

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift



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Byline: Nino Bucci (now) and Caitlin Cassidy (earlier)

Highlight: Foreign affairs minister to visit Samoa and Tonga ; Jim Chalmers speaks after GDP figures released; Labor ministry sworn in ; severe weather warnings for country's east; new consent laws in effect in NSW; NSW plastic bag ban now in effect; 37 Covid deaths recorded. Follow all the day's developmentsAustralian Politics podcast: Will Peter Dutton help or hinder Anthony Albanese's mandate?House prices fall for first time since September 2020Economic growth slows in March quarter despite rise in household spendingElection 2022 results: live votes tracker and federal seat countsGet our free news app ; get our morning email briefing

Body

block-time published-time 8.26am BST

First Dog is up!

Related: [Who will be the minister for sucking up to the teals but ignoring the Greens until it is too late? | First Dog on the Moon](#)

block-time published-time 8.18am BST

A little more from Penny Wong 's statement on her itinerary over the next couple of days:

In Samoa I will meet Head of State, His Highness Tuimalealiifano Vaaaletoa Sualauvi II and Prime Minister the Hon. Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa. My visit coincides with the 60th anniversary of Samoa's independence being celebrated this week. In Tonga, I will meet leaders including Prime Minister the Hon. Hu'akavameiliku and Foreign Minister the Hon. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu. **Australia** played a leading role in the international response to January's volcanic eruption and tsunami in Tonga, and I look forward to discussing what more we can do to help.

block-time published-time 8.16am BST

Penny Wong to return to Pacific tonight

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Penny Wong is embarking on her third international trip since being sworn in as **Australia**'s foreign affairs minister last week, travelling to two more Pacific countries - Samoa and Tonga - amid intensifying competition for influence with China.

Wong has placed a heavy emphasis on building stronger connections with Pacific countries, whose leaders have repeatedly said action on the climate crisis is a bigger priority for them than geopolitical rivalries.

On a two-day visit to Fiji late last week, Wong said **Australia** wanted to show it was a reliable and trustworthy partner and was "determined to make up for" what she described as "a lost decade on climate action".

After the Albanese government's first meeting of the full ministry on Wednesday, Wong announced she was about to fly to the Pacific again. Wong said in a statement issued a short time ago:

Tonight I will travel to Samoa and Tonga, to renew and strengthen **Australia**'s deep ties of friendship and family.

This is my second visit to the Pacific since being sworn in as Foreign Minister nine days ago.

I look forward to listening to leaders in Samoa and Tonga about how the Australian Government can best apply the new energy and resources we are bringing to the Pacific.

We understand that we need to work together like never before, for our peoples and for generations to come.

We want to make a uniquely Australian contribution to help build a stronger Pacific family - through social and economic opportunities including pandemic recovery, health, development and infrastructure support, as well as through our Pacific labour programs and permanent migration.

We will increase our contribution to regional security: we understand that the security of the Pacific is the responsibility of the Pacific family, of which **Australia** is a part. We will stand shoulder to shoulder with our Pacific family in addressing the existential threat of climate change. And we will deepen cultural and sporting ties.

This will be her third international trip since being one of the first five ministers to be sworn in on Monday last week. Wong joined the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, at the Quad summit in Tokyo on Tuesday last week, where she also met with her counterparts from the US, Japan and India.

After her forthcoming visit to Samoa and Tonga she will return to **Australia** before [flying with Albanese to Indonesia on Sunday](#).

Penny Wong with governor general David Hurley this morning. Wong is heading to the Pacific tonight. Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.27am BST

block-time published-time 8.14am BST

A spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Canberra has just released a statement regarding the ongoing tour of the South Pacific by officials from Beijing. Part of it states:

China's friendship with Pacific Island countries has been open, above board and has stood the test of history and the times. China never interferes in the internal affairs of other countries, never attaches political strings, and never seeks geopolitical interests. China's cooperation with Pacific Island Countries does not target the third parties and does not seek exclusive rights. We have no intention to compete with others and always oppose zero-sum game. China is willing to enhance communication with all countries that care about Pacific Island Countries, especially **Australia** and New Zealand, and give full play to respective strengths to carry out more trilateral cooperation on the basis of respecting Pacific Island Countries' wishes.

block-time published-time 8.10am BST

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Commonwealth Games swimsuits revealed

Commonwealth Games **Australia** has revealed what the nation's best swimmers and divers will wear in Birmingham later this year, with the latest aquatic apparel retaining a "unity" symbol designed by the Indigenous artist Jenna Lee which was last seen on swimsuits at the Gold Coast Games in 2018.

For those interested in the technology, the new range - designed by Speedo and bemusingly named "Fastskin Pure Intent and Fastskin Pure Valor" - features "Eco Endurance+" fabric made from recycled plastics and is 100% chlorine resistant, apparently. One assumes it will also make the swimmers go faster.

Emma McKeon, who the press release referred to as a "superfish", joined fellow star swimmers Zac Stubblety-Cook, Ariarne Titmus and Mack Horton to model the new range at the Miami Aquatic Centre on the Gold Coast earlier today. The Games in the UK begin on 28 July.

Zac Stubblety-Cook, Ariarne Titmus, Emma McKeon and Mack Horton in swim team uniforms for the Commonwealth Games. Photograph: Darren England/AAP

block-time updated-time Updated at 8.14am BST

block-time published-time 8.07am BST

The treasurer Jim Chalmers might call it a "["perfect storm" in energy markets](#)", but others are talking about a "world of pain" as gas and electricity prices skyrocket.

This evening, for instance, we are seeing wholesale prices on the spot market mostly above \$600 per megawatt-hour, according to the Australian Energy Market Operator.

enltrSome pretty high wholesale power prices this evening in the National Electricity Market: (Source: AEMO) pic.twitter.com/pQXPnRVXjh

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [June 1, 2022](#)

We know there's also the first big cold burst for winter (on the first day of the season, how timely) that's sending the mercury tumbling.

The wind chill is making it worse, too, so Sydney for instance might be 13C right now but the "feels like" temperature is just 3C, the Bureau of Meteorology says (Melbourne is at 10.7C, but the chill factor is only trimming it down to feeling like 8.6C).

Anyway, to add to the energy angst on Wednesday evening are [a couple of alerts](#) for possible shortages, including one for gas in Victoria, South **Australia** and Tasmania tomorrow.

enltrMeanwhile [@AEMO_Energy](#) is not projecting a potential shortage of gas tomorrow in Victoria, SA and Tasmania. (H/t [@gavinduffy](#)) pic.twitter.com/O3VlrcJXX9

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [June 1, 2022](#)

Note that it is only a potential shortage of gas, and what usually happens is that suppliers chip in or some big users opt to scale back use. Still, it's not exactly reassuring given what else is going on.

These include a so-called lack of reserve, level one, for electricity supplies in Victoria. Between 5.30pm and 7pm there is about a 300 megawatt shortfall in capacity reserves.

Again, that does not mean there will be blackouts. Rather it's a signal to suppliers to ramp up where they can. If it goes to a higher level, then things might get a bit more concerning.

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Meanwhile, Origin Energy shares have ended trading almost 14% down, shedding about \$2bn in value for the day after that profit alert earlier on.

enltrMeanwhile, [@originenergy](#) ends a rough day on the ASX, shedding more than 13%, or about \$2bn in value, after its profit alert. ([@AGLAustralia](#) ended down about 0.5%.) pic.twitter.com/FCIklnzZvE

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [June 1, 2022](#)

AGL Energy ended down about 0.5% (apologies for the [bad steer earlier](#) about the size of the drop. New glasses will be ordered).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.18am BST

block-time published-time 7.56am BST

Ah, this is interesting (via the ABC): the Australian Federal Police will no longer fall under the home affairs portfolio, moving to the attorney general. But home affairs is now responsible for natural disasters management.

enltr??The Home Affairs power base is being unwound somewhat, with the AFP to be the responsibility of the Attorney-General. But home Affairs will now include natural disaster response and recovery. 2/

- Melissa Clarke (@Clarke_Melissa) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.10am BST

block-time published-time 7.51am BST

Payne's top advisor was not preferred candidate to lead thinktank, defence department confirms

Marise Payne's former chief of staff was not the preferred candidate to head the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, a letter released by the Department of Defence confirms.

The former defence minister, Peter Dutton, announced before the election the appointment of Justin Bassi to be the executive director of Aspi, a Canberra-based thinktank that is substantially funded by Australian government agencies.

[Guardian Australia revealed in mid-March](#) that Bassi was not the preferred candidate of all of the members of the Aspi council, and that there had been ongoing discussions between the chair, former army chief Kenneth Gillespie, and Dutton's office on the matter.

The story reported that in a field of potential candidates to lead the organisation, Bassi had been assessed as suitable for the position, but the preferred candidate was said to be Michael Shoebridge, director of the thinktank's defence, strategy and national security program.

A few days ago, the Department of Defence tabled a letter Gillespie sent to Dutton on 29 November 2021.

The letter confirms that Bassi was assessed as "suitable" - but it does not explicitly say he was the preferred candidate. Instead, another of the six candidates was rated as "suitable and the preferred candidate".

The names of the five candidates other than Bassi were redacted "to protect the privacy of candidates whose names and interest in the role have not been released publicly", the Department of Defence said in its response to a question on notice from Penny Wong, who asked the question in the pre-election round of Senate estimates.

The letter is consistent with Guardian [Australia's](#) original reporting, although the name of the preferred candidate is redacted.

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enltrLetter tabled by the Department of Defence a few days ago on the selection process for a new executive director of ASPI. It confirms previous reporting by [@GuardianAus](#) that Marise Payne's former chief of staff, Justin Bassi, was deemed "suitable" but not the preferred candidate pic.twitter.com/mVpGVGrZlh

- Daniel Hurst (@danielhurstbne) [June 1, 2022](#)

In the letter to Dutton, Gillespie noted that Aspi had engaged an executive search firm, Watermark Search International, to "facilitate a strong field of candidates and to provide a transparent recruitment process".

The letter said that company worked "closely" with a selection committee from Aspi's council: Gillespie, Brendan Nelson, Lavina Lee, and Gai Brodtmann.

