is a lot of yelling across the chamber.

The Coalition wanted the bill split so that the rebates would be separate to the market intervention (which the Coalition claims will impact **Australia's** gas and coal industries). There is absolutely no reason to split the bill though – the government has the support it needs in the Senate without the opposition.

There also seems to have been some short memories in the LNP given that, for a good while there, the Coalition was threatening its own market intervention through its "big stick" legislation. That didn't end up happening, and a voluntary code of conduct was put in place –but given where prices are, and are heading, the government is now moving to make the code mandatory.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.54am GMT

block-time published-time 12.45am GMT

As we come to the end of the energy bill debate, we are getting some questions through about what some of it will mean.

Did you have any more detail about that this "electrification package" that has been negotiated for next year?

Not as yet. We know that a package is being worked up for the budget which aims to help low- and middle-income households move from gas appliances to electric ones. Whether or not that is in the form of direct cash rebates (doubtful) or directly on products (gas hot water/stoves – more likely) is yet to be confirmed, as it is still being worked up. Victoria is moving in this direction as a state and it was something that the government was already working on when the Greens added it as part of their negotiations.

The tricky part is going to be what happens when some people (renters etc) are left with gas appliances, given that when more people leave the gas grid, the more expensive gas will be. But all those details are still being worked out.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.52am GMT

block-time published-time 12.40am GMT

Meanwhile, we are almost there in the chamber.

enltrEnergy bill about to pass the House of Representatives [#auspol](#)

— Katharine Murphy (@murpharoo) [December 15, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.45am GMT

block-time published-time 12.37am GMT

Palau president stresses importance of climate action to Pacific

The president of Palau, Surangel Whipps, has told Penny Wong and Simon Birmingham that he was "extremely honoured to welcome your delegation to Palau".

He says cooperation with **Australia** in the maritime sector – including protecting Palau's exclusive economic zone – was a "symbol of Pacific cooperation and protecting the role of law, freedom democracy and the values that we share".

Whipps stresses the importance of climate action to the Pacific:

Energy bill passes – as it happened

When it comes to climate change I said to [the] Cop 26 [climate summit], you might as well bomb us because it's constant, whether it's typhoons, drought, the heat and sea level rise.

Your coming helps you understand the challenges we face ... This visit signifies the importance of the relationship and bringing that relationship to a higher level.

Whipps also mentions renewable energy projects:

One thing that Palau has learned not only is it important for reducing our carbon but also important to build resilience against the challenges of conflict which have raised the cost of fuel and really are holding us hostage to fossil fuels.

Whipps also thanks **Australia** for "leading the way in saying let's bring Cop to the Pacific" (**Australia** wants to host a climate summit in 2026 in partnership with the Pacific). He thanks **Australia** for raising its 2030 target to 43%, "which is important for keeping the world temperature below 1.5 which is so important for Pacific islands that are going under".

He also mentions flights between Brisbane and Palau are due to begin in February:

Please fill up that plane – come and visit.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.45am GMT

block-time published-time 12.35am GMT

Unemployment rate steady at 3.4% for November

The unemployment rate is out:

Australia's unemployment rate in November was 3.4%, the ABS has just announced. It was 3.4% in October and economists had predicted a similar result for last month.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.39am GMT

block-time published-time 12.34am GMT

Penny Wong visits Palau for second time

The president of Palau, Surangel Whipps Jr, is speaking at an event in Koror with Penny Wong. Daniel Hurst will have more for you very soon on Wong's second visit to Palau (the first was as a bipartisan group with then foreign affairs minister Julie Bishop)

This visit is also bipartisan – Simon Birmingham is also there.

Whipps dropped a little tidbit about Birmingham's experience, while talking of his excitement of direct flights from Brisbane to Palau now being available:

We have a beautiful ocean, a warm ocean because Senator Birmingham was able to swim this morning, and our jellyfish are harmless. I went to the Great Barrier Reef and was told to pull on these suits otherwise you will die. I want to welcome all the divers and snorkellers, come and see our culture and see what is unique about Palau.

I begrudge no one time in the ocean. It is good for the soul. In fact, auspol would probably be a much more chill experience if the parliament had been placed at Jervis Bay.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.41am GMT

block-time published-time 12.23am GMT

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Given it is the last (lol – famous last words) politics blog for the year, we thought it time to do another ask us anything. Not in podcast form this time, but in the blog.

So let us know – what burning questions do you have about politics? Or the team, if that's where your mind goes? Send them through to me at amy.remeikis@theguardian.com and I will get through as many as I can

block-time published-time 12.21am GMT

Greens to explain their position on energy bill

The Greens are holding a press conference at 12.15 to discuss where and why they landed where they did on the energy bill (in support, as long as no extra funds go to fossil fuel companies and support for the electrification package in next May's budget).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.26am GMT

block-time published-time 12.02am GMT

Albanese says opposition will be 'held to account' on energy bill

Anthony Albanese had some things to say on the energy bill in the house:

