



[Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened](#)

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Highlight: This blog is now closed. Follow our next [Australia](#) news live blog here when it launches Cyclone Gabrielle worst storm to hit New Zealand this century, says PM Get our morning and afternoon news emails, free app or daily news podcast

Body

block-time published-time 7.28am GMT

What happened Tuesday 14 February 2023

With that we'll end our live coverage of the day's news.

Here's a summary of the main developments:

Australian security agencies have [disrupted a foreign interference plot by Iran](#) that was targeting an Iranian-Australian on Australian soil, the government has said. A new set of rules for home care packages issued by the Australian health department has [limited access to allied health services and non-medical supports](#) such as in-home heating and cooling. The government agency investigating alleged war crimes by Australian soldiers in Afghanistan expects to [hand its first brief of evidence to commonwealth prosecutors](#) by the middle of this year. The eight-year-old Sydney boy who was found motionless at a resort in Fiji is suspected to have [died from electrocution, Fiji police have confirmed](#). One of the architects of the ACT's pill-testing program has accused the New South Wales premier, Dominic Perrottet, of "magical thinking" after he responded to a [renewed push for the scheme by saying "don't take drugs"](#). New Zealand is in a national state of emergency, as [Cyclone Gabrielle](#) batters the country, with floods trapping people on roofs, thousands displaced and landslides destroying homes in what [officials have described as an "unprecedented" natural disaster](#). A brain cancer patient who never recovered from surgery performed by Charlie Teo thought of the star neurosurgeon as "God", [a disciplinary hearing has been told](#).

Thanks for following along. We'll be back to do it all again tomorrow.

block-time updated-time Updated at 7.33am GMT

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block-time published-time 7.23am GMT

Curtin University denies union's allegations of censorship

Western [Australia](#)'s Curtin University has been accused of censoring media articles on internal platforms in the latest fallout over stalled bargaining enterprise agreement negotiations.

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) - which has been urging staff against voting for management's proposed wage reforms - accused the the university of restricting free speech on campus.

The union alleged staff alerted it to media coverage of the dispute having been deleted from Curtin's internal social networking platform Yammer. It said the NTEU's website was also temporarily blocked from Curtin University WiFi or LAN connections.

Curtin University said none of the claims made by the union were true:

The University categorically rejects the allegations of deleting social posts or restricting access to the NTEU website and is incredibly disappointed that the union would propagate such false claims. Curtin fully supports its employees and employee organisations exercising their rights in a lawful manner."

The university's pay negotiations with the union were abandoned 18 months in, after reaching a stalemate.

The university's proposal, being voted on this week, would provide staff 2.2% annual pay increases over the next five years – a real wages pay cut when factoring in inflation, which was 8.3% in Perth in, the last quarter.

NTEU Curtin branch president, Professor Scott Fitzgerald, said staff had been "shocked and outraged" by the alleged suppression of information in the middle of voting.

The ballot for the proposed enterprise agreement opened on 10 February and runs until Thursday.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.31am GMT

block-time published-time 7.08am GMT

More on the liquor amendment bill being introduced to the Northern Territory parliament

Local MP in Alice Springs, Country Liberal Party member, Joshua Burgoyne launched a blistering attack on the Fyles government accusing them of a belated "backflip" that embarrassed the NT government on the "national stage".

"You embarrassed yourselves on the national stage... I stand here today disgusted by what I've seen over the last eight months, the way in which this government has completely ignored all of the evidence and forged ahead. It took the Prime Minister of [Australia](#) coming to Alice Springs to get you to act."

Burgoyne said that the crisis has been hurting local business owners and sporting organisations, "They have seen cancellations since your government's disgrace was aired nationally," he told the parliament.

Minister for families, Kate Worden, said the NT government expected "robust debate" and that the government is committed to addressing the underlying causes of crime as well as anti-crime measures and public safety.

"It has been robust and so it should be but it's not a one size fits all... it's important to have those community-led responses to this issue." Worden said.

Opposition and independents seem to be supportive of the move but said it is belated and too late and came after federal pressure and media attention, according to independent MP for Araluen, Robyn Lambley said.

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"We're all calling for some common sense around this very destructive policy. It took the national media to come to Alice Springs in droves to report on the crisis, the carnage going on in Alice Springs and right throughout Central Australia since these alcohol bans were lifted," Lambley said.

Lambley said the NT government should have acted on restrictions sooner and on advice from Aboriginal health organisations and other health advocates.

"These are leading experts in alcohol harm and reduction and Aboriginal health throughout the Northern Territory, they are nationally acclaimed," Lambley

The NT government is hoping to get this passed quickly and enforced this week.

block-time updated-time Updated at 7.22am GMT

block-time published-time 7.04am GMT

In the Northern Territory, the liquor amendment bill 2023 is being introduced into the NT parliament now, as the NT government has faced ongoing pressure over increasing crime and antisocial behaviour in Alice Springs in recent weeks.

These amendments are being introduced so that NT liquor bans announced earlier this month, in remote communities and town camps can be enforced.

The NT government said these amendments which will restrict alcohol, and notes that the vast majority of remote communities and town camps across the territory are already dry.

The proposed changes mean that town camps and communities will revert to being dry areas and communities will develop Community Alcohol Plans and those that want to have alcohol allowed back in will need to have a community vote with at least 60% of people aged over 18 plus voting in favour.

Fyles said this is not "Stronger Futures" Intervention era bans, that restrictions coupled with investments which address the underlying contributors to alcohol-related harm.

"These measures will not solve every problem across the territory, Mr. Speaker, but they will restrict the supply of alcohol to those that cause harm in our community."

The Fyles government is wanting this to be fast-tracked so that it can be urgently passed and in effect this week.

"It is intended that this bill will pass the House on urgency and so that we can see this legislation come into force later this week," Fyles said in the NT Parliament on Tuesday.

block-time published-time 6.56am GMT

Jacinta Nampijinpa Price addresses media on Aboriginal land councils

Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price has called for major Aboriginal land councils to be further empowered to make decisions over their traditional lands, including decisions such as approving mines, while also suggesting land councils be probed in a royal commission.

The Country Liberal senator, who sits with the National party, has also urged any of her colleagues to join her in spearheading a No campaign for the voice to parliament referendum.

Nampijinpa Price held a Parliament House press conference a short time ago, appearing with Casey Costello of the Kiwi group 'Hobson's Pledge', a lobby organisation against so-called "race-based" provisions in New Zealand law for Maori people. Price's office described Hobson's Pledge as campaigning against the "New Zealand version of the Voice".