The letter continues:

In summary, after a robust selection process, the ASPI Council recommendation for the successor to Mr Jennings is [redacted]. I remain available to discuss the process and the candidates with you as you consider your appointment to the position.

In response to a second question on notice from Tim Ayres, the Department of Defence confirmed:

The appointed candidate was not the candidate preferred by the ASPI Council.

See the original story here:

Related: [Labor warns against 'political captain's call' as Dutton's choice to head defence thinktank delayed](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.09am BST

block-time published-time 7.34am BST

Firefighters are battling a major industrial blaze in Brisbane's south, [the ABC reports](#).

The fire broke out about 3:30pm on Ashover Road near the Archerfield Airport in Rocklea.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services said two large sheds were on fire.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.38am BST

block-time published-time 7.31am BST

Coalition looks set to be the biggest party in Senate

The Coalition is set to pick up three Senate seats in Victoria and South **Australia**, as counting for the upper house continues following the election, AAP reports.

Of the 76 seats in the Senate, 40 were up for grabs at the May 21 poll.

Based on current projections, the Liberal-Nationals Coalition is set to have the most senators in the new parliament, with 33 upper house members.

Labor is set to hold 26 seats when the Senate sits in July, with three new faces in Jana Stewart and Linda White from Victoria and Fatima Payman from Western **Australia**.

There will be 12 Greens members in the Senate, should the current projections hold, with the party in line to pick up three extra seats.

Incoming Labor senator Jana Stewart during the party's caucus in Canberra on Tuesday. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

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Based on the current numbers, Labor and the Greens combining for a vote would be able to block proposals from the Coalition, but would not be enough to secure a majority on the Senate floor without the help of a crossbench member.

Pauline Hanson is expected to be returned to the Senate for Queensland, giving One Nation two seats.

The Jacqui Lambie Network is also expected to get a second seat, with former Lambie staffer Tammy Tyrrell expected to be elected.

Former Wallabies star turned independent candidate David Pocock is on track to defeat Liberal Zed Seselja in the ACT Senate race, making it the first time the territory has not had a Liberal in the upper house.

Election analyst William Bowe said there were still three seats still in doubt as counting continued.

He said despite early enthusiasm for the prospects of Legalise Cannabis **Australia** taking the last Senate spot in Queensland at the expense of One Nation, hopes for the party had faded.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.49am BST

block-time published-time 7.10am BST

Australian men's cricket coach has Covid

The Australian men's cricket coach Andrew McDonald has tested positive for Covid and he will miss at least the first game of the team's Sri Lanka tour.

enltrAustralian men's coach Andrew McDonald has tested positive to Covid-19 and will have a delayed arrival in Sri Lanka, where Michael Di Venuto will fill in until McDonald joins team for second the T20 international.
[@codesportsau](#) [@codecricketau](#)

- Daniel Cherny (@DanielCherny) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.52am BST

block-time published-time 6.49am BST

Tasmanian premier backs **Australia** Day shift

Jeremy Rockliff supports changing the date, AAP reports:

Tasmania's Liberal premier, Jeremy Rockliff, has indicated he supports shifting **Australia** Day from 26 January, labelling conversation about the date "increasingly divisive".

Rockliff also backed constitutionally enshrining an Indigenous voice to parliament, a key reform promised by the new federal Labor government.

"**Australia** Day, it is a national conversation of course and one that I am increasingly concerned... is becoming increasingly divisive," he told state parliament on Wednesday.

"By nature I am not a divisive person. Bringing people together, Aboriginal people in Tasmania, all Tasmanians, to unite and celebrate **Australia** Day [on] a day we can all unite is a clear objective of mine."

Rockliff, a long-term deputy who became premier in April when Peter Gutwein unexpectedly quit politics, was responding to a question from Labor MP David O'Byrne about whether he backed moving **Australia** Day.

During his time in the state's top job, Gutwein said he supported a national conversation about changing the day and that reverting to a weekend in January, and not a set date, would be a sensible compromise.

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"You outlined the previous premier's view on this particular matter and I support that view," Rockliff said.

"You mentioned the... last weekend in January... the previous premier's view on that, I support. I was deputy when he made that statement."

Tasmanian premier Jeremy Rockliff. Photograph: Rob Blakers/AAP

Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania manager Rebecca Digney said it was incredibly heartening to hear the premier recognise **Australia** Day as divisive.

"For a very long time, Palawa/Pakana people have taken to the streets each **Australia** Day to tell the broader public what the day represents to us," she said.

She said there was no reason the island state could not change the date, citing moves by several Tasmanian councils in recent years to shelve **Australia** Day celebrations on 26 January.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.53am BST

block-time published-time 6.48am BST

Worth a look for our South Australian readers:

enltrAnother by-election, this one in the Adelaide state seat of Bragg on 2 July. It follows the resignation of former Deputy Premier Vickie Chapman. Here's my by-election guide [#saparli](https://t.co/QIEDraC1XN)

- Antony Green - elections (@AntonyGreenElec) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 6.22am BST

The WA police are trialling the use of electric vehicles for frontline work. You could say they're planning on [ending the weekend](#) (of criminals).

Police say that a Hyundai Ioniq 5 electric vehicle and a Toyota Mirai hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicle have been fitted with police markings, radio, lights and sirens.

Acting assistant commissioner, Allan Adams, said that the acquisition was part of the Western Australian climate policy.

Adams said:

The WA Police Force has initiated research and testing of 'green' vehicles that may be suitable for operational policing.

Toyota and Hyundai have kindly provided vehicles to the WA Police Force for the purpose of a long-term full operational trial.

The Hyundai will be trialled at State Traffic, Midland, Rockingham, Geraldton and Bunbury police stations. The Toyota will be trialled in the Fremantle District.

The two cars being trialled by the WA police force. Photograph: Adam Brouwer/WA police media liaison

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.32am BST

block-time published-time 6.12am BST

Tasmania ends strip searching of children in custody

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The Tasmanian parliament has passed laws that will end routine strip searching of children in custody. But the Human Rights Law Centre is urging the state government to do more to reduce the number of children in custody in the first place.

It said in a statement:

Long overdue laws that will end the routine strip searching of children in Tasmanian jails have passed the Tasmanian Parliament.

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service and Human Rights Law Centre said that while the reform was a positive development, the Rockliff government must go further by reducing the number of children being pipelined into Tasmanian detention centres in the first place. This includes raising the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 because children do not belong in detention.

Overly broad laws in Tasmania currently permit the practice of routine strip searching, which involves forcing children as young as ten to remove their clothing in front of adult prison guards on a regular basis.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.18am BST

block-time published-time 6.04am BST

These are lovely (to look at, not to physically experience):

enltrsome more Canbrrrrrrrrrrrr pics from this morning pic.twitter.com/UBzpvOAIxB

- Mikearoo (@mpbowers) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 5.53am BST

NSW mayor wants flood-prone homes moved

AAP has filed this report on today's public hearings of the NSW parliamentary inquiry into the state's flood response"

Emergency services should be merged and residents at risk of inundation moved, a northern NSW mayor has told an inquiry examining the state's flood response.

Tweed Shire mayor Chris Cherry has told a hearing in Murwillumbah people in flood-prone areas should be re-housed elsewhere and the number of agencies that respond to emergencies consolidated.

"We would really like it if Fire and Rescue, Rural Fire Service and SES are joined into one combined emergency group that respond with the police," Cherry said on Wednesday.

An upper house inquiry is using public hearings across the region to examine the response to the catastrophic February-March floods across northern NSW.

Cherry said the region is at great risk from climate change and has a higher proportion of vulnerable and low socio-economic residents.

Flood mitigation and levees can only go so far, she said.

"The single thing that is going to mean that we're not back here in the future doing exactly the same thing is getting people out of the floodplain," she said.

Lismore MP Janelle Saffin says authorities know where the at-risk properties are. Councils can access state funds for voluntary property buybacks and house raising through the NSW floodplain management program.

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Premier Dominic Perrottet said on Wednesday governments needed to learn from disasters and be prepared for them to happen again.

The floods in NSW and Queensland have become Australia's fourth costliest disaster, surpassing the 1989 Newcastle earthquake, with insurance claims passing \$4.3bn.

More than 216,000 claims have been filed up to the end of May, the Insurance Council of Australia says.

About 20% of claims, totalling almost \$1bn, have been paid.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.59am BST

block-time published-time 5.49am BST

Covid restrictions easing in WA

We teased a bit of this earlier, but AAP has the full story on Covid measures in WA:

Western Australia has eased some Covid-19 restrictions and will wind back widespread vaccine mandates as the state continues to lead the nation in third-dose jab rates.

From Wednesday, unvaccinated returning Australians and permanent residents are no longer required to quarantine for seven days and the weekly cap of 70 people no longer applies.

From 10 June, WA's mandatory vaccination policy will be eased with a requirement for three jabs to be limited to healthcare workers in hospitals and primary healthcare settings, residential aged care and residential disability settings.

The 10 June date allows public and private schools time to manage the changes and is expected to result in about 500 public sector employees returning to work.

From 15 June, restrictions on access to remote Aboriginal communities will also be scrapped although mask-wearing, proof of vaccination and visitor limits in certain settings will remain.

Among statewide restrictions to stay in place, Covid-positive people are still required to isolate for seven days and get tested, and close contacts must wear masks and take a daily rapid antigen test.

Premier Mark McGowan said WA's high vaccination rate had allowed the easing of restrictions.

On the latest federal government statistics, 83.3% of eligible people across the state have received a third dose, with the ACT the next best on 78.3%.

Meanwhile, WA opposition leader, Mia Davies, said on Wednesday that she had contracted Covid-19.

WA reported 8452 new infections on Wednesday along with one death. There are 298 in hospital including eight in ICU.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.57am BST

block-time published-time 5.42am BST

I guess people in a non-AFL states will find this interesting?

enltr #BREAKING Legendary caller Ray Warren has stunned the sporting world by announcing he was retiring from calling live sport. <https://t.co/CMNjXgEpiV>

- Telegraph Sport (@telegraph_sport) [June 1, 2022](#)

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block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.44am BST

block-time published-time 5.36am BST

Energy prices skyrocketing

As we [have already noted](#), new treasurer Jim Chalmers warned of a "perfect storm" in energy markets, and that various chooks had come home to roost after almost a decade of disarray in the national energy policy hen house. (To paraphrase a bit.)