Apparently, those opposite want us to have acted quicker, but also want us to be slower at the same time. Having had 22 policies in government, but not landing one of them, they now want us to have no policy also. They were addicted to power – but hopeless on energy. They rushed around passing legislation about strawberries – laws that have never been used – but did nothing to help people with their power bills. The only time they acted with urgency was to cover-up the 20% increase in power prices and to keep it a secret until after the election. And now they are seeking to stand in the way of this urgent action because they imagine that somehow it serves their political agenda. Well, the choice for this parliament today is very clear. Vote for this plan – and vote for lower prices. Or vote against it – and vote for higher prices. Vote for this plan – and stand up for jobs, industry and households. Or vote against it – and stand with them, with companies banking record profits and sending them offshore. That is the choice. Vote for this plan – and be part of the solution. Or vote against it – and be part of the problem. The opposition will be held to account for their decision.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.14am GMT

block-time published-time 12.01am GMT

PBO wants feedback on 'build your own budget' tool

The Parliamentary Budget Office wants some feedback on its plan to release a "build your own budget" tool.

You can find the consultation paper [here](#).

The PBO wants more people to understand how the budget works as part of its education role.

But in the meantime, you can build your own budget with us here, and work out what you could spend the stage-three tax cuts on yourself (and don't expect that issue to go away anytime soon – it will be one of the main issues of the first half of next year).

Related: [You be the treasurer: scrap the stage-three tax cuts, spend money, or pay down the federal budget deficit](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.09am GMT

block-time published-time 11.50pm GMT

Labour market figures to round out ABS's year of living statistically

Energy bill passes – as it happened

We'll get the November jobless figures from the ABS at 11.30am (AEDT), which will likely be the last headline stats for 2022 unless you're hankering for the annual reweighting of the cost of living and CPI baskets, and the odd number on mortality (both out next week).

October's unemployment rate came in at 3.4%, matching the figure for July. Both of which are at about 50-year lows, and so even a modest bump up for last month probably won't change the narrative about the labour market remaining very tight. (In the September quarter, about 1:30 jobs were vacant, or double the pre-pandemic ratio, the ABS told us yesterday.)

The flip side would be a drop in the rate to 3.3% or lower, which would set off fresh alarms about the Reserve Bank needing to ditch the notion of pausing in its interest rate climb, and hike again when it returns from its summer repose in February.

Banks such as ANZ and CBA are expecting the rate in November to hold at 3.4%, with job additions in the 15-20,000 range. A shift in the participation rate up or down often determines which way the jobless rate arrow points.

Since it's the unexpected last day (probably) for federal parliament as MPs return to vote on the government's energy bill, it's not a bad time to reflect a little on labour stats. At the end of 2021, the unemployment rate was at 4.2% and by April it was down to 3.9% according to ABS data released just three days before the federal election in May.

Of the three big economic events during the election campaign, the jobs figures were arguably the Morrison government's trump card in terms of economic management. (They might also claim the improving budget deficit but that was still a big red number, and so not really a number to trumpet.)

The other two, though, had been the surprising CPI spike to 5.1% for the March quarter and the subsequent RBA interest rate rise days later.

Those two events set a tone that made it even harder for the government to win over swinging voters, many of whom would have voted by the time the more upbeat jobs numbers landed.

Since the election, the numbers have generally got better and better – with the exception that wages are not yet rising in line with the ongoing scramble to keep or attract new staff.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.03am GMT

block-time published-time 11.43pm GMT

Suicide Prevention **Australia** urges PM to reverse cuts to subsidised mental health appointments

Suicide Prevention **Australia** has asked the prime minister to step in and reverse the decision to cut the number of subsidised mental health appointments under the Better Access program from 20 to 10.

The government says it is returning the program to the original 10 subsidised sessions to help more people access mental health support, with long waiting lists for people to access even one session.

But the peak body, Suicide Prevention **Australia**, says it is the wrong move until reforms are delivered which would address the issues the government says it is attempting to address.

The Suicide Prevention **Australia** chief executive, Nieves Murray, said the second part of the Suicide Prevention **Australia**'s Community Tracker for the December Quarter (2022), released today, found one-in-five Australian adults (22%) reported being formally diagnosed with a mental illness in the past 12 months.

A further 19% revealed they had been diagnosed with a mental illness at some point prior to the past 12 months, bringing the overall number of Australians diagnosed with mental illness in their lives to 42%. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows over 60% of people who die by suicide have a mental illness or behavioural disorder.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Access to timely, effective and affordable mental health treatment is critically important to suicide prevention.

Murray:

We know people need help and are willing to get it. It's the worst possible time to reduce support.

We need a stronger safety net for those at-risk of missing out on critical support as a result of these changes.

You can read more on some of the reaction, [here](#)

Related: [Experts decry Labor's 'appalling' plan cut to number of Medicare psychologist sessions](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.52pm GMT

block-time published-time 11.20pm GMT

Ted O'Brien says Labor has 'ideological zeal' against gas energy

The legislation is being debated in the parliament and the Coalition's Ted O'Brien is very, very angry about it, accusing the government of trying to destroy the gas energy.

"They are trying to kill it off because they have an ideological zeal to destroy this energy," he says.

O'Brien is also very angry about the market intervention and the government telling businesses what to do.