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The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, has repeatedly said the voice would be a consultation model, with no veto power over parliament.

In a wide-ranging press conference, Nampijinpa Price said she was against the voice because of her belief that it signified “somehow because of your race, you’re inherently marginalised.”

“It’s not about assessing the needs of vulnerable Australians, regardless of racial heritage, it’s assuming that all Indigenous Australians sit behind the 8-ball, will never get ahead. If we have this in our constitution, it assumes we are forever going to need special needs,” she said.

In one comment, Nampijinpa Price suggested Indigenous nations may need to negotiate treaties among themselves. Asked for clarification, she went on to say that traditional land councils should have more power.

“I would like language groups themselves be able to take control of their own lands for the purpose of economic development activities, to do what they want with the land... whether it’s a tourism venture, whether it’s a mine, whether it’s a bakery, that’s what should be happening, Aboriginal people should be able to create jobs in their own communities,” she said.

But after citing concerns about the northern and central land councils, Nampijinpa Price then added: “I would say that we probably need a review, if not a royal commission into how they conduct themselves... probably all land councils.”

Nampijinpa Price claimed the voice would become a “trojan horse” but did not say for what. She aired doubts that the voice model would “shift the dial” or have benefits for Indigenous communities.

“I can’t support the model of an entity that separates us along the lines of race,” she said.

She said she had not had conversations with former Greens senator Lidia Thorpe, who quit that party for the crossbench last week, partly related to her concerns over the voice. But after announcing herself as a prominent voice in the Fair [Australia](#) campaign, from the right-wing Advance group to push for a No vote, Nampijinpa Price said she would welcome all colleagues joining her in the organisation.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.09am GMT

block-time published-time 6.33am GMT

Bathrooms at a Sydney CBD train station will be out of order for the rest of year

A broken sewer valve 18 metres below ground level at Sydney’s St James station has caused “significant issues”, with commuters entering the station greeted with signs warning the toilets will be closed for an “extended period of time”.

A Transport for New South Wales spokesperson said it will take until December for the toilets to reopen to staff and commuters. Guardian [Australia](#) understands construction works will only begin in March.

The spokesperson said:

Sydney Trains is undertaking essential construction work to fix a sewer valve 18 metres below ground level at St James station.

The work requires significant excavation and engineering works and we expect the bathroom facilities at St James station to reopen to commuters and staff by December 2023.

There’s no sewerage overflow to any public area and train services will not be impacted by the work.

The spokesperson said commuters needing bathrooms should use public facilities in Hyde Park or at surrounding train stations.

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block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.36am GMT

block-time published-time 6.09am GMT

Key event

Moore-Gilbert: **Australia** “playing catch-up” on Iranian interference

Kylie Moore-Gilbert, who was imprisoned in Iran for more than two years before her release as part of a complex prisoner swap in late 2020, made the comments to ABC TV, in reaction to the revelation on Tuesday that [Australian security agencies disrupted a foreign interference plot by Iran](#) that was targeting an Iranian-Australians in **Australia**.

The plot allegedly included individuals monitoring the home of a critic of the Iranian regime and extensively researching the person and their family.

Moore-Gilbert said:

I think we are playing catch up when it comes to Iran at the moment, there has been a lot of focus on foreign interference from China and justifiably so, especially on Australian university campuses but other nefarious actors of which Iran is just one have been operating here in a similar capacity but perhaps less overtly than the Chinese have for a number of years.

Now with the recent protest erupting in Iran we have seen them come out of the shadows and show themselves more than they have in the past. I'm not privy to Asio's internal operations or anything like that, but my sense has been the Iranian threat has not been taken as seriously as it should be until these recent reports emerged in the last few months of actual targeted campaigns surveilling Australian citizens on Australian territory.”

Moore-Gilbert said the activities included targeting Iranian-Australians who still have family in Iran who might be politically active or of interest to the regime.

She said this included “silencing dissent outside the borders” and that “often family members inside Iran are used to blackmail Iranian-Australian citizens to stay quiet, not to speak to the media and stay quiet, under threat of having family members arrested or harmed back in Iran”.

She said the activities had been effective in dissuading some vocal Iranian-Australian protesters from continuing their in person and online protests in recent months.

Moore-Gilbert also said she suspected Iranian authorities had continued to target her since her release, claiming that her financial information had been posted on regime-linked sites and that “suspicious individuals” had attended her book events.

Australian-British academic Kylie Moore-Gilbert. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

You can read more about the disrupted Iranian foreign interference plot here:

Related: [Australia foils Iran surveillance plot and vows to bring foreign interference 'into the light'](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.16am GMT

block-time published-time 5.57am GMT

Confucius Institutes at Australian universities to remain ‘under review’

The federal government has released [its response](#) to an inquiry into national security risks affecting the higher education and research sector in **Australia**.

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It supports, or supports in principle, most of the 27 recommendations by the parliamentary joint committee on intelligence and security. [That report came out last year](#). The accepted recommendations include a call for the attorney general's department to "clearly communicate Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme requirements to foreign student associations operating at Australian universities and investigate possible cases of non-compliance".

The government has also revealed that the University Foreign Interference Taskforce's training working group will consider anonymous assignment submission. Australian universities have been considering allowing students to submit written assignments under pseudonyms and in hard copy amid [growing concerns about foreign government-linked harassment over politically sensitive topics](#).

But the government "noted" the committee's recommendation "that Universities who elect to host a Confucius Institute should disclose and make public details of those agreements and funding arrangements, and that at a minimum, Universities have a final say about the appointment of staff, curriculum content and that robust academic freedom and free speech clauses be included in any agreement".

The government said universities would "continue to apply a comprehensive approach to their due diligence in assessing foreign interference risks and reflect that in the terms of any agreement to host a Confucius Institute". It gave a hint that the minister, Penny Wong, was prepared to intervene in future under the foreign arrangement veto powers:

Arrangements between Australian public universities and Chinese government entities and/or universities relating to Confucius Institutes are required to be notified to the Minister for Foreign Affairs under the **Australia's** Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Act 2020 (the Act). Fifty-six such arrangements have been notified and confirmed to be subject to the Act to date...

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) reviews Confucius Institute arrangements notified under the Act in consultation with Government agencies and provides advice to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Minister may exercise powers with respect to individual foreign arrangements within scope of the Act where the arrangement is, or is likely to be, inconsistent with **Australia's** foreign policy or adverse to **Australia's** foreign relations.