And as we [noted here yesterday](#), some energy retailers have already given up, telling customers to shop elsewhere because their bills (the payment type) will double if they stay.

The assumption has been that if you're a retailer without generation capacity, you're highly exposed to soaring wholesale prices. These doubled in the year to March and have doubled again since.

However, as Origin Energy - one of the big three "gentailers" - showed today, having your own power plants doesn't necessarily translate into a bonanza.

The company [this morning warned the ASX](#) that problems accessing coal from suppliers for its Eraring power station in NSW (the nation's biggest [until it closes in 2025](#)).

Not only did it cut its forecast earnings for this year by about a third, Origin also said it had to "withdrawn all guidance" for the coming financial year because of the "very high degree of uncertainty" about its operations.

Investors are allergic to uncertainty, and they had a bit of a reaction - slashing the company's share price by as much as 16%.

[AGL Energy shares](#), meanwhile, are also down about 0.7%. Uncertainty is a certainty for that company - the nation's biggest generator - after billionaire Mike Cannon-Brookes earlier this week succeeded in [foiling its plans to split into two](#). Now it's the chairman, chief executive (and others) who are doing the splitting, or will do soon.

Meanwhile, across the National Electricity Market serving eastern **Australia**, there are more signs of high wholesale prices with most states reporting prices above \$300 a megawatt-hour on the spot market.

Then there's Queensland, where demand seems to be sated at a zero price, presumably because it's both sunny and windy there today without the chill of regions to the south:

enltrWhile all other states in the national electricity market are looking at \$300+ per megawatt-hour, Queensland is currently (pun!) giving it away... (Source: [@AEMO_Energy](#)) [pic.twitter.com/R39lvARiy5](#)

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [June 1, 2022](#) this post has been amended to correct the share price of AGL, which had fallen by about 0.7%, not 7%.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.20am BST

block-time published-time 5.29am BST

Vaccination mandates in most workplaces reportedly coming to an end in Western **Australia** from next month.

enltr [#BreakingNews](#) From Friday 10th July, vaccinations mandates will be dropped for most of WA's workplaces but excluding health care, residential aged care and disability settings. More info in our 1pm bulletin. [#wapol #wa pic.twitter.com/t8yObtebnb](#)

- Triple M Karratha (@MMMKarratha) [June 1, 2022](#)

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block-time published-time 5.20am BST

The opposition leader, Peter Dutton, has flagged that the national curriculum and "values argument" in schools will be one of the "big debates" in parliament this term. He was answering a question from Andrew Bolt on Sky about whether he would push back on climate "extremists" who are leaving children "crying with fear about the end of the world".

Dutton told Bolt:

We could talk all night about what is happening in our schools.

enltr"I want to shine a light on that and let parents be the judge of what's being taught in their schools." Peter Dutton accuses teachers of extremism & not being factual. The union dominates the Labor party. Seeks debate on the national curriculum & values again. [#auspol](#) [pic.twitter.com/BmLnsnca14](#)

- David Marler (@Qldaah) [May 31, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 5.04am BST

The ACT records 832 new Covid cases, one death

There are 84 people in hospital, five in intensive care.

enltrACT COVID-19 Update - 1 June 2022 ?? COVID-19 vaccinations ? Aged 5-11 years (1 dose): 80.6% ? Aged 5-11 years (2 doses): 68.1% ? Aged 5+ years (2 doses): 97.3% ? Aged 16+ years (3 doses): 76.6% ?? COVID-19 case numbers ? New cases today: 832 (385 PCR and 447 RAT) [pic.twitter.com/lfqSgbViFR](#)

- ACT Health (@ACTHealth) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 4.58am BST

South **Australia** records 2,901 new Covid cases, one death

There are 244 people in hospital, and six in intensive care.

enltrSouth Australian COVID-19 update 1/06/22. For more information, go to <https://t.co/XkVcAIWPSN> or contact the South **Australia** COVID-19 Information Line on 1800 253 787. [pic.twitter.com/G974jbuWhO](#)

- SA Health (@SAHealth) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 4.37am BST

Tony Burke has answered our requests, and given some more info on the absolutely enormous Bible that he used during this morning's swearing-in ceremony at Government House.

Burke - inducted as the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, and Minister for the Arts - tweeted that it's from 1880, and it was bought when "Dad's grandfather came to Tumut from Ireland after the famine".

enltrThere's been some interest in the really large old bible I was sworn in on today as Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Minister for the Arts. Dad's grandfather came to Tumut from Ireland after the famine and bought it on 28 March 1880. [pic.twitter.com/Pysj3J9xj5](#)

- Tony Burke (@Tony_Burke) [June 1, 2022](#)

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At the ceremony, the very large, ornate hardcover bible made a thud as Burke placed it on the table to sign his paperwork opposite the governor general. My Twitter notifications absolutely blew up after posting a photo of the bible, with ordinary punters absolutely gasping to know more.

Burke, in a series of tweets, revealed the bible was chock-full of "beautiful" illustrations and ornate lettering.

undltr pic.twitter.com/czs35gpCKw

- Tony Burke (@Tony_Burke) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.39am BST

block-time published-time 4.23am BST

Markets stable after GDP announcement

Markets for stocks and the Australian dollar were mostly unmoved by the GDP figures, matching expectations the data would not be a "major volatility catalyst" in the lyrical words of the ANZ.

Some other interesting figures to emerge include the 60% jump in transport for the quarter as Covid curbs were eased as the Omicron wave (sort of) receded.

The household savings dropped two percentage points to 11.4%, financing the 1.5% increase in consumer spending.

Sally Hunter, senior economist at KPMG, said the ratio remained "comfortably above pre-pandemic levels:

[H]ouseholds are still relatively well-placed to weather the emerging headwinds, from higher inflation and rising interest rates.

Notwithstanding this, momentum in spending is expected to cool through the rest of the year, as these drags combine with the end of the boost generated by the relaxation of restrictions.

Those floods in NSW and Queensland literally squelched growth in the construction sector, cutting it to just 0.2% even as governments and businesses were busy pouring money into projects all over the country.

Hunter, though, was wary about reading too much into the growth of total compensation for us toilers, noting they rose at a quarterly pace of 1.8%, or less than the 2% pace during the December quarter.

Meanwhile, the hard-hats are doing quite nicely. Profits for the mining sector were up 14.7%, accounting for more than half of all corporate profits.

Hunter said:

The last time this threshold was breached was in 2008, and with prices still elevated this is likely to remain the case in the near term.

Among the states, Victoria led growth in final demand, ahead of WA, with Tasmania the laggard.

enltrAmong the states, economic growth bragging rights, at least for the March quarter, went to Victoria, with WA a close second. (Source: ABS) pic.twitter.com/IGRBOjcUHW

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.34am BST

block-time published-time 4.19am BST

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

National Covid-19 update

Here are the latest coronavirus case numbers from around **Australia** on Wednesday, as the country records 37 deaths from Covid-19:

ACT

Deaths: 1 Cases: 832 In hospital: 84 (with 5 people in ICU)

NSW

Deaths: 9 Cases: 8,383 In hospital: 1,143 (with 31 people in ICU)

Northern Territory

Deaths: 0 Cases: 232 In hospital: 15 (with 1 person in ICU)

Queensland

Deaths: 6 Cases: 4,455 In hospital: 326 (with 5 people in ICU)

South **Australia**

Deaths: 1 Cases: 2,901 In hospital: 244 (with 6 people in ICU)

Tasmania

Deaths: 2 Cases: 793 In hospital: 48 (with 1 person in ICU)

Victoria

Deaths: 17 Cases: 9,934 In hospital: 528 (with 30 people in ICU)

Western **Australia**

Deaths: 1 Cases: 8,452 In hospital: 298 (with 8 people in ICU)

block-time updated-time Updated at 4.26am BST

block-time published-time 4.16am BST

Western Sydney light rail second stage to proceed

The second stage of the Paramatta light rail in Sydney's west will go ahead, with a "significant" funding pledge headed its way at the upcoming New South Wales state budget.

Premier Dominic Perrottet announced the plan without any details around the timeframe for delivery or cost, despite a since-deleted post from his own Twitter account this morning revealing \$600m was being promised for the initial stages of the project.

The plan was singled out to go ahead, despite advice from the state's infrastructure body to delay it, alongside other "mega-projects" including the Beaches Link motorway and M6 extension in Sydney's south.

Speaking on Wednesday morning, Perrottet said:

The foundation stone of this government has been infrastructure delivery. Not only do we have great projects at the end of it that improve people's lives, but importantly as well, in addition to that, it drives jobs growth and economic growth.

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

Infrastructure minister Rob Stokes would not be drawn on the timeframe or the costs:

We have to go through a full environmental impact assessment process, which will involve detailed conversations with communities along the route. We can have it all, we can't do it all at once.

block-time updated-time Updated at 4.23am BST

block-time published-time 4.14am BST

That's it from Chalmers.

block-time published-time 4.13am BST

Chalmers also makes clear that he expects the government's submission to the fair work commission will call for an increase in the minimum wage of 5.1%, in line with inflation.

block-time published-time 4.07am BST

Chalmers is asked where he sits "philosophically" on supporting new gas exploration to "get more gas out of the ground to increase the supply?"

He responds:

It is not philosophy to me. It is science. Where it is safe to do it and the environmental impacts have been considered, of course. That is my position. It is based on science and evidence, and there are, obviously, a range of views in the community about gas developments. I thought what happened in the Northern Territory was a good template with the Government. Michael Gunner was Chief Minister recognise that and had a look at all of the considerations and came to a conclusion. I thought that was good.

He was asked a follow up, about whether he was "ruling out pulling the trigger on gas" and he said he would not pre-empt discussions with Chris Bowen and Madeleine King, who hold the climate change, energy and resources portfolios.

block-time updated-time Updated at 4.09am BST

block-time published-time 4.02am BST

Chalmers is asked an interesting question about whether he plans to include well being measures, such as life expectancy, in his October budget. He responds:

I think it is really important that we measure what matters in our economy in addition to all of the traditional measures, not instead of, but in addition to.