There is a lot of pointing across the despatch box. A lot. That pointing finger got a work out.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.28pm GMT

block-time published-time 11.12pm GMT

Treasurer says gas price cap still high by historical standards with 96% of offers below cap

And on the gas price caps, Jim Chalmers said this during his speech:

The legislation contains a sunset clause so that the power to make these orders ends 12 months after the commencement of any order made – or if no order is made, 12 months after the commencement of the Bill.

Through this instrument, the government intends to implement a temporary price cap of \$12 per gigajoule.

The ACCC has identified this price based on the costs of production and a reasonable return on capital. And it is still a high domestic price by historical standards.

In 2021, the ACCC found that there were 289 domestic offers made by producers and retailers, with 96% of offers below \$12 per gigajoule, and the average price \$9.20 per gigajoule.

The bill also includes measures to detect, deter and address any non-compliance with the price cap.

For transactions that fall under the scope of the emergency price order, prices above the cap will be subject to enforcement action.

The price cap will be reviewed in mid-2023, to ensure it is having the intended effect, and to consider whether adjustments are needed.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.20pm GMT

block-time published-time 11.09pm GMT

Treasurer Jim Chalmers introduced the bill to the house about 20 minutes ago.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

He said in his speech:

This is a plan agreed by National Cabinet – endorsed by every Premier and Chief Minister, from both sides of politics, and we thank them for their cooperation.

They, like us, know that action is needed now.

Our collective measures to address gas and coal prices are estimated to reduce the impact of forecast electricity prices next financial year by 13 percentage points –

And reduce expected inflation in 2023-24 by around an estimated half a percentage point.

And our direct assistance will provide hundreds of dollars of energy bill relief in addition to these measures.

And that's what this choice – this coming vote – really comes down to.

Higher power prices or lower power prices?

Relief on energy bills, or no relief?

Protecting Australian industry and jobs, or abandoning them?

block-time published-time 10.57pm GMT

Treasurer accuses opposition of 'hiding behind process point' of when they received draft legislation

On Peter Dutton's contention the Coalition only received the legislation at 8.45pm last night, the treasurer, Jim Chalmers, told ABC radio RN "they received draft legislation last week" and accused the opposition of "hiding behind this process point".

... They have spent weeks giving the metaphorical middle finger to manufacturers, and families and small businesses doing it tough under high energy prices, they have been playing politics all along and that is what they are doing with this process now.

They got a draft of this legislation last week, we said we would take into consideration the consultation on this draft, we did that yesterday and when it was ready after that consultation, we provided it to the opposition in the usual way.

block-time updated-time Updated at 11.09pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.44pm GMT

The house sitting has begun so we are under way. Let the energy legislation begin.

block-time updated-time Updated at 11.02pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.44pm GMT

Unlikely any Liberal MPs will cross the floor on energy bill

Good morning all from the House of Representatives chamber in Canberra. Now that Peter Dutton has confirmed the Coalition will vote against the government's energy price relief package, I thought it prudent to check in with a couple of Liberals to see if there will be any floor crossing this morning.

I hear the Victorian Liberal Russell Broadbent used the opportunity of the Coalition party room meeting at 8.15am to counsel his colleagues that it isn't a good idea to try and govern from opposition.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

What he means by that is the Coalition can take a per se or principled position that it is bad for governments to be in the business of controlling gas prices, but it's hard to explain to people that per se or principled position means you are voting against lower energy bills.

But my intel suggests Broadbent won't cross the floor this morning.

Liberal Bridget Archer says she would rather the bill be split so she could support supplying price relief, but she won't cross the floor because she's concerned about a lack of information about the implications of the intervention. After procedural argy bargy, the House is now on to the substantive business of considering the legislation.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.02pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.43pm GMT

Dutton calls for crackdown on encrypted messaging

On the issue of the Queensland shooting and the role of internet companies, Peter Dutton said:

We invested a record amount into Asio and the federal police and the Australian Crime Commission, other agencies and they worked hand-in-glove with their state authorities. Like we've seen in recent years, the spread of disinformation on the internet and the way in which that infects people's minds and changes their whole persona, their whole perspective, and causes them to commit or contributes, at least, to them committing extreme acts, should be of concern to any right thinking Australian.

So, this is why we've had a debate in recent years about encryption, where there are messages and encrypted messaging apps, and an exchange of information, of disinformation, between these groups. I mean, we only know what we've seen publicly in relation to the incident in Queensland. So, no doubt, all of that investigation is still under way. But it should be a real concern.

So, when we've spoken for many years about the concern that police agencies and intelligence agencies had where they just can't get access, as they normally would, with an exchange years ago of a telephone call or a handwritten letter or messages which could be discovered with a warrant. Now, the police can't discover that information. So, when you've got that environment where there can be no transparency and there can be no discovery, then you will have these groups manifesting their lunacy and reinforcing each other's ideas and prejudices and it manifests in tragic ways.

So, we should be very realistic about the benefit of the internet in many ways in our lives, but also the downside that really causes me great concern not just as a leader in our country, but as a parent, as well, because you worry about the information that your children are accessing online. Impressionable young minds – as we've seen in recent years – can be encouraged to go off to conflict. They can be encouraged to spread all sorts of conspiracy theories and subscribe to those and spread that hatred and we should be very concerned about that.