Separate from their powers under the Act, the Minister may also direct DFAT to pursue mitigations to manage foreign policy risks, where identified.

DFAT, in consultation with other agencies, has assessed all Confucius Institute arrangements notified and within scope of the Act. The Government's resilience measures, including UFIT and the Foreign Arrangements Scheme (as established by the Act), are an effective mechanism for engaging with the university sector to ensure universities are informed about and are managing risk associated with foreign engagement, including with respect to Confucius Institutes.

DFAT will keep these arrangements under review. DFAT is actively engaging with universities directly and through UFIT to convey the Government's expectations, and advice on negotiating arrangements that protect **Australia's** interests and mitigate risks.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.01am GMT

block-time published-time 5.43am GMT

Greens senator says RBA governor 'breached' promise on interest rates

Sarah Hanson-Young was also asked by the ABC about the future of Reserve Bank governor Philip Lowe.

Asked if she believed he should exit his role this year, Hanson-Young said:

I think everyone is struggling to find words to defend the bloke from here on in, aren't they? Nine consecutive rate rises after promising it wouldn't happen. The smashing of mortgage holders. The hurt this is making for those who

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are renters. And all the while we know that inflation is the result of a supply crisis. And the supply chain issues. The world over.

She added:

Someone has to take some responsibility. Philip Lowe has made a promise to people. That's been breached over and over again. I mean, you struggle to even find members of the government now who are willing to stand next to the bloke and say it's OK."

Hanson-Young also discussed her criticism of NBN Co and the salaries the entity's executives are drawing.

She said:

NBN Co is a government business. Taxpayers, a taxpayer-owned entity. And the executives are getting obscene amounts of money in bonuses. And the CEO alone with his base salary and bonuses we have discovered this morning, just short of \$3m. I mean, this is ridiculous. This is absolutely ridiculous. \$2.9m for the guy who heads up NBN Co. Nearly \$700,000 of that as a performance bonus.

You ask regular Australians about their NBN, whether they're happy about it? Should we give the bloke some more money? I don't think many Australians would say yes."

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

block-time updated-time Updated at 6.23am GMT

block-time published-time 5.36am GMT

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young has reiterated the Greens don't believe the Albanese government's proposed \$10bn affordable housing fund does enough to help renters across the country.

Hanson-Young told ABC TV:

I don't think anyone is suggesting that the Government doesn't want to do something to help create more affordable housing. Our concern is that this package just doesn't cut it. That this package, it's 30,000 homes over five years, when the need right now is so much more than that.

We're worried it doesn't do anything for the renters in this country. A third of households are renters. There's nothing in this package for them. And we want to make there is more money on the table to build the houses and to construct the homes that we need right now. 30,000 over five years, when there's 670,000 places in need, that's the shortage of affordable housing. It's just a drop in the ocean."

block-time published-time 5.22am GMT

Former CEO of fallen tech star charged with insider trading

The former chief executive of Big Un, a collapsed video marketing start-up that once boasted a rocketing share price, has been charged with insider trading, the corporate regulator said on Tuesday.

Big Un was a hot tech stock in 2017, surging about 1,500% after reporting accelerating sales, before it was revealed it grossly overstated its performance. Investors ultimately lost hundreds of millions of dollars after Big Un was forced to report the true state of its financials.

The company specialised in creating online marketing videos for small businesses, such as cafes, in annual membership-style arrangements.

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Richard Evans, also known as Richard Evertz, allegedly passed on insider information to a shareholder in early 2017 about customer demand for one of Big Un's products, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission said.

The shareholder was also provided information about funding arrangements.

Insider information refers to price sensitive information about a public company that a person might use for financial gain.

Evans, who was represented in court by his lawyer in Sydney on Tuesday, faces a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment along with a fine.

The regulator said its investigation of Big Un and its officers and executives is ongoing.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.50am GMT

block-time published-time 5.16am GMT

More than 100,000 'zombie' work agreements in operation, Fair Work Commission says

Labor's secure jobs better pay bill, passed in late 2022, killed off so-called "zombie" agreements struck before the Fair Work Act commenced. The agreements could have lower rates of pay or trade off conditions like penalty rates.

On Tuesday the Fair Work Commission [published](#) a non-comprehensive list of agreements currently in effect but due to sunset by 7 December 2023 if they are not extended, revealing an astonishing 101,033 such zombie agreements.

The workplace relations minister, Tony Burke, said:

When we legislated to bring this rort to an end I never imagined the problem was so widespread. These zombie agreements have been a major loophole undercutting pay and conditions. Without the government's secure jobs, better pay laws we may never have known the full extent of them. Under our laws these zombies will be terminated by the end of the year.

The Liberal and National parties voted to keep this loophole in place. They voted to keep workers on old, outdated agreements so that they're paid less than they should be. The government will continue to bring forward legislation to close the loopholes undercutting pay and conditions.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.38am GMT

block-time published-time 5.15am GMT

enltrl am deeply saddened to see the destruction and loss of life caused by the wildfires in Chile. **Australia's** sincerest condolences to those who have lost loved ones, and whose lives and livelihoods have been affected.
???? ????

— Tim Watts MP (@TimWattsMP) [February 14, 2023](#)

block-time published-time 5.10am GMT

Elias Visontay is going to take you through the rest of this afternoon, so make sure you keep checking for updates.

I will be back early tomorrow for the third day of this sitting week – until then, take care of you.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.28am GMT

block-time published-time 5.09am GMT

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Collins says she would be 'surprised' if parliament doesn't agree to more affordable housing

Q : Negotiations are on-going with the Greens, who, on balance, are in support, but still have concerns they want to work out before they decide which way they will vote.

Julie Collins says the government has a mandate:

This is what we took to the election. We had a \$10bn fund on the table at the election and it's part of a broad housing suite of policies ... and we've done it carefully and in a considered way. We're talking about housing for some of the most vulnerable in our community and people who need it most, women and children fleeing family violence, older women at risk of homelessness and veterans. I would be real surprised if the parliament doesn't agree to providing additional housing, social and affordable housing for those people that need it most.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.26am GMT

block-time published-time 5.08am GMT

Collins brushes off questions about \$10bn housing fund

The housing minister Julie Collins is speaking to the ABC and is asked whether the government has done any modelling on whether its \$10bn affordable housing fund is inflationary.

Collins says:

This fund was part of budget but an election commitment we took to the Australian people. We announced it back in 2021. We're talking about here the single biggest investment by a federal government and social and affordable housing in more than a decade.

A \$10bn fund with the returns every year being invested in social and affordable housing right across the country.