I do want to have better ways to measure progress, and to measure the intergenerational consequences of our policies and to give people an accurate sense, or a more accurate sense, of the cost to budget of various tax measures.

This is something I am personally very keen on. I have had a number of conversations already with the Treasury about them and you should expect to hear more about them, certainly, this year but over the course of this term.

block-time published-time 3.59am BST

Chalmers says the "waste audit" - which came up quite regularly as a Labor promise during the election campaign - has begun, and he expects "the fruits of that effort will be in the October budget".

block-time published-time 3.57am BST

Chalmers is asked about immediate solutions to gas price hikes that are hitting those on the east coast, but says:

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There is no simple mechanism that would immediately take this pressure off the gas price. This spike in the price has a number of causes and it does not have a single solution. If there was one, somebody would have reached for it.

block-time published-time 3.55am BST

Chalmers says there is a little light, but far more shade, in the numbers he's looked at:

First of all, there are some pleasing elements of the national accounts, but there are far more troubling aspects in our economy and it is not just me saying it.

Skyrocketing inflation is a big challenge. Falling real wages is a big challenge. The impact of interest rate rises that the Reserve Bank governor has flagged, a big challenge. Anyone who has looked at our budget understands that we could get more bang for all of that debt we have got in the budget. I think the challenges are accepted across the community and people who think about the economy as much as we all do.

The main story that I wanted to take out of this national accounts briefing today is even if you consider GDP growth at 0.8%, the pre-election fiscal outlook anticipated 1.8%. Household consumption at 1.5%, the PFO anticipated different. New business investment, 1.4% and hoping for a exports was -0.9%. The PFO anticipated 2.4%.

So, this just gives you a bit of an indication of, even where some of these numbers on the surface that might be pleasing compared to some of the diabolic numbers we have had, they are still short of the former government before and I want to be upfront about those challenges.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.59am BST

block-time published-time 3.52am BST

Chalmers says international economies are facing similar challenges, and he says China's management of future Covid outbreaks could cause further pressures.

When asked about what, exactly, he is talking about when he mentioned the mess left behind by the Morrison government, Chalmers said:

I would like to outline in some detail the problems that I inherited when I give a ministerial statement to the parliament, but as I have indicated in different conversations I have had with some of you over the last little while, there are substantial health costs...still from Covid, which we are concerned about.

There are interest rate rises and issues around the productivity assumptions in the budget... so there are a lot of measures which were not talked about by the government before the election. We hope to be able to detail them as we go about making sure that the budget... [handed] down in October is a genuine reflection of the economic challenges that we have inherited.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.55am BST

block-time published-time 3.47am BST

Chalmers says it is a "perfect storm" when it comes to energy prices, and again gives the Coalition a slap:

On energy in particular, this is an incredibly challenging set of circumstances, particularly for Australian industry, when you consider this spike in gas prices, which goes hand-in-hand with a spike in the price of liquid fuels and a spike in the price of electricity as well. This is, unfortunately, a perfect storm of conditions and challenges in our energy market. These are the costs and consequences of almost a decade now of a government, with 22 different energy policies, failing to land the necessary certainty to improve the resilience of our energy markets.

This is the chickens coming home to roost when it comes to almost a decade now on climate change and energy policy failure from our predecessors. Our first responsibility in times like this is to implementing our powering

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

Australia plan, so we can boost renewables and storage but most of all boost certainty so we can get that investment flowing that we desperately need to make our energy markets more predictable, more resilient, so we can get cleaner and cheaper energy into the system.

This perfect storm of energy price spikes is doing enormous damage to our employers, to our households and to our national economy.

block-time published-time 3.44am BST

What he wants to get through, of course, are the GDP figures, ahead of a cabinet meeting at 1pm.

Chalmers says:

These are glimpses at the mess the former government have left behind for us to clean up. You can see in these figures, even with a number on the surface, when it looks relatively robust, is much lower in many instances and what the government was relying on in the forecast in the budget. That, for me, is really a defining take out of the numbers that we see today.

Obviously, we want the economy to recover strongly. Obviously, we want household consumption and other key elements of national accounts to be as strong as possible but even when, on the surface, they may look stronger than they have been during the worst of Covid, they are still short of what the government was hoping for.

block-time updated-time Updated at 3.46am BST

block-time published-time 3.42am BST

Jim Chalmers is speaking in Canberra

The newly sworn-in treasurer says he wants to get through whatever he's getting through "swiftly".

block-time published-time 3.33am BST

With that, I'm off to buy my dog a coat. Have a wonderful Wednesday, Nino Bucci is here to keep the fire burning for the rest of the afternoon.

block-time published-time 3.28am BST

Some 42 people were sworn into the Labor ministry today. Here are some of the unique ways they describe beginning their respective jobs:

"Time to get to work to restore integrity in government" - Mark Dreyfus.

"Can't wait to get to work" - Tanya Plibersek.

"I can't wait to roll up my sleeves and get cracking" - Katy Gallagher.

"Let's get to work" - Jim Chalmers.

"There's a lot of work to do, and I'm ready to get started" - Richard Marles.

"Now the hard work begins" - Bill Shorten.

And, my personal favourite, "The Malaysian caucus has doubled!" - Penny Wong.

enltrLet's get to work. [#auspol pic.twitter.com/KKJFI4gVgk](https://auspol.pic.twitter.com/KKJFI4gVgk)

- Jim Chalmers MP (@JEChalmers) [June 1, 2022](#)

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

enltrDeeply honoured to be appointed as Minister for Finance, Minister for Women and Minister for the Public Service. Lots of work ahead! I can't wait to roll up my sleeves and get cracking. Thanks for all the messages of support. [#auspol](#)

- Katy Gallagher (@SenKatyG) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 3.12am BST

WA to phase out Covid measures

Western **Australia's** vaccine mandate will be significantly softened from 10 June following a reduction in Covid cases.

In an expansive easing of Covid measures, quarantine requirements will also be removed for unvaccinated Australians and permanent residents arriving in the state.

enltrWA's vaccine mandate to end June 10 - except for health care, aged and disability workers [#covidwa @10NewsFirstPER pic.twitter.com/tcafMeC7eb](#)

- Natalie Forrest (@nat_forrest) [June 1, 2022](#)

enltrMark McGowan says companies and the private sector may still enforce the vaccine mandate if they choose to. WA Police is not considering it but DFES and prison services are. 3rd dose rate is 81.8% [@9NewsPerth](#)

- Joshua Dawe (@joshuadawe9) [June 1, 2022](#)

Premier Mark McGowan :

WA's world-leading Covid-19 vaccination rates are something we can all be proud of. They were crucial in delivering our soft landing and have meant we significantly reduced the number of serious illnesses and hospitalisations, kept people out of ICU and limited the number of Covid-19 deaths.

We're still in the midst of this Omicron wave and coupled with this upcoming flu season it's vital people take every precaution, follow the health advice, keep up mask wearing as necessary, ensure they are up to date with the Covid-19 and flu vaccines and maintain handwashing and sanitising.

With the removal of borders our health experts are expecting increased flu cases, which is why we need to be vigilant, especially as we're getting into the colder months and people are now travelling more.

It comes as WA recorded 8,432 new Covid cases and one death.

There are 98 people being treated in hospital with the virus including eight people in ICU.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.19am BST

block-time published-time 3.09am BST

It's still snowing in the ACT:

enltrSnow from Mount Taylor [pic.twitter.com/ILcrzgEPgb](#)

- Megan Doherty (@MeganDohertyCT) [June 1, 2022](#)

enltrStill on a weird high from how beautiful Canberra was this morning. Possibly I'm losing my mind. But how beautiful? From [@mpbowers pic.twitter.com/yYaxMDIVil](#)

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

- Katharine Murphy (@murpharoo) [June 1, 2022](#)

Meanwhile, conditions have eased in parts of Victoria but a severe weather warning is still in place for alpine regions and east Gippsland:

enltrA Severe Weather Warning for damaging wind gusts continues in alpine regions and East Gippsland. Conditions have eased in [#Melbourne](#), the [#Otways](#) and West & South [#Gippsland](#). Sheep Graziers Warning and Coastal Wind Warnings also easing today. Details at: <https://t.co/GxoWBqMnrh> [pic.twitter.com/3m3C8DOz4L](https://t.co/3m3C8DOz4L)

- Bureau of Meteorology, Victoria (@BOM_Vic) [June 1, 2022](#)

enltrMelbourne: the most liveable city in the world, for aquatic creatures [pic.twitter.com/5SDn0Oyx57](https://t.co/5SDn0Oyx57)

- Dr Vyom Sharma (@drvom) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.31am BST

block-time published-time 3.00am BST

GDP update

More on the GDP figures. On a quarterly basis, the economy expanded 0.8%, for the second quarter in a row after the pandemic gyrations. (Of the major banks, ANZ wins the picking prize.)

enltrAustralia's GDP growth eased to 3.3% in the March quarter from a year ago. It expanded 0.8% on a quarterly basis, the ABS said. [pic.twitter.com/G5cUZ8IRSN](https://t.co/G5cUZ8IRSN)

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [June 1, 2022](#)

The economy was generating about \$527.7bn in activity, a record by the looks of it. Of interest for inflation (and RBA watchers) was the rise in price pressures.

The deflator used to correct for price increases rose 2.9%, the fastest pace since the March quarter of 1988. (Cue some economic writers picking what song was top of the pops back then).

For the goods and services we trade with the world, export prices rose 9.6% while the cost of imports rose 3.5%. Thank Russia's invasion of Ukraine for part of the former.

Either way, we got more for less, which is why the Australian dollar will probably end the year a bit higher than the 72 US cents or so that it is currently hovering near.

Less enjoyable, though, was the deflator for domestic demand, which rose 1.4%. That's the highest pace since the GST's introduction in 2000 (and in line with the CPI being the highest since then too).