We would support the government in any measures they had to hold some of these companies and these platforms to account, because if a court issues a warrant, that information should be discoverable by police. Like the knocking on a door and not giving them access to a safe because, even if they had a warrant, are you saying that they can't get into the safe? It just doesn't make any sense. It's just a technology issue and we're allowing these people to manifest their crazy ideas online.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.16pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.39pm GMT

Dutton 'honestly believes' energy price caps will be 'catastrophic for economic policy in this country'

Peter Dutton continued:

Energy bill passes – as it happened

I honestly believe that this is catastrophic for economic policy in this country, and as we know, these sorts of market interventions don't just restrict themselves in terms of the impact to the energy sector, there will be other companies in other sectors who are looking to invest here at the moment, who will be looking at the sovereign risk that's created out of this and questioning whether they will invest in agriculture or whether they'll invest in the manufacturing, advanced manufacturing, into the healthcare sector.

They will look at this government's stance and they will see with one commodity where you've got a high-inflationary environment, the government is willing to intervene – why wouldn't they do it elsewhere? It's a reasonable question for investors to ask, and so there is a very significant economic policy here that's in question and the Coalition is not going to stand for it.

If the government wants to play political stunts and tricks, let them do that. We made it clear that we would provide support for a bill which includes relief to people who have seen their power prices go up under this government but if the government blends it in with the price mechanism, we're not going to support that bill.

The chair of the Australian Energy Regulator, Clare Savage, said this morning on RN the regulator was already seeing energy prices come down, about 40-50% in Queensland and New South Wales, just from when the government spoke about intervention after it handed down its budget in October (this is also rolled into that) so there is some impact.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.52pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.35pm GMT

Dutton says Albanese and Labor 'have no plan' to bring energy prices down as parliament set to pass bill

We brought you some of Peter Dutton's comments a little earlier – here was his opening remarks to his press conference:

We received the legislation at 8.45pm last night, so we'll have a party room later this morning, but my recommendation to our party room will be that we support the payment, the support to families who are really doing it tough under this government at the moment.

These are families that have heard the prime minister say on 97 occasions that he would reduce their power bills by \$275 and then deliver a budget which had no plan whatsoever. This has been a cruel hoax and a con job by the prime minister.

If people think their power bills are going down under this prime minister, just look at his budget document. It says that power prices will go up by 56%, that gas will go up by 44%, and Chris Bowen – who I'll come back to in a second – Chris Bowen declares that he and the prime minister can't be held to account because there's no silver bullet and no guarantee that power prices will go down.

You know, well, 'no shock, Sherlock*'. I mean, the fact is that power prices will continue to go up and up and up under this Labor government because they have no idea what they're doing.

*That is not what people say, but I suppose it is still family friendly hours.

Dutton continued:

I lived through the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd years and this has all of the mayhem and chaotic nonsense that we saw during that period. The prime minister had a shambolic press conference last Friday. He promised that there would be* legislation and a plan, but it's clear that they're still drafting this thing as we speak.

So, I think there'll be a number of amendments, even to the original draft, and it's clear that the government has made this up on the run, and Australians should take no assurance, no comfort, from the words of the prime minister at the moment because he has no plan. He can't explain to you how power prices will come down.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

In the budget, of course, they funded activists to try and stop gas coming into the system**. If you've got increased demand for gas in the system, how can you reduce supply? Because you'll drive up prices. So, on the one hand, the government's offering support, on the other they are driving prices up.

**The tense of this is interesting, given that there is legislation.

*Are the activists with us in the room right now?

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.47pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.16pm GMT

NSW treasurer Matt Kean says state is open to option of small modular nuclear reactors in future

The New South Wales treasurer, Matt Kean, said the state government was open to looking at small modular nuclear reactors as part of the state's energy mix into the future, calling them "exciting technology".

Speaking to 2GB on Thursday morning, he said:

Of course we'd be open to looking at options like nuclear if they were commercially available. Small modular nuclear reactors are exciting technology, which may come available in the future.

Right now the small modular nuclear reactor prototypes are not going to be ready until the mid-2030s and that may be something we should look at, but right now we've got a problem and we need to deal with it with the technologies we have available.

A fortnight ago, Kean labeled an idea floated by former staffer and Liberal candidate at the upcoming state election, Matt Cross, of small-scale nuclear reactors in every community as a fantasy.

He said:

There's not a single micro nuclear reactor that's commercially available anywhere in the world. People can chase all kinds of fantasies.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.24pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.00pm GMT

Over on the ABC, Bowen was also asked about the electrification package and said much the same thing.

He was then asked if the Greens had actually secured it, given he says that Labor was working on it anyway and answered:

Look, I'm not interested in apportioning credit, we're getting things done and we're working across the Parliament, with the Greens, with the crossbench, with people of good faith who want to work with us. The Opposition's made themselves irrelevant but just opposing everything; that's a matter for them, but where the Parliament works best is where parties - we've had plenty of disagreements with the Greens, but we also have areas of agreement where we can come together and work on things together, the Parliament and the country are better off, that's the case across the board with people of good faith and goodwill working together in the national interest; that's what's occurred here.

block-time published-time 9.55pm GMT

Electrification through Greens-backed package could make households 'much, much more efficient', Chris Bowen says

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Chris Bowen was also on the Seven network (honestly, the man was everywhere this morning) where he was asked about the electrification package the Greens said it secured in next year's budget.