We know we need to provide more social and affordable homes. And we know one tier of government will not solve the housing issues alone and need all tiers of government stepping up to the plate and working together.

Q : It's not \$10bn being spent on social and affordable housing, but the returns from the fund which will be spent on housing. Given the volatile nature of the market, does that guarantee up to \$500m will be spent on affordable and social housing each year?

Collins:

We have obviously sought advice from the guardians of the future fund. The other future funds that are managed is over the long term they've returned significantly for the taxpayer. That's what we would expect of this fund and that's the advice we've received and based on advice.

We have talked to the community housing sector, the building and construction sector about what is achievable. There's constraints in the market.

We have unlocked up to \$575m from the national infrastructure facility to get work on the ground now while we wait for returns from the fund. So the fund is in a position to be able to deliver those returns.

The important point here is it provides a pipeline of continuity for the community housing providers and for other providers of social housing across the country over the long-term. So that we have less stop-start of housing construction.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.29am GMT

block-time published-time 4.52am GMT

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'I think it's on the money': Sir Angus Houston hands over defence review

Sir Angus Houston, a former defence and air force chief, said he believed the defence strategic review was the most important piece of work he has done.

Houston made the comments as he handed over the final version of his report in front of cameras in the prime minister's office moments ago.

It was certainly not as cringeworthy as the Kenneth Hayne royal commission report handover to Josh Frydenberg, but it is always a little awkward to fill the space with small talk, knowing the cameras are recording every word.

The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, and the deputy prime minister, Richard Marles, received two bound copies of the report in folders with nondescript cover pages.

Marles said:

Thank you very much, Sir Angus.

Houston said he believed the report addressed all the terms of reference ("I think it's on the money"). Houston said the only thing he regretted was that the other lead of the defence review – former defence minister Stephen Smith – was unable to be there for the handover.

Albanese pointed out that Smith is now "serving in a different way" (he recently took up the post of Australian high commissioner to the UK).

It's worth remembering that the findings are not going to be a surprise to the government – Albanese thanked Houston (and Smith) for briefing the government throughout the process. But the government will now take some weeks to consider its response and prepare an unclassified version for public release.

Albanese added:

You've earned a cup of tea in my office.

Exit media stage right.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.05am GMT

block-time published-time 4.43am GMT

Australia Institute takes government's carbon offset scheme to ACCC

The **Australia** Institute has filed a complaint with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission "on the basis that the Australian Government's 'carbon neutral' certification scheme, Climate Active, may be misleading and deceptive under consumer law",

That's after the Four Corners report into the scheme last night.

Polly Hemming, Acting Climate & Energy Program at the **Australia** Institute said:

On the one hand government regulators are trying to crack down on greenwash, and on the other hand the government is certifying greenwash. Its no wonder the public don't know what to believe.

Gas companies should not be allowed to grow their emissions while lauding carbon neutral claims but they are and what is worse the federal government is certifying it.

The country is suffering from state-sponsored greenwashing and it is undermining **Australia**'s emission reduction efforts and international reputation.

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Promoting fossil fuel companies as climate leaders punishes companies with legitimate climate ambition. It rewards greenwashing while credible claims are unrecognised and unrewarded.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.19am GMT

block-time published-time 4.41am GMT

Campaign to stop Pep-11 restarts after court overturns Morrison's block

In view of the federal court decision on Pep-11 that Paul Karp reported on a little earlier (the court quashed Scott Morrison's decision to not allow it) the Surfrider Foundation is restarting its protests against the project – stop Pep-11 (again)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.01am GMT

block-time published-time 4.36am GMT

Dozens of politicians' offices have Chinese CCTV systems, finance department says

Department of Finance officials said there are 88 politicians' offices which host the Chinese-made Hikvision and Dahua electronics including CCTV and intercom systems, with government moves to remove and replace the products.

Last week the opposition called for action as it circulated new figures showing that at least 913 Hikvision and Dahua devices – including CCTV systems – were installed at more than 250 government sites across a range of departments.

The US and the UK have already banned these products at government locations, with the US Federal Communications Commission warning of an “unacceptable risk to national security” due to possible espionage and spyware.

Liberal senator Claire Chandler asked in Senate estimates about how many electorate offices (the local neighbourhood offices where politicians and their staff are often based) had those devices. Officials from the finance department said 88 offices had those products, including 65 with cameras.

They said 45 offices were still to have those cameras removed, with removal of the intercom systems said to be in “an earlier stage”. Officials said the department had written to politicians in July, soon after the election and change of government, to advise them of the program to change those devices.

Asked about the timeline or priority to have those devices removed, officials said other factors (such as whether an office should be left without cameras for a period) were being considered.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.00am GMT

block-time published-time 4.35am GMT

Labor receives defence capabilities review

As confirmed in question time, the defence strategic review is being handed to the prime minister and defence minister this afternoon.

But you won't be seeing it for some time.

Conducted over six months, the DSR was informed by engagements with more than 150 individuals and experts including Defence officials, Australian Defence Force personnel, defence industry, national security thinktanks and academics, representatives from the states and territories and interest groups. In addition, the Leads of the Review received over 360 submissions from the general public, interested parties, organisations and state and territory

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governments. The Albanese Government will now take the necessary time to consider the review and its recommendations.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.56am GMT

block-time published-time 4.33am GMT

Question time ends

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.39am GMT

block-time published-time 4.25am GMT

Milton Dick sends another MP packing

Milton Dick is not playing today – the LNP MP for Groom, Garth Hamilton, also got booted for making light of the point of orders.

(An earlier version of this post said it was Jason Clare – the education minister was mentioned for interjecting, but it was Hamilton who was booted).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.36am GMT

block-time published-time 4.24am GMT

Shadow comms minister asks about mobile coverage; gets thrown out

David Coleman (the new shadow communications minister) has a question for Michelle Rowland – but he gets thrown out before he can hear the answer.

My question is to the minister nor communications. According to the Australian Electoral Commission, just 33% of electorates outside of metropolitan Australia are held by the Labor and Labor party. But under the government's improving mobile coverage round of the mobile blackspot program, 74% of locations are in Labor-held electorates. How many of these locations were chosen based on advice from the minister's department?

Rowland:

I thank the member for his question. Improving access, especially to regional communications, is a top priority for the Albanese government.

The commitment of \$40 million for the improving mobile coverage round of the mobile blackspot program is to address mobile connectivity at 54 locations around Australia. They were based on feedback from communities to local concerns, natural disaster risks, areas affected by bushfire and safety along transport routes. The important thing here is that these were election commitments. They were incorporated in Labor's pre-election costings.