Compensation to employees rose 5.5%, a number that economists will also zero-in on. That's on the high side (the ANZ was looking for 5%) and might nudge up expectations that the RBA will increase its cash rate by more than 25 basis points to 0.6% when the board meets next Tuesday.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.06am BST

block-time published-time 2.45am BST

Australian Republican Movement welcomes appointment of minister

The push for [Australia](#) to break away from the monarchy has gotten its best news in 25 years after Anthony Albanese appointed an assistant minister for the republic, AAP reports.

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enltrMatt Thistlethwaite - the assistant minister for the Republic - is sworn in by Governor-General David Hurley - the Queen's representative in **Australia**. [#auspol pic.twitter.com/UTdrv6tHt](#)

- Dominic Giannini (@domgiannini_) [June 1, 2022](#)

Australian Republic Movement chair Peter FitzSimons says the appointment of Matt Thistlethwaite was a major show of support.

It remains to be seen what progress Labor will make on the issue after it confirmed a constitutionally-enshrined First Nations Voice to Parliament was its referendum priority.

But FitzSimons said the republic movement now had "the wind in our sails".

This is the best news for the Australian Republic Movement in nigh on a quarter-century. In the insightful words of that well-known monarchist Lyle Shelton a few weeks ago, for the first time, **Australia** has 'a Minister of the Crown devoted to removing the Crown'.

The timing is perfect ... we are on our way.

FitzSimons said he looked forward to working with the government on the issue.

enltr?? In a major historic first, **Australia** now has an Assistant Minister for the Republic. We congratulate the Government on making this important step towards the realisation of an Australian republic and look forward to working with them over the next parliamentary term. [#AusPol pic.twitter.com/aptr3OQPQ](#)

- Australian Republic Movement (@AusRepublic) [May 31, 2022](#)

It comes months after the ARM released its preferred model for an Australian republic proposing a new head of state would be voted in after a "robust" nomination process.

But Labor's Jason Clare made clear during the federal election campaign that a First Nations voice was the priority.

Indigenous Australians have been incredibly patient ... Our constitution won't be complete until it recognises and has within it our Indigenous brothers and sisters and recognises a history of more than 60,000 years.

Asked about the issue during the campaign, Albanese said the republic issue was "important", but not as important as Indigenous recognition in the constitution.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.03am BST

block-time published-time 2.44am BST

Queensland records six deaths, 4,455 Covid cases

Queensland Health has released today's Covid update.

There have been 4,455 cases detected overnight and, sadly, six further deaths.

There are 326 people being treated in hospital with the virus including five people in ICU.

enltrToday we have recorded 4,455 new COVID-19 cases. Sadly, we have reported 6 deaths in the past 24 hours. Full details?? <https://t.co/MyDwPPzP2F> [pic.twitter.com/7DnvvrP35L](#)

- Queensland Health (@qldhealth) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 2.35am BST

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

NSW Great Western Highway closed by weather-related crashes

A section of the Great Western Highway is [closed](#) following two cases of trucks sliding off the highway due to snow and ice.

enltr... and snow it begins... ?? The white stuff is falling on the Great Western Highway, 30km West of Lithgow. If you're driving, take it easy. Take your time, and use your headlights. pic.twitter.com/o7pMSGK5QU

- Transport for NSW (@TransportforNSW) [May 30, 2022](#)

Local member for Bathurst Paul Toole wrote on Facebook:

The Great Western Highway is closed between Marrangaroo and Kelso due to two separate truck accidents.

At both locations trucks have slid off the highway due to snow and ice.

We expect the highway to be closed for a number of hours and all detour routes are impacted by snow.

enltrTRUCK CRASH, Great Western Highway. Road closed in both directions. No diversions in place due to adverse weather! Motorists are instructed not to travel west of Lithgow and east of Bathurst? [@RoadFreightNSW](#) [@trevthetruckie](#) [@theoztrucker](#)

- Hamilton-Vaughan (@A_hv101) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.36am BST

block-time published-time 2.31am BST

Economic growth slowed in March quarter

Australia's economy slowed in the March quarter, as splurges by households, businesses and government were not enough to make up for a contraction of the country's net exports.

Gross domestic product expanded at a clip of 3.3% in the first three months of 2022 compared with a year ago. That pace compared with 4.2% reported by the ABS for the December quarter and the roughly 3% rate expected by economists.

It's the first big economic number to land since the Albanese government took office this month (and with some of the more minor economic ministers formally sworn in only this month.)

We'll dive further into the numbers but we knew that a shrinking trade surplus would lop about 1.7% off today's overall growth figures. Against that, businesses stocked up more amid the Covid shortages and widespread flooding in parts of Queensland and NSW during the quarter, while both household and government spending was pointed upwards.

By contrast, growth in the US was 3.6% for the first quarter, 5.1% for the European Union and a miserly 0.2% in Japan. In many cases, the country's that shrank the most during the pandemic are also bouncing back the fastest - with consequences for inflation and interest rates.

More shortly.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.35am BST

block-time published-time 2.27am BST

Tony Burke: nine-year 'attack' on arts is over

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

Tony Burke has released quite a passionate statement about his appointment to minister for employment, workplace relations and the arts.

He says the nine-year "political attack" on the arts and entertainment sector "is now over".

The neglect, the contempt and the sabotage of the previous government has ended. I am determined to deliver a better future for **Australia**'s creative sector... I don't intend to waste a moment.

undltr pic.twitter.com/CP4NNDKqhl

- Steve Dow (@dowsteve) [June 1, 2022](#)

He also says a top priority in his role as minister for employment and workplace relations will be closing the gender pay gap.

enltrNew workplace minister Tony Burke outlines the government's IR priorities and also encourages "workers to join their union". pic.twitter.com/uVZqm7hKzp

- Ben Schneiders (@benschneiders) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.37am BST

block-time published-time 2.17am BST

Tasmania records two deaths, 793 Covid cases

Tasmania has recorded 793 new Covid cases overnight and two further deaths.

There are 48 people being treated in hospital with the virus including one person in ICU.

enltrSadly another 2 reported deaths Today's daily stats in the tablet ?? pic.twitter.com/s0bXulBUmd

- COVID Tasmania (@CovidTasmania) [June 1, 2022](#)

enltrTasmania has 793 cases and 2 deaths. The Reff is up from 0.93 to 0.94. Hospitalisations and ICU admissions are unchanged at 48 and 1.

- Professor Adrian Esterman (@profesterman) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.39am BST

block-time published-time 2.05am BST

Perrottet says NSW to 'build [its] way forward'

NSW premier Dominic Perrottet has been out and about at the SMH infrastructure summit today, tweeting that the state is going to "build [its] way forward".

enltrPremier Perrottet boats that almost half the cranes in **Australia** are in NSW right now. ?? pic.twitter.com/fdkp2eIW8O

- Tamsin Rose (@tamsinroses) [June 1, 2022](#)

enltrTransport minister David Elliott says the announcement of the Parramatta light rail phase two funding cements Parramatta's place as the "hub of the six cities spokes". [#nswpol](#) pic.twitter.com/nVDZ3kOgbz

- Tamsin Rose (@tamsinroses) [June 1, 2022](#)

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

It comes as the state's infrastructure advisory body has urged the [New South Wales](#) government to reconsider a number of its megaprojects as rising costs put a question mark over their benefit to the state.

Related: [Infrastructure NSW calls on government to reconsider timing of megaprojects](#)

enltrGovernment ministers refuse to reveal how much is being promised for the light rail project and would reveal it at the budget later this month. But Perrottet's office tweeted out this morning that it was \$600m. The tweet has been deleted. [#nswpol](#) [#infrastructure](#) [pic.twitter.com/ENmzRMJ7jb](#)

- Tamsin Rose (@tamsinroses) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.28am BST

block-time published-time 1.56am BST

March quarter accounts due out

The Albanese government gets its first big economic data release at 11.30am AEST, with the release of the March quarter national accounts.

The last time we saw them, the ABS told us the economy had grown at an annual clip of 4.2% in the December quarter, which seemed to be setting up the Morrison government with a rails-run into the election.

That was before CPI derailed that run with a 5.1% rise - the most in two decades - that in turn got the Reserve Bank off the fence. The mid-campaign rate rise - the first increase in the cash rate since 2010 - was another handicap the Coalition would rather not have had.

Well, today's figures will point to a slowdown in growth, economists expect. A year-on-year rise of about 3% is the prediction particularly after data out yesterday on net exports (outgoings minus incomings) slashed the equivalent of 1.7% growth from the overall figure.

Against that public demand was up more than expected, reflecting some of that pent-up spending by governments on new roads, buildings and whatever they thought might keep the economy juiced up through the pandemic. (The NSW government's pullback on some big projects announced this week reflects less need for stimulus plus the skyrocketing costs of everything.)

While the GDP figures are by their nature backward-looking, there are some numbers to look out for. According to the ANZ, average earnings are expected to show annual growth of about 5%.

"If we're right, this will keep speculation of a 40 basis points move [to 0.75%] move at the June meeting [of the RBA] very much alive," it said in a briefing note this morning:

We expect GDP to have risen 0.8% q/q and 3.1% y/y - a pretty solid result given the challenges of Omicron, as well as flooding and heavy rain through much of the quarter.

On the subject of rain, meanwhile, here's how the year to date is looking, with a few areas - notably where we had some of the worst flooding - collecting record rainfall.

enltrYear to date data shows record wet areas for northern NSW, south-east Queensland, and the Sydney region. Unusually dry for the Top End, and western Tasmania. [@BOM_au](#) [pic.twitter.com/J3orfX87XO](#)

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [May 31, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.04am BST

block-time published-time 1.55am BST

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

NT records 232 Covid cases

The Northern Territory has recorded 232 new cases of Covid-19 today and no further deaths.

There were 135 cases in the Top End, 37 in Central Australia, eight in East Arnhem, 20 in the Big Rivers region, three in the Barkly region and 29 are under investigation.

There are 15 people being treated in hospital with the virus including four people requiring oxygen and one person in ICU.

block-time published-time 1.47am BST

Albanese beams at a child, congratulates everyone who has been sworn in, and that's it.