The detail is still being worked out, but it is about getting households off of gas and on to electricity, where renewables on the grid should help bring down energy prices as time goes on.

(The trick will be making sure financially vulnerable households aren't left holding the can – the more households coming off of gas, the more expensive gas will be.)

Bowen this morning told Seven viewers:

Well, people obviously will always be able to make their own choices, but we've been working for a while on this thing called the National Energy Performance Strategy, and we had a good conversation with the Greens, and the Greens suggested that we deliver a package pre-budget, in the lead-up to the budget, which we're more than happy to do as the first dividend of that strategy.

Really, it's about providing support for households and businesses to make the best energy choices for them, because electrification and energy efficiency can reduce your bills, can actually be a healthier result in your house and can be much, much more efficient, and so there's a number of ways we can do it.

We can provide low-interest loans through the CEFC, which we're already doing for electric cars, for example; there's lots of things we can do. It's entirely in keeping with our agenda, and that's what a good government does, works across the aisle with people of good faith to get things done where we can find agreement. That's what a mature sensible grown-up government does, and that's exactly what we've done again.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.12pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.48pm GMT

'Australians will pay the price' for Labor energy bill, Angus Taylor says

Angus Taylor held a doorstep (quick press conference) early this morning where he reiterated the Coalition's opposition to the energy legislation.

Well today's vote on this bill is the end of a shambolic and disgraceful process after months of inaction, thought bubbles being dropped on an almost daily basis by government ministers. We're being asked to vote today on a Bill that we hadn't seen until late last night. It was still being baked yesterday afternoon and it's come out completely undercooked.

Now, we know that to get this through the parliament, Labor has done a sweetheart deal with the Greens. We don't know how much they've given them. But we do know the Greens passed or approved this legislation, agreed to support this legislation completely sight unseen. This is like the buyer of a house coming in and buying the house without having even seen it. Without having seen it. This is what the Greens have done.

Now the worst part of is, of course, is Australians will pay the price. Australians will pay the price for a disgraceful piece of legislation and a disgraceful process.

Labor was elected in May. At least some of the energy price increase ahead was known by the Coalition before the election. But in politics, nothing matters except what matters in the moment.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.01pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.36pm GMT

'Our job to intervene' in industry in extraordinary circumstance: Chris Bowen

The price caps are temporary (they are in place for a year). So what is to stop the government from doing it again?

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Chris Bowen told the ABC it's a measure for the times.

Well, this is an extraordinary circumstance. This is a war circumstance where 90% of the price rises around the world, we know from the International Energy Agency, have been caused by the impact of coal and gas of Putin's invasion of Ukraine. So this is pretty unusual. And we don't think that it is appropriate, and I'll be very frank and blunt about this. We don't think that it is appropriate for some companies to make very big profits as a result of those war prices and war profits at the expense of Australian households and consumers. I know some people, particularly the companies involved, will disagree with that. News flash – gas companies like big [profits]. But it's our job to intervene, carefully, methodically in the base interests of the Australian industry.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.49pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.32pm GMT

Angus Taylor repeats gas industry arguments against price caps

Here is a little more from that interview with Angus Taylor. He is asked why the government's legislation won't work and says:

Well, because we will see supply shortages and the industry experts and participants are all saying this. Look, there's years and years, decades and decades of experience with price caps around the world. It's microeconomics 101. If you impose an aggressive price cap, you drive supply shortages.

The ABC interviewer then points out that Taylor is making the gas industry's case for it. Thomas Oriti:

I mean, that's ... forgive me but that's the argument of the gas industry. Supply being reduced if price caps are put in place. Some people listening might be asking the question, hang on, we're paying more and more for power bills. Do you actually care about gas prices for households or are you lobbying for the gas industry?

Taylor responds:

We absolutely care about prices for households and I was minister when we saw the gas price being driven down from \$20 to \$5 and I wasn't loved by the energy players, I can tell you that, Thomas ... I always took a tough stand on them doing the right thing.

But I'm not interested in policy that simply doesn't work, that's shambolic, that's not understood by the government, that was still being baked late yesterday afternoon and has come out completely undercooked ...

The prices are completely unregulated in the markets that really matter. In Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane, the price can be whatever it can be. This is how bizarre this legislation is. So if there are shortages, there'll be price gouging.

... This legislation is badly thought through, it followed from months of thought bubbles from every senior member of the government who was in this area of policy and it's come out completely undercooked.

It won't work. It will lead to supply shortages. You say that only the gas industry says price caps drives supply shortages. We saw this in the 70s. We saw it in the 80s. We saw it after the second world war. It's in every microeconomics textbook right at the beginning. When you impose price caps, you see shortages and then there's price gouging that follows from that ... the real test here is will Australians' bills be lower after this legislation goes through?

The government has not been saying bills will go down – but that they won't increase as much as they are slated to, because of the intervention.

There is also the rebates, which are still to be worked out with the states, which will help eligible people.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.46pm GMT

Energy bill passes – as it happened

block-time published-time 9.29pm GMT

Angus Taylor criticises 'months of inaction and delay' over Labor energy bill

Here is Angus Taylor on ABC News Radio explaining why the Coalition will not be supporting the energy bill today:

Can I first say that the most important thing we want to see here is more affordable, reliable energy for all Australians; but we simply can't support this bill in its current form.