In other words, Mr Speaker, we are delivering on our election commitments because we funded them in our budget. Now, Mr Speaker...

Coleman tries to have a point of order on relevance but Dick is NOT having any more abuse of the points of order and boots Coleman out.

Paul Fletcher seems a bit miffed. And not in the theatrical way:

Mr Speaker, with great respect, you are saying to this side that we cannot bring - raise a point of order on relevance, which is in the standing orders, this question is quite precise. "Were the locations based on advice from the minister's department?" The minister has not addressed that.

So Dick explains:

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I'll deal with this. Yes, it is correct, points of order can be taken on relevance. If a minister is answering directly about the question, it may not be the specific answer you want, that is not a time to simply get up and ask for a point of order on relevance. I warned the member about that. The minister is being relevant. And if that standing order is going to be abused there will be consequences. I'll return to the minister to the dispatch box to continue with her answer.

Rowland:

Thank you. Now, it appears the member is confusing election commitments with other funding allocations that were made under the October Budget.

Now, Mr Speaker, we also have public consultation on the draft grant and grant opportunity guidelines from 14 November to 28 November 2022, conducted by the department. The feedback provided in the consultation process was used to prepare the final grant opportunity guidelines that were published on 2 February. Now, let's be very clear, Mr Speaker. We also have, under our better connectivity plan, \$150m over two streams. There is \$100m for place based connectivity solutions and \$50m for mobile blackspot solutions to deliver new mobile coverage to regional, rural and remote areas.

Mr Speaker, it is very clear that under this program, which is an election commitment, for which guidelines went out to the public ...for which we had, Mr Speaker, commitments to improve connectivity in area that is had elevated bushfire and flooding risks right across Australia, Mr Speaker. We had local communities contribute to these draft guidelines.

What I would say to those opposite is I would encourage them to work with their local communities on these rounds of blackspots funding for which the guidelines have been opened for public consultation.

But this government is delivering on its election commitments. This government urges those to do the best by their local communities and participate in that process.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.41am GMT

block-time published-time 4.17am GMT

'Mr Speaker, protect me': Butler seeks help on fashion clash

The interjections on the wardrobe continue and Mark Butler calls on Milton Dick for help.

Mr Speaker, protect me.

Dick, who absolutely has more grey hairs than before he started this role, sighs and says:

The minister will get on with his answer and the leader of the opposition will cease interjecting and giving fashion advice.

Question time or fashion show? A view of the chamber this afternoon. Photograph: Martin Ollman/Getty Images

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.35am GMT

block-time published-time 4.15am GMT

The curious case of Dutton and Butler's buttons

Mark Butler takes time out of answering his dixer to troll the leader of the opposition, who is yelling at him to button up his jacket.

(I mean, I am all for equal opportunity when it comes to focusing on what men are wearing for a change, but also, maybe the chamber has better things to do with its time than worry about buttons and ties?)

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Butler:

Just getting some fashion advice from the leader of the opposition to do my jacket up.

Shows how desperate I am for fashion advice, Mr Speaker. When I reach into the bottom of the bucket and take some advice from the leader of the opposition ... but take it I will. Such is the generosity of spirit.

enltrDid the fashion advice go beyond buttoning? [@PeterDutton_MP](#) [@Mark_Butler_MP](#) #gt

— Katharine Murphy (@murpharoo) [February 14, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.29am GMT

block-time published-time 4.12am GMT

Karen Andrews takes aim at Labor on borders and TPVs

Karen Andrews has the next question and while the shadow home affairs minister isn't quite as incensed as yesterday, she is still ALL BUSINESS:

Last night it was revealed the Minister for Home Affairs received department advice highlighting the importance of temporary protection visas as deterrents that support Operation Sovereign Borders. Can the prime minister guarantee the tempting of TPVs won't provide an incentive for people smugglers, compromise our border protection and reopen our borders?

Anthony Albanese:

I thank the member for her question. She refers to last night, and I assume she's referring to Senate estimates, where Mike Pezzullo was asked the following question. "Mr Pezzullo, I just noticed the media reporting. Did the department advise against the changes to TPVs as announced today?" Mike Pezzullo, "No. No." In a word, an unequivocal no. "No."

The government I can assure you has listened to advice and put in place the appropriate mitigants so the short answer about whether this government has acted contrary to advice, I would say no.

(There is then a very long back and forth about whether or not Karen Andrews can table the incoming brief the reports were based on, but in the end, the answer is no.)

(Those incoming briefs are usually heavily redacted.)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.23am GMT

block-time published-time 4.05am GMT

Richard Marles lambasts Coalition over defence as Labor set to receive strategic review

The defence minister, Richard Marles, sounds the most passionate I think I have ever heard him in QT as he talks about the defence strategic review about to be handed to the government:

The review has met with 150 different experts across academia, thinktanks, defence industry and the defence force itself. It's received more than 360 submissions from the general public, and I have no doubt that the report that the prime minister and I are about to receive will be one of the most important works in Australia's defence history, and the government will take some weeks to review before we announce and declassify a version of it along with our response to it.

But none of this happens in a vacuum because the decisions that this government now has to come back off the back of a lost decade of the Coalition government, the worst national security government in history.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Time and again those opposite were making decisions based on politics rather than policy, such as their decision to down select the attack-class submarine program to one tenderer before they completed the design just so they could do a single press conference in the lead-up to the 2016 election.

That decision alone cost the Australian taxpayer billions of dollars. It was an epic failure. From a government which, when it left office, had 28 different defence programs running a combined 97 years over time.

But the decisions of those opposite aren't really a surprise because they never took defence seriously.

Six, really seven different defence ministers in the course of nine years.

It was for them a revolving door. They could not have treated defence with more contempt because for those opposite becoming a defence minister was simply receiving a trophy. Well, let me say this. The defence strategic review ushers in a new era of defence policy in this country.

One where our decisions are rooted in proper judgments, judgments which are based in the national interest, a national interest which has at its heart keeping Australians safe.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.12am GMT

block-time published-time 4.00am GMT

Now, just because the prime minister will receive the report today, doesn't mean that we will.

Usually, cabinets like to mull over these things and then decide to release them when they have a response ready to go.

block-time published-time 3.53am GMT

Albanese to receive review of [**Australia**](#)'s defence capabilities today

Anthony Albanese has confirmed he will receive the defence strategic review (carried out by Angus Houston and Stephen Smith) this afternoon.