A 42-strong ministry has received Hurley's blessing.

enltrThe new frontbench. [#auspol](#) [@SBSNews](#) [pic.twitter.com/CJclmhvYQB](#)

- Naveen Razik (@naveenjrazik) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.01am BST

block-time published-time 1.42am BST

"[Insert minister here] is making a big return this term after suffering a lengthy hamstring injury..."

enltrThe commentary of the swearing in ceremony is a bit like the opening of the Olympic Games with Bruce McAvaney pointing out various athletes and their backgrounds

- Greg Jericho (@Grogsgamut) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.44am BST

block-time published-time 1.41am BST

The assistant ministers are sworn in

Finally, the 12 assistant ministers step up.

Justine Elliot, assistant minister for social services and the prevention of family violence. Matt Thistlethwaite, assistant minister for defence, veterans' affairs and the Republic. Dr Andrew Leigh, assistant minister for competition, charities and treasury. Patrick Gorman, assistant minister to the prime minister. Jenny McAllister, assistant minister for climate change and energy. Carol Brown, assistant minister for infrastructure and transport. Ged Kearney, assistant minister for health and aged care. Emma McBride, assistant minister for mental health and suicide prevention and rural and regional health. Malarndirri McCarthy, assistant minister for Indigenous Australians and Indigenous health and aged care*. Tim Ayres, assistant minister for trade and manufacturing. Anthony Chisholm, assistant minister for education and regional development. Tim Watts, assistant minister for foreign affairs.

*The NT senator cannot be in attendance today but will be sworn in at a later date.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.49am BST

block-time published-time 1.31am BST

Queensland earthquake

I interrupt the swearing in for an earthquake:

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

enltrA 3.0 magnitude earthquake has been felt in Queensland's south-east, Geoscience **Australia** has confirmed.
#9News <https://t.co/QjYgc0Gzqx>

- 9News Queensland (@9NewsQueensland) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.48am BST

block-time published-time 1.27am BST

Go off government house!

enltrSomeone's phone at the ministry swearing-in just went off, playing the riff of INXS 'Need You Tonight' very loudly, just as Kristy McBain was shaking the Governor-General's hand "No soundtracks please," Albanese joked

- Josh Butler (@JoshButler) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 1.21am BST

The outer ministry is sworn in

Next up are the outer ministry:

Matt Keogh, who takes on veterans' affairs and defence personnel.Pat Conroy, who will serve as minister for defence industry, international development and the Pacific.Stephen Jones, assistant treasurer and minister for financial services.Andrew Giles, minister for immigration, citizenship and multicultural affairs.**Anne Aly**, minister for early childhood education and youth and the first Muslim woman to serve as a minister.Anika Wells, minister for aged care and sport, a big promotion for her second term in parliament.Kristy McBain, minister for regional development, local government and territories and another big promotion after entering parliament in 2020.

enltrShortland MP Pat Conroy has been sworn in as the Minister for Defence Industry and Minister for International Development and the Pacific in Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's government at Government House. He's the only Hunter based MP to be sworn in.. [@PatConroy1](#). [@1053NEWFM](#) <pic.twitter.com/LKv8gRBZaB>

- Jessica Rouse (@JessRouse95) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.49am BST

block-time published-time 1.19am BST

A day of firsts.

enltrI've always believed that our parliament best serves the community when it reflects the community. Proud we've welcomed new members to Labor's caucus who reflect so much of modern **Australia**.
<pic.twitter.com/5k58RudB1M>

- Senator Penny Wong (@SenatorWong) [June 1, 2022](#)

enltrAnd the Malaysian caucus has doubled! <pic.twitter.com/GbaIDjwHvq>

- Senator Penny Wong (@SenatorWong) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.28am BST

block-time published-time 1.15am BST

Family outing

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

Anthony Albanese's first full ministry is being sworn in at Government House. After his interim group of five was sworn in last week, the prime minister has now presented his full 42-member frontbench.

It's a big day for the politicians, but also their families. Most brought their partner or children to the event, and with Labor's caucus full of young families, there have been a lot of kids running around.

Jason Clare, the new education minister, turned up with his son Jack in a full head-to-toe red Adidas tracksuit, and Atticus in a koala beanie. "Look out Government House," Anika Wells tweeted alongside a photo of her partner and three children.

enltrLook out Government House [#auspol/ pic.twitter.com/X1HUqQzI6j](https://pic.twitter.com/X1HUqQzI6j)

- Anika Wells MP (@AnikaWells) [May 31, 2022](#)

In the background, as ministers swore their oaths, other babies - all very well-behaved, it must be said - cooed and babbled and squirmed.

Baby's day out. Photograph: Jenny Evans/Getty Images

Ministers can choose to take an oath on Bible or religious text, or a secular affirmation. The likes of Jim Chalmers, Don Farrell and Amanda Rishworth brought their own small Bibles to the event; Tony Burke came to the front with a very large, ornate hardcover bible, which made an audible but soft thud as he placed it on the table to sign his paperwork. Bill Shorten held his small bible aloft, above shoulder-height, as he took his oath.

Each incoming minister received a round of applause as they shook David Hurley's hand and posed for photos, but the loudest clap was reserved for minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney. A rousing round of applause greeted her swearing-in, as she wore a traditional kangaroo-skin cloak, with Hurley giving her a hug.

"You'd better stop or I won't be able to go on," Albanese joked, as the applause finally ended.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.23am BST

block-time published-time 1.09am BST

Love to see it.

enltrLinda Burney has been sworn in as Indigenous Affairs Minister. ?? [@jamesbrickwood](#) On a trivial side note - women are so efficient. Here Ms Burney demonstrates how it is possible to wear an outfit that is simultaneously greatly symbolic AND very warm. pic.twitter.com/cJ300IN1MJ

- Stephanie Peatling (@srpeatling) [June 1, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 1.08am BST

Murray Watt is sworn in as minister for agriculture, fisheries, forestry and emergency management

Next up is Queensland senator Murray Watt, who will be minister for agriculture, fisheries, forestry and emergency management. It is his first time holding the agriculture portfolio.

Ed Husic, following Watt, will join cabinet for the first time in his career after previously shuffling aside on the frontbench for Kristina Keneally. He will serve as minister for industry and science, and is one of the first Muslim member of cabinet.

Clare O'Neil is lucky last for cabinet ministers. She replaces Kristina Keneally who was expected to be home affairs minister. She will also service as minister for cyber security. Previously, O'Neil was active in the aged care space, particularly throughout the pandemic.

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.11am BST

block-time published-time 1.02am BST

Julie Collins sworn in as minister for housing, homelessness and small business

Julie Collins follows Clare. She will serve as the only Tasmanian MP in cabinet as minister for housing, homelessness and small business after serving as the agriculture spokesperson in opposition. She will be overseeing the shared equity scheme.

Michelle Rowland is next. She has been shadow communications minister since 2016 after entering office in 2010. She will retain the role, with oversight over the ABC and SBS.

Madeleine King, (another M!) follows. She will serve as minister for resources and Northern **Australia** while formerly holding trade in opposition.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.09am BST

block-time published-time 12.58am BST

Mark Dreyfus is sworn in as attorney general

Mark Dreyfus is next. Briefly serving as attorney general in 2013, he returns to the role nine years later.

He has faced calls to help free Julian Assange and will also have a hard task ahead with the national integrity mission.

Brendan O'Connor returns to skills and training which he also held in 2013 under Kevin Rudd, while Marles has taken his defence portfolio which he held in opposition. A veteran, O'Connor has served in the parliament for more than two decades.

Jason Clare follows, taking education from Plibersek. He received wide praise when briefly hopping in to the limelight while Albanese had Covid.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.07am BST

block-time published-time 12.54am BST

Linda Burney sworn in as minister for Indigenous Australians

Now Wiradjuri woman Linda Burney is up, adorned in a beautiful kangaroo skin cloak. As minister for Indigenous Australians, she will work on the referendum for a voice to parliament and the implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

She is the first Aboriginal woman to serve in the role.

Linda Burney at the swearing-in ceremony at Government House. Photograph: Jenny Evans/Getty Images

enltrFor the first time in our history, a black woman becomes minister for Indigenous Affairs. Historic moment for [@LindaBurneyMP](https://twitter.com/X850YQzSHA) [pic.twitter.com/X850YQzSHA](https://twitter.com/X850YQzSHA)

- Bridget Brennan (@bridgeyb) [May 31, 2022](https://twitter.com/bridgeyb/status/1531111111)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.33am BST

block-time published-time 12.51am BST

Catherine King sworn in as minister for infrastructure, transport, regional development and local government

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

Catherine King is up after Plibersek as minister for infrastructure, transport, regional development and local government. A woman of many hats!

Amanda Rishworth enters cabinet for the first time as minister for social services. She was first elected in 2007.

Former opposition leader Bill Shorten follows, who will work on the Royal Commission into Robodebt as minister for the NDIS and government services. This is a historic first and a huge area of passion for Shorten.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.56am BST

block-time published-time 12.48am BST

Mark Butler sworn in as health and aged care minister

Mark Butler follows. Previously serving as shadow climate change minister from 2013-2021, he has been moved to the health and aged care portfolio.

Chris Bowen jumps up afterwards, taking the climate change and energy portfolio after serving as Bill Shorten's shadow treasurer from 2013 to 2019.

As noted by the ABC, the order in which ministers are being announced is in the order of their seniority.

Next is Tanya Plibersek, who has contentiously been moved from her shadow education portfolio to serve as minister for environment and water.

enltrWow: [@tanya_plibersek](#) will be the new environment and water minister. That's a sign that [@AlboMP](#) is giving importance to these vital areas. [#auspol](#)

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [May 31, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.55am BST

block-time published-time 12.45am BST

Katy Gallagher sworn in as finance minister

Next to sign her commission is Katy Gallagher, who will serve for the first time as minister for finance, the public service and women.

South **Australia**'s Don Farrell has been promoted to deputy Senate leader and follows her. Sky news describes him as "the godfather". He takes on trade and tourism.