I should say I only received a copy of the bill late last night. It's been an absolutely shambolic process. There's been months of inaction and delay and to deliver to the parliament the bill that we're supposed to vote on today, late last night is an absolute disgrace. We saw even just yesterday afternoon, the energy minister couldn't explain what was in the bill.

Now, what we need to see is more supply being pumped in and sold into the Australian domestic network. It's worked for us in the past. We got the price of gas down from \$20 a gigajoule down to closer to \$5 a gigajoule and yet Labor instead is taking an approach which simply won't work.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.35pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.27pm GMT

Back to politics now, but hold your heads up high, Morocco fans. What a run.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.31pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.25pm GMT

'Not just for Morocco, but for all Arabs, Africans and Muslims': mixed emotions for Moroccan fans in Darling Harbour

Both disappointment and elation hung over Tumbalong Park in Darling Harbour this morning, as France beat Morocco in the World Cup semi-final.

A strong but divided crowd descended on to the live viewing sight, set up for **Australia**'s loss to Argentina in the round of 16, and maintained for the semi-finals.

And when France scored their second goal to seal a tight and nervy win over the Moroccan underdogs, half the crowd exploded, flags and cheers filling the cold morning air.

The goal only momentarily silenced the Moroccan fans, who returned to their drumming and cheering soon after, their disappointment becoming pride.

A variety of flags dotted the crowd, in addition to the French and Moroccan flags, with Algerian and Palestinian fans present.

Yacine Elakil said Morocco had the better chances and should have scored, but was proud of their efforts nonetheless.

"We're sad but we're happy at the same time. We're so proud of these players and what they've achieved, it's been a great journey."

"This run to the semi-finals was not just for Morocco, but for all Arabs, Africans and Muslims. It's for anyone who feels Moroccan, all are welcome."

But French fans left floating, many saying they were surprised at the French success in this World Cup, but we're looking forward to a final showdown with Argentina.

Energy bill passes – as it happened

Loraine said she braved the cold this morning to witness what she said was a “legendary” moment.

“Seeing Morocco and France in a semi-final has been special, it was worth it because we would be happy no matter the result. Obviously I supported France, but would’ve been happy if Morocco won.”

“It’s so great to see this sense of community here today, and we’re looking forward to the final against Messi. We were champs four years ago, we can be champs again.”

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.31pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.24pm GMT

‘We have followed them forever’: Morocco and France fans turn out in Darling Harbour for semi-final

A rambunctious crowd descended on Tumbalong Park in Darling Harbour for Morocco’s World Cup semi-final against France.

An early goal for France dampened things only momentarily, with the local Moroccan diaspora out in full force, drumming and singing for their team.

But it was not a completely partisan crowd; French flags and national team jerseys dotted the crowd, but are being drowned out by the jumping and singing Moroccan supporters.

Supporters of both teams told me they were confident of the win, with the match seemingly still in the balance to both sides.

Ahmed says he didn’t expect the Moroccan support to be so strong in Darling Harbour, but has welcomed it regardless.

We are a small community here in Sydney, but you see we turn up for the team; we have followed them forever and will continue following them.

As you can see by the drumming and dancing, we don’t need that many people anyways.

Meanwhile Maxence Leroux recently migrated to **Australia** from France, and said while the Moroccan contingent were strong, there were many French supporters in the crowd, and in Sydney.

The Moroccan players and supporters have made this a great match, it’s a great atmosphere here today.

I didn’t expect France to go this far, but now that they’re here, I want them to win.

enltrTumbalong Park absolutely jumping this morning for Morocco’s semifinal against France. Going behind clearly hasn’t dampened things. pic.twitter.com/VeQ8j1BdjE

— Mostafa Rachwani (@Rachwani91) [December 14, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.56pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.19pm GMT

Industry minister Ed Husic says energy intervention is ‘doing what is right’

Ed Husic appeared on ABC News Breakfast a little earlier this morning where he was asked whether or not he expected the coal and gas industry to campaign against the government for its energy intervention.

Husic, as the industry minister, has been critical of the gas industry in particular for its prices and what that is doing to the manufacturing sector:

Energy bill passes – as it happened

I come back to this point: We are doing what is right in the national economic interest. There is give and take to get the balance right and you have asked me before, some manufacturers will appreciate that the cap is in place and others will say it is too high. Gas producers will say this is all too low, our pricing is too low and this cap is setting the price too low and this isn't right.

We have got to be able to moderate expectations and do what is right, come together as a country to do what is right for the nation's economic interest. The parliament gets this. The bulk of the parliament gets this. The only people in parliament who think that pensioners should prop up the profits of gas companies is the Liberal and National party who want to vote against this bill and want to vote against protecting households, businesses and jobs. It is extraordinary.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.26pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.09pm GMT

Dutton wants market intervention unlinked from energy rebates

Just to be clear – the government does not have to split the energy bill, as it has the support of both the Greens and David Pocock.

But that hasn't stopped Peter Dutton from having a crack. He wants the government to unlink the market intervention from the rebates (whatever form that will take).