We committed, and announced, well before the election of the Defence Force posture review but we decided, of course, to elevate that to a full strategic review. Looking at not just where our Defence Force assets were, but what our Defence Force assets are so that we improve our capability because it's not, of course, just about how many dollars are spent, it's about whether those dollars are going towards creating capability improvements to defend our nation.

Related: [Two former defence leaders paid almost \\$800,000 to review **Australia**'s military capabilities](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.07am GMT

block-time published-time 3.52am GMT

Defence dixer incoming

Pat Conroy, the minister for defence industry, gets a dixer to do a rah-rah on defence industry in [**Australia**](#).

They wanted to build submarines in Japan. We will build our nuclear-powered submarines in Adelaide.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.58am GMT

block-time published-time 3.51am GMT

Albanese: 'We are making changes to the way that grants are given'

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Dai Le, the independent MP for Fowler, has the next question from the crossbench:

My question is to the prime minister. Federal grants are integral to every community group. Recent media reports a former member of staff for the former member of Fowler (Labor's Chris Hayes) had been given grants for an organisation out of the electorate.

Given the staffer didn't disclose the conflict of interest, local community groups have raised concerns. What steps will the government take to investigate the matter and restore integrity with the grants process?

Anthony Albanese:

The minister responsible and the government have made it very clear that we are making changes to the way that grants are given.

That is why - and those objected - opposite who were objecting just before should indicate that when we announced our budget, which cut out a whole lot of the discretionary funds, they objected at that time.

That's why we're putting integrity back into the system. I was talking just yesterday about walking past North Sydney Pool, with Toto the dog, and there you've got a regional pool, and it was justified ...

That's right. You can see where it is, it's right next to the pylon of the Sydney Harbour Bridge because maybe someone from the bush might have a swim in there. Like, once in a while. That sort of programs that they've engaged this is just extraordinary, and the former government did not have enough transparency in the way that they conducted these ... We're making sure that we do going forward, and that's why as well you won't see from this government the sort of disgraceful roting of bushfire funds ...that occurred ...that occurred from the National party.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.57am GMT

block-time published-time 3.43am GMT

Liberals double down on energy bill pain

The Liberal MP for Forde, Bert van Manenn asks Anthony Albanese :

My question is to the Prime Minister. A single mother with six children in Queensland has been hit with a \$1500 electricity bill, much of which is due to the mother's need to charge her NDIS-supported daughter's electric wheelchair.

Given that a worker at the mother's electricity company told this struggling single mother she'll be paying the bill for "The rest of her life", will the Prime Minister immediately apologise to this family for promising them a \$275 annual cut to their power bill? Why do Australian families always pay more under Labor?

(again, the commitment was by 2025, although it is true that the government hasn't been repeating it)

Albanese:

Thanks very much. I thank the member for Forde for his question. I do note that he was absent, he had leave, when the vote happened in this Parliament, which was \$1.5 billion of assistance for people just like the constituent that he raised.

And that is why the Queensland government, as well as the New South Wales government as well as every state and territory government, as well as this national government, all signed up to energy price relief, \$1.5B but those opposite, of course, voted against that.

They voted against price caps.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

They're already having an impact on prices.

The member for Hume we know hid the price rises before the election and then misled Australians about it.

Actually, changed the rules so it wouldn't be declared. And, of course, as well we know we're all vulnerable to international prices, and we should be, because four gigawatts of capacity got taken out of the grid and only one gigawatt put in. We're more vulnerable because we had 22 energy policies announced but not a singled one delivered, and they left us with an energy grid that was built for the last century.

Even Snowy Hydro, which is a positive initiative, they just forgot to plug it in at any time to the grid.

Those opposite came up with all sorts of fantasies about a way forward, including - I well remember in Queensland the feasibility study that was happening for the Collinsville power plant.

They gave the \$4 billion for the feasibility study. I wonder to who? To the propose -- to the proponent. Here's \$4 billion to see if your project stacks up.

And they took that to an election. They told Queenslanders that it was going to make a difference.

Paul Fletcher pretends to have a point of order and Milton Dick has no time for it and Fletcher is warned.

Albanese:

We had \$1.5 billion of price relief that they voted against.

They had the Collinsville fantasy that they took to an election. They kept talking about throughout the entire last term knowing that it was never going to happen. Knowing that it was never going to happen.

A bit like the dark nuclear fantasy they're on about now.

There are so many interjections during all of that, that to include them would make this post unreadable.

An animated PM Anthony Albanese during QT. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.16am GMT

block-time published-time 3.34am GMT

Albanese cites RBA, Matt Kean, AER chair in response to energy bill question

The Liberal MP for Moncrieff, Angie Bell, has the next question for the PM:

Can he explain to the house why Energy **Australia** is telling its consumers this week that the increase in electricity bills is due in part to "some increases in government green schemes and market changes".

Prime minister, isn't energy **Australia** right and is this why your government refuses to ever innocence your election promise to cut electricity bills by \$275? Why do Australians always pay more under Labor?

Anthony Albanese:

The Reserve Bank of **Australia** have said this in their statement on monetary policy of this month. They said this, "Wholesale electricity and gas prices declined in responsible to the announcement of the temporary price caps on domestic gas and thermal coal in the energy price relief plan".

"Futures markets now suggest the wholesale electricity and gas prices will be lower in 2023", that's now, "And 2024 than previously expected. Over this year and next..."

Not just them, [**Australia** Energy Regulator chair] Clare Savage told Senate estimates yesterday...

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

"In December, National Cabinet announced an agreement for significant interventions in the wholesale gas, coal and electricity markets. We have seen future markets fall materially since that time and we think that will mitigate."

That's what they had to say. The New South Wales premier, so maybe you can interject on him, too. "I'm a free market guy and also a practical guy. So the fact you say I'm a free market guy and I'm supporting it must say something. It's states and territories working with the Commonwealth government everyone at National Cabinet is on a unity ticket."

Matt Kean, the New South Wales Treasurer said this, "We're not on the side of energy bosses. We're on the side of consumers and businesses."