Tony Burke is up after him, returning to cabinet as one of the most experienced Labor MPs. He will be minister for employment, workplace relations and the arts. Also, why is his bible so big?

enltrTony Burke has brought the largest Bible I've ever seen to the ministry swearing-in pic.twitter.com/0RIPPpUQV4

- Josh Butler (@JoshButler) [May 31, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.56am BST

block-time published-time 12.40am BST

Labor ministry swearing-in begins

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

The gang is gathered at Government House with governor-general David Hurley, who is swearing in the newly elected ministry.

Defence minister Richard Marles was first up to sign his commission, followed by foreign minister Penny Wong - the first foreign-born foreign minister of **Australia** - and treasurer Jim Chalmers.

Foreign minister Penny Wong being sworn in. Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian

enltrI'm at Gov House to be sworn in as Minister for NDIS & Gov Services. With me is Cheryl Crilly and her husband Jose. Cheryl is on the NDIS and has been seriously mucked around by the agency. I want to pay respect to people with disability by including them in everything I do. pic.twitter.com/Se8HVE2pm2

- Bill Shorten (@billshortenmp) [May 31, 2022](#) Prime minister Anthony Albanese looks on during the swearing-in ceremony at Government House this morning. Photograph: Jenny Evans/Getty Images

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.04am BST

block-time published-time 12.36am BST

Labor's Matt Gregg concedes Deakin to Michael Sukkar

Michael Sukkar has been re-elected to the seat of Deakin despite a 6% swing against him.

enltrLabor's Matt Gregg has called Michael Sukkar to concede defeat in Deakin. [#auspol](#)

- Sumeyya Ilanbey (@sumeyyailanbey) [May 31, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.46am BST

block-time published-time 12.23am BST

New consent laws in effect in NSW

New affirmative consent laws have come into effect in New South Wales today, meaning a person needs to do or say something to show consent - or say or do something to seek consent - in order to engage in sexual activity.

The NSW attorney general, Mark Speakman, said the reforms sought to tackle sexual violence in the state.

The consent reforms are not just about holding perpetrators to account, but changing social behaviour with clearer rules of engagement to drive down the rate of sexual assaults.

These laws set clearer boundaries for consensual sex, reinforce the basic principle of common decency that consent is a free choice involving mutual and ongoing communication, and reinforce that consent should not be presumed.

enltr?? New affirmative consent laws start today in NSW. ?? The laws set clearer boundaries for consensual sex, reinforce the basic principle of common decency that consent is a free choice involving mutual and ongoing communication, and reinforce that consent should not be presumed. pic.twitter.com/O5prvsvYM5

- Mark Speakman (@MarkSpeakman) [May 31, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.35am BST

block-time published-time 12.12am BST

Heads up readers, we're not far off governor general David Hurley arriving at government house to swear in the new Labor ministry (around 9.30AM).

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

Hopefully they're all appropriately dressed for the weather!

block-time published-time 12.04am BST

Victoria records 17 deaths, 9,934 Covid cases

Victoria's Department of Health has released today's Covid update.

Sadly, it is another high day for fatalities, with 17 lives lost to the virus. There have been 9,934 new cases reported.

There are 528 people being treated in hospital with the virus including 30 people in ICU and nine requiring ventilators.

enltrWe thank everyone who got vaccinated and tested yesterday. Our thoughts are with those in hospital, and the families of people who have lost their lives. More data soon: [#COVID19Vic](https://t.co/OCCFTAtS1P) [#COVID19VicData](https://t.co/OCCFTAtS1P) [pic.twitter.com/QGPd512eOz](https://t.co/OCCFTAtS1P)

- VicGovDH (@VicGovDH) [May 31, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.36am BST

block-time published-time 12.02am BST

NSW records nine deaths, 8,383 Covid cases

NSW Health has released today's Covid update.

There have been 8,383 additional cases reported and, sadly, nine further deaths.

There are 1,143 people being treated in hospital with the virus including 31 people in ICU.

enltrCOVID-19 update - Wednesday 1 June 2022 In the 24-hour reporting period to 4pm yesterday: - 96.4% of people aged 16+ have had one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine - 94.9% of people aged 16+ have had two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine [pic.twitter.com/pUD0i5FRa4](https://t.co/pUD0i5FRa4)

- NSW Health (@NSWHealth) [May 31, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 11.58pm BST

Wind damage in NSW

Assistant commissioner for the New South Wales SES Dean Storey appeared on ABC News Breakfast this morning as wild winds continue to lash large parts of the state.

He said 1,400 requests for assistance had been lodged with the SES in the past 24 hours.

There is quite a bit of cleanup to take place, we're hoping to see that wild weather and the strong winds ease as we get into this afternoon and this evening, and until then we are urging the community to be vigilant, a lot of trees are down, be cautious.

Storey said the winds had been widespread, but the Hunter region had been hardest hit while the central tablelands was experiencing snow.

A tree downed by strong winds in Cessnock, NSW. Photograph: Facebook/ Cessnock District Rescue Squad - VRA Rescue NSW

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.08am BST

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

block-time published-time 11.51pm BST

Matt Canavan: renewables 'are the dole bludgers of the energy system'

In an interesting take on the cost of living crisis, Queensland senator Matt Canavan appeared on the Today show earlier this morning, describing the electricity market as "broken" because we shut down coal power stations.

The reason our energy bills are going up is because for the last decade or so we have been shutting down coal power station and gas production opportunities. When you restrict the supply of something, guess what? The price of it goes up. That is what Australian families are suffering through now.

Asked if putting more investment into renewables over the past decade may have eased the burden, Canavan replied "we have", but renewables are the "dole bludgers" of the energy system.*

This country, **Australia** has had record investment in renewables. But the reality is, when the wind is not blowing and sun is not shining these things don't turn up. As I have said, they are the dole bludgers of the energy system they only work when they want to. We need power on all the time.

*This is [not an accurate description](#) of how renewable energy works.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.04am BST

block-time published-time 11.43pm BST

The economic headwinds

The Albanese government is taking over just as a few key economic weathervanes point towards more inclement conditions ahead.

Property markets heated up over the past couple of years - fuelled mostly by record low interest rates - and they are now starting to turn a bit wintry.

Data from CoreLogic out today show the combined capitals' "home values" in May recorded an average drop of 0.1% for the month. That's the first monthly drop since September 2020, small as it is.

enltr [@corelogica](#) data out today shows first drop in average home values in **Australia** since September 2020. [#auspol pic.twitter.com/CVEWO6FxzC](#)

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [May 31, 2022](#)

Sydney's declines have gathered pace since peaking in January. Mind you, the decline is only 1.5% since then, and they remain 22.7% higher than before the pandemic.

CoreLogic:

Comparatively, Melbourne, which experienced a softer growth phase, has recorded a smaller peak-to-date decline of -0.8%, with housing values now 9.8% higher compared to the pre-Covid level.

Newcomers to Canberra to take up jobs in the Labor government might wince a bit at the costs of abodes, with house values up 37.9% from pre-pandemic times.

Perth and Adelaide, though, continue to see higher property prices, with the pace even picking up of late.

Regional prices are still rising, but the pace is coming off there too.

enltrThe pace of home price declines is gathering pace in Sydney, in particular. Regional price trends have lagged those in state capitals, but are also turning lower, [@corelogica](#) says. [pic.twitter.com/qaO8ksebgq](#)

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [May 31, 2022](#)

CoreLogic's research director Tim Lawless reckons speculation about the impact of rising interest rates was only "one factor" nudging house price growth to slow or start to reverse. In fact, the pace of growth peaked in May 2021:

Since then, housing has been getting more unaffordable, households have become increasingly sensitive to higher interest rates as debt levels increased, savings have reduced and lending conditions have tightened.

Now we are also seeing high inflation and a higher cost of debt flowing through to less housing demand.

And that's before the official rate rises really get going:

enltrAhead of today's release of the March Qtr GDP data, investors estimate the chance of an RBA cash rate rise to 0.75% (up from 0.35%) as 78%. [#auspol pic.twitter.com/xgpwdcd5dC](#)

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [May 31, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.02am BST

block-time published-time 11.41pm BST

enltr????A Hazardous Surf Warning has been issued for Thursday. [#Surf](#) and swell conditions are expected to be hazardous between Smoky Cape and Ulladulla. Warning details <https://t.co/8J01GGyARl> [pic.twitter.com/2g4VGZIFi0](#)

- Bureau of Meteorology, New South Wales (@BOM_NSW) [May 31, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 11.34pm BST

If you are feeling the winter blues this morning, here is some wholesome content as Australians (including chickens) wake to 1 June.

enltrIt's Snowing on My Hollyhocks and Oranges: A Memoir. [pic.twitter.com/1Rq3Xd5cgc](#)

- Steph Gardiner (@steph_gardiner) [May 31, 2022](#)

enltrMorning [pic.twitter.com/2VL1HvqlI3](#)

- Rhys Muldoon (@rhysam) [May 31, 2022](#)

enltrWhat a sunrise! ?? Good Morning [#GoldCoast](#) [@9NewsGoldCoast](#) [@9NewsQueensland](#) [#9News](#) ?? James Woodrow [pic.twitter.com/xGPNQ1mLby](#)

- Charlton Hart (@CharltonHart) [May 31, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 11.25pm BST

Richard Marles on power prices

The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) has imposed a price cap in Sydney, Brisbane and Victoria for the first time ever in response to record levels and a cold snap driving up gas use.

Richard Marles told the Today show this morning the response to the cost of living crisis wouldn't be a quick fix.

We have got a cost of living crisis in this country. That's what has been left to us by the former government. And we have got a real issue with power prices. Again, that's the legacy of having had a decade under the Liberals where

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

they haven't had a consistent energy policy. Where there has been no investment in getting renewable energy going and that's now the challenge that we face.

It is not something we can solve overnight but... there are some things that we can do sooner rather than later in terms of... making childcare more affordable... arguing for a wage increase for those on the minimum wage. There are issues here which are going to take longer but which we need to start addressing now... around having a settled policy in relation to energy policy and getting our grid up to a modern standard where it can take on renewables which are cheaper.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.45pm BST

block-time published-time 11.15pm BST

NSW plastic bag ban begins

Single-use plastic shopping bags have been banned in NSW, and there will be further changes to eliminate other plastics later this year. Here's what you need to know from AAP.