This is from the same party that was at one stage of its time in government threatening "a big stick" which eventually became a poking toothpick, but here we are.

Dutton:

We made it clear that we would provide support for a bill which includes relief to people who are seeing their power prices go up under this government but if the government blends it in with price mechanism, we won't support that bill.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.12pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.03pm GMT

Binance fined more than \$2m for breaching spam laws

Dipping out of politics for a moment

Cryptocurrency platform Binance has been fined more than \$2m for breaching [Australia](#)'s spam laws over emails sent without easy enough unsubscribe buttons.

The platform paid \$2,000,220 after the Australian Communications and Media Authority (Acma) found Binance had sent over 5.7m commercial emails between October 2021 and May 2022 that either made it difficult for people to opt out by requiring them to log into an account, or didn't have a way to unsubscribe.

Twenty-five emails were also sent without the consent of recipients, Acma found.

The emails promoted Binance's cryptocurrency trading services or other crypto financial products.

Acma chair Nerida O'Loughlin said it should be easy for customers to unsubscribe from commercial emails.

Customers should not be made to log in to stop receiving messages. It is very concerning that we continue to see breaches of the spam laws from large-size companies that should have good compliance practices in place. The Spam Act has been in force since 2003, so there are simply no excuses.

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O'Loughlin also said it was "disappointing" Acma had warned Binance several times prior to the investigation that it might have been not compliant but the company failed to take adequate action.

Binance has agreed to undertake an independent review of its e-marketing practices and train staff.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.10pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.53pm GMT

Meanwhile, Chris Bowen has been absolutely everywhere this morning, bouncing from interview to interview and Jim Chalmers has been filling in where Bowen hasn't been.

We'll bring you some of what they have been saying very soon.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.56pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.49pm GMT

In its two-year report into the energy market the AER has released today, the regulator talks about when power companies offer capacity power at higher costs, thereby driving up the cost of energy.

Savage says that right now it is not a cause for alarm "but we're definitely seeing some early warning lights".

Overwhelmingly this year, we've had unprecedented high prices and that's what you and I were just talking about. Mostly that's been driven by supply conditions. So you've had lots of discussion about the perfect storm, but we had lots of coal plant outages very high coal and gas prices, restrictions on the amount of water that Snowy Hydro is able to release and very high demand with an early winter but on top of all that, we don't think all of those things explained the level of price increases we saw in the whole stock market this year. We have got some evidence that suggests maybe generators have been withholding some of their capacity to drive up prices a bit but it is early analysis and we do want to do some further work to test the outcome of that and how strong it is.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.56pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.42pm GMT

Government measures will 'help to ameliorate' electricity bill increases

The government's legislation should mean that people save \$230 on what their bill would have been without the intervention.

Does Clare Savage think that sounds right?

Look, I think it's pretty early to say we've still got another six months or five months to go before the Australian Energy Regulator sets next year's default market offer. And we are not talking about bill decreases. We're talking about reductions on how much the bill would have increased but it's very important to stress there have been a lot of pressures in the wholesale market this year. And that's what our report out on this today talk about. But these measures will actually help to ameliorate some of that price increase.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.45pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.39pm GMT

Energy bill already having an impact, says chair of Australian Energy Regulator

The chair of the Australian Energy Regulator, Clare Savage, had a very early appearance on ABC radio this morning (thank you to our Melbourne colleague Nick Miller for listening) where she was asked about whether or not

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the energy bill – which will put temporary price caps on coal and gas as well as enforce a mandatory code of conduct for the gas industry – would have an impact.

Savage said it already was:

Well, it's certainly a very complex space in energy at the moment. And as a regulator, I'm probably not best place to get into the ins and outs of the government's policy. But that said, I can already see and the Australian energy regulator monitors this, the tangible impacts that these interventions are actually having in the market for electricity contracts for next year. So that's a really great thing from a customer perspective.

So how is it having that impact?

Savage:

So if you're a retailer of electricity, you do buy contracts to supply your customers in advance of the year that's coming. So for that next financial year 23/24. Since the government started talking about intervention in fuel markets in the October budget, the cost of one of those contracts has already fallen about 45 to 50% in New South Wales and Queensland. Now, I should stress that doesn't mean we're gonna get low retail prices next year. But it does mean if these markets keep trading as they are right now, we should see an increase next year that's much lower than what we'd originally feared.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.04pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.26pm GMT

See? In and out

enltrHouse Draft Daily Program, Thursday 15 December 2022 [#auspol pic.twitter.com/fRWxKQPCsm](https://twitter.com/fRWxKQPCsm)

— Political Alert (@political_alert) [December 14, 2022](https://twitter.com/political_alert/status/1599999999999999999)

block-time published-time 8.25pm GMT

Good morning

Welcome to surprise sitting day AKA energy legislation day AKA can you believe we are all back here day.

A very big thank you to Martin for kicking us off with the day's news. We'll switch to Politics Live now as Canberra fills with the determined, the cranky and the bemused.