That's what Matt Kean had to say, in drawing a distinction between the two sides of this chamber. I say to the member, who asks the question, you would have more credibility if you voted for energy price relief and hadn't have opposed the \$1.5bn that we will provide.

block-time updated-time Updated at 3.53am GMT

block-time published-time 3.31am GMT

Smudge Lord would NEVER

enltr [@GuardianAus](#) just download the app: <https://t.co/fggiwf7rnH> pic.twitter.com/hlhdkJSpS0

— Bill Shorten (@billshortenmp) [February 14, 2023](#)

block-time published-time 3.30am GMT

Cost-of-living attacks continue from Angus Taylor

Angus Taylor gets the usual theatrical groans when he asks a question of Anthony Albanese and not Jim Chalmers ;

My question is to the prime minister. In 2006, the prime minister said, "The government has nailed to keep a lid on inflation in **Australia**'s economy and as a consequence interest rates have kept going up and up." After eight consecutive rate rises on this government's watch, will the prime minister take responsibility for rates going up and up? Why do Australian families always pay more under Labor?

Shadow treasurer Angus Taylor in the chamber today. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

Anthony Albanese:

I'm asked by the Shadow Treasurer, in 2023, about a quote from 2006. And they say they're backward looking. And they say they can't keep up with the times. I don't know where they get that from, Mr Speaker.

I don't know where they get that from.

I'm sure that whoever faxed that quote to the Shadow Treasurer - I'll just accept that perhaps it's accurate, even though it wasn't detailed what was there. We actually have a plan to take pressure off inflation so, therefore, that's the way you take pressure off interest rates. And we have a plan.

The relief is energy price relief that they voted against, cheaper medicines that they don't support, cheaper childcare that they don't support.

Fee-free TAFE that they don't support. The repair is about supply chains, so we have legislation for the national reconstruction fund so that we make more things here and they're voting against that as well as dealing with the skills crisis that we inherited. And restraint was shown by us returning those revenue gains to the budget.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

That's our plan. Those opposite have no plans except saying "No" And getting quotes from 2006 faxed through to their offices. The truth is that what we need in 2023 is a forward-looking government and that's what you have right here, a forward-looking government that's looking at the challenges that we inherited off [those opposite]

The problems that they've created. It's one thing to create problems, which you did. You left us with \$1 trillion of debt, a massive skills shortage.

No, industry policy plans, manufacturing going backwards but then you stand in the way of solutions as well. No wonder you won't ask the Treasurer a question.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.16am GMT

block-time published-time 3.25am GMT

PM defends Michelle Rowland accepting gaming company donations

The independent MP Kate Chaney has the first crossbench question:

My question is to the prime minister. Last week we found out that the minister for communication, who's responsible for regulating online gambling, accepted \$19,000 in donations as well as repeated hospitality from large gambling companies.

Prime minister, you promised to bring integrity back to politics. When the minister makes decisions on gambling how do we know if the decisions are based on what the communities needs or what the gambling companies have paid for?

Communications minister Michelle Rowland during Question Time this afternoon. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

Anthony Albanese:

I thank the member for Curtin for her question and for her going commitment to make sure that the political system that we all operate under is improved. And that's why my government has committed, through our minister for the Special Minister of State, to bringing forward reforms to make sure, along with our national anti-corruption commission, a change to the way that donations can be made within the system, including real time declarations including lowering the threshold of donations as well in terms of declarations.

So I do note that the minister for communications has declared all donations in an appropriate way, and I know that the minister answered a question on this last week. But I make this point out about the minister for communications and how you know what a good job she is doing and why she has my absolute and total confidence is this.

The minister is committed to delivering a national self-exclusion [scheme] that's called bet register. It will allow individuals to exclude themselves from all licensed interactive wagering services in just a single step.

The minister is also implementing initiatives from the national protection framework including the changed guidelines for messaging in advertisements. We're also progressing work around the classification of video games with gambling-like features, making a major difference there as well.

With changes that currently respect captured under the interactive gambling act.

In addition to that, we're working on a response to recommendations from the parliamentary inquiry on the use of credit cards in online gambling. The Minister for Communications is the person driving that work.

That is obviously very important as well. We have also established an inquiry into online gambling including the impacts of gambling advertising on children. Let me be very clear. The minister for communication's record when it comes to harm minimisation on gambling is exemplary. And that is why she has my total confidence going forward.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.15am GMT

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

block-time published-time 3.17am GMT

It is a rowdy chamber today!

Sussan Ley gets up and she has very serious face on, to match the very serious way she asks this question:

My question is to the prime minister. I refer to the Treasurer's description of one interest rate rise under the former government as a full-blown cost-of-living crisis. Since then, Labor have failed to deliver a plan to deal with rising inflation and a cash rate has risen eight times in eight consecutive meetings of the RBA. If one rate rise was a crisis in May, how would the prime minister describe the eight rate rises since? Why do Australian families always pay more under Labor?

Anthony Albanese:

Nobody wants to see interest rates go up, but it's a reality ...

(There are a lot of interjections from the opposition, including from Peter Dutton)

I think Australians understand that. There's a lot of pressure on interest rates at the moment.'

(There are more interjections, because it has become obvious that Albanese is quoting Dutton)

Well, it was his quote, not mine. That's what the leader of the opposition had to say ... in May 2022 ... And the fact that you interjected so loudly and rejected that comment so strongly, well ... says a lot about the turmoil that is in your ranks today.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.30am GMT

block-time published-time 3.13am GMT

Question time begins with interest rates on agenda

I'm a little behind on QT, after listening to the legal affairs committee, but I will catch you right up.

Peter Dutton wants to know why Labor's spending is making the RBA job's harder.

Anthony Albanese:

(After some back and forth at the dispatch table)

On Friday, I listened to RN, and the New South Wales Treasurer said this. The Treasurer of New South Wales forecasts, "Inflation has peaked this year. There are significant head winds being caused by the war in Ukraine which is driving up the price of coal and gas and that is being seen through to electricity prices. This is a global issue and all reserve banks are fighting inflation."

Indeed the Reserve Bank is fighting inflation, and they say that our action is actually assisting the in doing this.

That's why we returned 99% of the revenue gains were returned to the bottom line, making a positive difference.

(Angus Taylor and Jim Chalmers are having a shouting match across the table)

Albanese:

Those opposite seem to be shocked by the fact that during a recession that occurred under their watch, what central banks will do, not just in Australia but around the world, is to lower interest rates in order to stimulate demand in the economy. That's what it occurs under their watch. Under their watch, but they seem oblivious to any of that. They seem oblivious to the fact that interest rates were higher..

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Paul Fletcher has a point of order, but it is the usual call for relevance and Milton Dick makes his usual, the prime minister is answering ruling.