The ban comes into effect from today, with retailers who continue to provide the bags up for a maximum fine of \$275,000.

The state will expand the ban on single-use plastics in November to include straws, coffee stirrers, cutlery, plates, cotton buds, polystyrene cups and containers, and cosmetics containing plastic microbeads.

Environment minister James Griffin said convenience didn't make up for the permanence of plastic, and the single-use plastics made up about 60% of all the state's litter.

I think all of us can see the impact plastic pollution is having on our environment. By stopping the supply of problematic plastic in the first place, we're helping prevent it from entering our environment as litter, or going into landfill.

Exceptions will remain for people with disabilities or medical needs that require them using single-use plastics such as a straw. The bag ban does not apply to bin liners or supermarket produce and deli bags.

The NSW government has worked with the National Retailers Association to provide education on the new laws and aid compliance, small business minister Eleni Petinos said.

Opposition small business spokesman Steve Kamper said education programs were left too late and had inadequate reach. He said more notice and better government messaging would have prompted businesses to purchase paper or cardboard packaging months ago instead of ordering more plastic bags.

No one told these small businesses that plastic bags are banned ... now they're sitting on thousands of dollars' worth of bags they can't use.

All other states and territories have already banned plastic bags, beginning with South [Australia](#) in 2009. Major supermarkets Woolworths and Coles also stopped providing single-use plastic bags in 2018. The thicker plastic bags sold in supermarkets are not banned by the new laws.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.38pm BST

block-time published-time 11.09pm BST

Richard Marles on Peter Dutton's China language

Deputy prime minister Richard Marles was also up on Sunrise this morning.

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

Asked about reasonably inflammatory language from Peter Dutton that the only way to preserve peace in the region was to prepare for war with China, Marles said "we have got to be really careful" about choice of words.

I think it is ... more about what we actually do. In that sense, it is really important that we actually get the high-power equation rate. That means we get long-range capable submarines on time and when you look at the former government they beta test very loudly but when it came to the doing, the action, they were found missing on every occasion.

I think the priorities are making sure that we get the submarine program back on track, making sure we do get our relationships right amongst our regional neighbours in the Pacific and the area where I had an enduring engagement. And that is what is most important we can do in terms of keeping our country safe.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.13pm BST

block-time published-time 11.02pm BST

Aged care reform overdue, says new minister

New minister for aged care and sport Anika Wells also appeared on Radio National this morning. She said aged care reform was long overdue and the government needed to demonstrate it was a valued industry in **Australia**.

And she hopefully flagged sports rorts is behind us.

enltrNew Minister for Sport Anika Wells describes the Coalition's sport grants schemes as "fractious" for the community. [@AnikaWells](#) [@PatsKarvelas](#)

- Jack Snape (@jacksongs) [May 31, 2022](#)

Related: [Coalition and Labor pledge \\$40m of election cash to clubs that benefited from 'sports rorts'](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.11pm BST

block-time published-time 10.58pm BST

It's snowing in the ACT!

enltrSnow! [#Cbrrrrrr](#) ?? [pic.twitter.com/NbPHT4j09O](#)

- Karen Barlow (@KJBar) [May 31, 2022](#)

enltrThe snow on the Brindabellas is an absolute delight.

- Stephanie Peatling (@srpeatling) [May 31, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 10.55pm BST

Severe weather warning for **Australia**'s east

It's definitely winter today with a severe weather warning in place for large parts of **Australia**'s east, as the risk for damaging winds continues.

The icy blast hitting the Hunter, metropolitan Sydney and Melbourne, Illawarra, South Coast, Tablelands, South West Slopes, Snowy Mountains, ACT, Gippsland and Lord Howe Island will continue until this evening, with winds of up to 100km/h and blizzards expected over alpine regions.

enltrIt's pretty chilly here at Government House in Yarralumla this morning. But there's also a pretty decent sunrise over the snow dusted Brindabellas, so ??????? [@BreakfastNews](#) [pic.twitter.com/4n0FHOL4vI](#)

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

- Matthew Doran (@MattDoran91) [May 31, 2022](#)

The Bureau of Meteorology warned saturated soils brought an increased risk of trees and powerlines toppling, particularly along high terrain.

Wind gusts in excess of 90km/h were recorded at several locations in the Illawarra yesterday evening and early this morning including Wanganderry, Nowra, Albion Park and Bellambi.

The strongest wind gusts were around the Wilsons Promontory area in Victoria, with a 107 km/hr gust recorded at Cape Otway this morning and a 124 km/hr gust at Hogan Island between Victoria and Tasmania.

Welcome to winter! Cold temperatures across [#NSWweather](#) and windy conditions continuing with a warning for damaging wind gusts on and east of the Great Dividing Range. Snow along the southern and central ranges. Find the sun to thaw out. Full details <https://t.co/q3xCF0PI3D> pic.twitter.com/W0zSUZOuZP

- Bureau of Meteorology, New South Wales (@BOM_NSW) [May 31, 2022](#)

Related: [Perfect storm: Australian ski resorts gear up for big season after snow blankets resorts](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.23am BST

block-time published-time 10.49pm BST

Richard Marles talks about cabinet picks

Marles indicated Labor's cabinet would likely have had a 50-50 gender split if it weren't for Kristina Keneally and Terri Butler losing their seats.

There is a record number of women in cabinet, but fewer than 11 ministers that were in shadow cabinet under Labor.

Marles said Labor faced "difficult circumstances" of two senior female politicians losing their seats but there were "fantastic women" coming onto the frontbench.

It's a significant moment in our nation's history that we have 10 women in cabinet, 13 in ministry, women of enormous calibre in the most senior roles who are going to play a critical part in shaping character of this government.

Asked if Tanya Plibersek, who has been given the portfolios of environment and water had received a demotion as she was previously shadow minister for education, Marles said that was the "last thing" he would describe it as.

"It's a really important portfolio, he said.

It might be how the former government viewed that area of policy but for us the environment is front of centre and it always has been.

Related: [Anthony Albanese's ministry contains more surprises than expected following a factional kerfuffle | Katharine Murphy](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.31pm BST

block-time published-time 10.45pm BST

Richard Marles on Pacific challenges

Deputy prime minister Richard Marles is on Radio National.

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

Asked why he chose defence as his portfolio, Marles said **Australia** was facing the most difficult set of circumstances since the second world war, citing the nation's need to get "regional relationships right" in the Pacific.

It's really important we're getting national security right and there's a lot to be done around the failings of the former Liberal government on issues such as submarines ... we've seen a capability gap of 20 years grow in the last 10, we've got to do something about that.

This is a really significant moment in time in terms of **Australia**'s place in the world and our strategic circumstances there's much to do and it's really important we get it right.

Marles said **Australia** would become the Pacific's "natural partner of choice" if the government put in the work. He said foreign minister Penny Wong's trip to Fiji in her first week holding the portfolio made it "completely clear" what the Labor government's priority would be.

Deputy prime minister Richard Marles speaks to foreign minister Penny Wong during Labor party caucus yesterday. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

The key here is making sure we do the work as a country in terms of our relationship with the Pacific to make sure we build the relationships and put forward plans and projects that advance their interests.

If we do that we will be the natural partner of choice for the Pacific but ... it's something we need to earn and something we need to work on.

enltrChina has been rebuffed by Pacific Islands nations - did Penny Wong's visit make a difference? "Penny Wong's visit made it completely clear what the priority of the Albanese Labor government is" - [@RichardMarlesMP](#), Deputy PM

- RN Breakfast (@RNBKbreakfast) [May 31, 2022](#)

Marles said submarines would be on top of his agenda in first term.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.16pm BST

block-time published-time 10.40pm BST

Billy Bragg praises Anthony Albanese's 'socialism of the heart'

Musician Billy Bragg has welcomed the prime minister's quoting of his lyrics in his first press conference, describing him as having a "socialism of the heart" and a "commitment to the politics of compassion".

enltrWoke up this morning to find that the new prime minister of **Australia** had quoted my lyrics in his first press conference: "Just because you're going forwards, doesn't mean I'm going backwards". Here's my response to that welcome news. [pic.twitter.com/ynvgVmheE7](#)

- Billy Bragg (@billybragg) [May 31, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.46pm BST

block-time published-time 10.38pm BST

Good morning

Anthony Albanese is set to swear the most diverse ministry in history in at Government House today following his full announcement of appointments on Tuesday.

Caitlin Cassidy here to guide you through it, while sheltering from Sydney's icy winds.

Australia news live update: Penny Wong to fly to Pacific tonight; Tasmania premier backs Australia Day shift

Ten of the 23 cabinet ministers announced are women, a record, but less than 11 shadow ministers that were in Labor's opposition. The cabinet also holds the first Muslim ministers to serve in Australian parliament, Ed Husic and **Anne Aly**.

Albanese labelled it the "most experienced incoming Labor government ... since federation".

entlrthe full Albanese ministry and portfolio list also in the PM's announcement was Patrick Dodson, named as a special envoy for reconciliation and the implementation of the Uluru statement from the heart pic.twitter.com/1Lhmlspdtg

- Josh Butler (@JoshButler) [May 31, 2022](#)

Meanwhile, it is the first day of winter, and we are diving in headfirst this year, with possible blizzards and vigorous winds for large parts of New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, including Sydney and Melbourne.

The risk of damaging winds of up to 100 km/h continues east of the Great Dividing Ranges as a deep low pressure system flows from the Queensland border down to Gippsland. Blizzards are likely in alpine areas.

Speaking of NSW, two reforms are coming into effect in the state today including [new consent laws](#) and a ban on plastic bags. The changes, meaning a person must do or say something to affirm they have consent before sex occurs, aim to better deliver justice to victims and survivors of sexual assault.

In other news, cost of living pressures are continuing to pinch with a spike in [wholesale power costs](#) challenging families.

The deputy prime minister, Richard Marles, told Nine Network power prices were a "real issue" exacerbating the cost of living crisis.

He said rising power prices weren't something that could be immediately resolved before pointing to Labor's plan for more affordable childcare, its support for a minimum wage rise in line with the rate of inflation and the transition to renewable energy.

It'll no doubt be a busy day, so let's get cracking.

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