The government will be able to pass its energy legislation after the Greens and David Pocock announced they would support the bill. But that doesn't mean we are in for an easy day. There are a lot of people who wish to make their views on this very, very clear, including the opposition, who came out of blocks pooh-poohing the national cabinet decision then complained it wasn't consulted on the legislation (Labor went the Greens and Pocock route). Jacqui Lambie has things to say about cheaper energy bills. The house crossbench has things to say about renewables. Everyone wants to say something about their constituent's energy bills, with business a close second. But we are on the clock here (the Senate is scheduled to sit from 1pm) so not everyone is going to get to say everything they want. And this is supposed to be a one-day wonder. Get in, pass the legislation, get out.

Independent senator David Pocock – and a baby possum. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

You'll have Katharine Murphy – one of the nation's leading reporters on energy – to lead the way, with Josh Butler and Daniel Hurst to assist you in all things house and Senate today. You have me, Amy Remeikis, on the blog for most of the day.

It's a treat to be back with you all, so I've started the day with two coffees and three Ferrero Rochers from last year's Christmas stocking I found at the back of the linen cupboard. Desperate times, y'all.

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Ready? Let's get into it.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.34pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.24pm GMT

Robodebt inquiry to investigate department role

Senior public servants involved with the failed robodebt scheme will appear before a royal commission today, Australian Associated Press reports.

It comes after former prime minister Scott Morrison told the inquiry he wasn't privy to discussions between departments that flagged the scheme as unlawful.

Karen Harfield from Services **Australia** (formerly the Department of Social Services) and Ben Lumley from the Department of Human Services will both appear as witnesses at the Brisbane-based commission.

On Wednesday, Morrison blamed departmental staff for omitting legal concerns from a policy proposal he presented to cabinet despite having signed an earlier briefing document in which concerns were raised.

"Had that advice come forward I sincerely believe we would not be sitting here today," he told the commission.

Robodebt involved using individuals' annual tax information provided by the ATO to determine average fortnightly earnings and automatically establish welfare debts, an approach ruled unlawful by the federal court in 2019.

The scheme wrongly recovered more than \$750m from 381,000 people and led to several people taking their lives while being pursued for false debts.

Commissioner Catherine Holmes SC questioned why Morrison had not inquired further as to how the legislative issues had been resolved after they disappeared.

"That is how the cabinet process works," he replied.

"I was satisfied that the department had done their job."

Former prime minister Scott Morrison is seen on a screen in the media room at the first hearing block of the royal commission into the robodebt scheme on Wednesday. Photograph: Jono Searle/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.36pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.09pm GMT

Tens of thousands of NSW high school students will end a tense wait after 12 months of hard work, with the state's year 12 students set to access their end of year marks.

Some 54,000 students will learn the results of their Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (Atar) from 9am on Thursday, with results showing a slight improvement to marks overall.

Year 12 students in NSW are getting their results today. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

It comes after results were leaked over the weekend, with students briefly able to access their results online through a student portal.

The incident is being investigated by the NSW Education Standards Authority, who apologised for the mistake.

Thursday's results show 48 students receiving highest possible Atar of 99.95, including 29 boys and 19 girls, who attended a mix of public and private schools.

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block-time published-time 8.08pm GMT

Government shrugs off industry opposition to energy price caps

Despite weeks of [strong criticism](#) from coal and gas companies about the proposed price caps, the federal parliament will pass the government's proposal when it returns in Canberra today.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers has urged all MPs to be on the "right side" of solving the nation's energy woes.

"Today Coalition MPs around the country have a choice: they can vote for cheaper power prices and more household assistance for families and businesses doing it tough or they can vote for higher energy prices and no help for families," he said.

Crossbenchers have been surprised by the lack of direct lobbying from industry bodies who may have been "blindsided" by the reasonable pricing test introduced by ministers.

Peter Hannam and Josh Butler explain:

Related: [Gas industry attempts to block price caps on fossil fuels shrugged off by Australian government](#)

block-time published-time 8.07pm GMT

Welcome

Good morning and welcome to the live blog which is something of a Christmas politics special with the federal parliament returning to action today to pass the government's energy legislation.

All the latest on that with my colleague Amy Remeikis in a short while but before then, here are a few stories making news overnight.

Our lead story looks at a report by Wollongong university professor Philip Laird who claims that the answer to the benighted Sydney-Melbourne rail link is to upgrade and straighten around 200km of outdated track to allow medium-speed trains, [thus reducing journey times from 11 hours to six](#). He reckons it would be a much cheaper alternative to high-speed links, could be ready in "four years", and would also help **Australia** cut emissions by removing a lot of road freight.

We have more great reporting on the Wieambilla shootings. In particular, details about the [strict religious upbringing of Gareth and Nathaniel Train](#), their [tangled personal lives](#) and their father Ronald's evangelical church are continuing to emerge. Ronald told A Current Affair last night: "I'll stand before God for what they've done."

Guardian **Australia**'s award-winning robodebt expert, Luke Henriques-Gomes, was one of many interested parties as Scott Morrison appeared before the royal commission yesterday. Luke's take is that the former social service minister [was long on unnecessary detail and short on the sort of exact recollection](#) about what went down that could have helped the commission. Today, Karen Harfield from Services **Australia** (formerly the Department of Social Services) and Ben Lumley from the Department of Human Services will appear as witnesses.

Load-Date: December 15, 2022