Albanese:

When John Howard was in government and when who asked the question actually occupied the position as assistant treasurer, now, I don't blame him personally for the fact that interest rates were higher when he was assistant treasurer than when they are now, but that is a fact. And perhaps it should be a cause for some self-reflection from the leader of the opposition.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.28am GMT

block-time published-time 3.08am GMT

Monash University rolls out digital IDs allowing students to access buildings with phone

Monash University has become the first tertiary institution in [Australia](#) to adopt an entirely digital campus ID, replacing the traditional student card.

After five years of planning, the mobile M-Pass will roll out from semester one, allowing students to access buildings and facilities via a tap of their iPhone or smartphone, while also replacing physical staff and student identification.

Senior vice-president Peter Marshall said the move would eliminate the need to print and distribute physical cards, cutting budget costs.

"Monash University prides itself on the early adoption and development of new user-convenient technologies ... we're proud to be at the forefront of a modern, more efficient way for students and staff to engage with our campus facilities and services."

The M-Pass in Apple Wallets will be built into the same privacy and security systems on student and staff devices - while Apple will not know locations accessed and transaction history.

If a student's phone dies, the M-Pass can still be used for five hours as part of the phone's power reserve.

It follows a greater federal and state government push towards streamlining digital identification, including the promise to work towards a national digital ID system.

Related: [MyGov app facing overhaul to centralise online identification](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.27am GMT

block-time published-time 3.05am GMT

Antic wades into murky waters on Indigenous heritage, is accused of being 'borderline racist'

Liberal senator Alex Antic is in the legal affairs committee asking "who is it who decides who is Aboriginal and how do they do it".

He also wants to know "so somebody says I want to go to parliament, under the voice, and I'm Aboriginal, how does that work?"

He then moves into very, very murky areas.

"Let's put the voice aside for the moment. What percentage to somebody have to be of Aboriginal descent to be deemed Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?," he says.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

This is something that One Nation has often asked. In 2019, the far-right party wanted people to “prove” their Indigenous heritage through a DNA test and was roundly criticised for it.

Antic is pulled up by a departmental official.

Senator, I wouldn't be using the type of language.

Antic doesn't stop there though:

If you are 95% Irish, Scottish, 5% [Indigenous]... would you be eligible for the voice department?

He is told that “getting into a conversation about percentages is not appropriate” and asks “why not?”

The answer the department continues to push back and tells him of the three part test set down in Mabo – establishing ancestry, accepted by the relevant community and self-identification.

Antic:

So what happens then, if the community for political purposes simply reject someone on the basis of their descent?

Alex Antic during Senate estimates today. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

Labor senator Anthony Chisholm steps in then and tells Antic he is “talking in hypotheticals and riddles”.

“I know what you are seeing to achieve, quite frankly it is borderline racist, what you are putting forward here.”

Antic laughs and says “is it really?”

“To ask the question about how someone identifies and how it is that the legislation, the framework does that in a practical [sense] that is racist is it?”

Chisholm says:

Borderline, yes ... the path that you are going down.”

The pair get into a back and forth, while Antic continues to decry he has not received an answer (he has).

Antic then asks:

So is it the case, you cannot tell me that I have a 10% lineage as a person, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person, that will be enough in order to qualify for any of these legislative provisions? Nobody can actually tell me who actually is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person for the purposes of the law in this country.”

The department again says there is a three part test, from the Mabo decision, and has been put in practice for decades.

Antic is not finished yet.

Are you concerned that this process is going to lead to people who wrongly identify themselves as Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal, becoming qualified for the voice, for any other program it may be.”

He is again told he is asking a question around a hypothetical.

“So it could just be anybody,” Antic says again.

He is again pointed to the three part test.

“Which you can't describe.”

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

It goes round in circles, but Antic feels like he has his social media soundbite, talking over anyone who tries, again, to give him the answers and demands “in practical terms” what it takes to prove “descent in this country”.

There doesn't seem to be enough time to explain to the SA Liberal senator about colonisation, it's impact on Indigenous people and the widespread attempts to wipe out Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through the Stolen Generation.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.16am GMT

block-time published-time 2.29am GMT

It is almost question time – expect there to be some estimates tea, as well as Labor criticising the opposition over its opposition to the housing fund.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.07am GMT

block-time published-time 2.10am GMT

Bill Shorten's social media team are working OVERTIME today.

enltrGreat news for my friend [@pbol800](#) Thrilled he can keep running. pic.twitter.com/tvgrqSBQNH

— Bill Shorten (@billshortenmp) [February 14, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.23am GMT

block-time published-time 1.56am GMT

Federal court quashes Scott Morrison Pep-11 decision over 'apprehended bias'

The federal court has issued orders formally quashing Scott Morrison's Pep-11 decision to refuse Asset Energy's application to drill for gas off the New South Wales coast.

Asset Energy had argued Morrison had breached the requirements of procedural fairness and that he was not validly appointed as the responsible minister of the commonwealth-NSW offshore petroleum joint authority.

Two weeks ago the resources minister, Madeleine King, [announced the government](#) intended to settle the case, rather than defend the legality of Morrison's decision. According to the federal court judgment, the commonwealth accepted that Morrison's decision was “infected by apprehended bias”.

On Tuesday Justice Darren Jackson quashed Morrison's decision and remitted the application back to the joint authority to decide according to law.

Justice Jackson said it was “unnecessary” to determine if Morrison was validly appointed, but agreed there was “a proper basis to conclude that the decision was affected by apprehended bias”.

He said:

In this case, Mr Morrison's public comments might lead a fair-minded observer to reasonably apprehend that when he did come to deliberate on the matter, sometime between 10 and 14 December 2021, his mind might have been closed to persuasion.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.03am GMT

block-time published-time 1.51am GMT

No.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Just no.

Stop it.

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— Bill Shorten (@billshortenmp) [February 14, 2023](#)

block-time published-time 1.40am GMT

Please, no.

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— Bill Shorten (@billshortenmp) [February 13, 2023](#)

block-time published-time 1.33am GMT

Opposition calls for further details on Iranian foreign interference claims

The federal opposition has responded to the Iranian foreign interference plot claims and called on the government to provide the “strongest possible response to deter this activity and send a clear message to those responsible that it will not be tolerated”.

In a statement, the Coalition said the confirmation from the minister for home affairs, Clare O’Neil, that Asio had disrupted attempts to monitor an Iranian-Australian was “extremely concerning, but not surprising”.

Claire Chandler, the shadow assistant minister for foreign affairs, who has chaired a recent Senate inquiry into human rights in Iran, said that committee had “heard from dozens of Iranian-Australians who have raised concerns about threats, intimidation, surveillance and foreign interference by individuals affiliated with the Islamic Republic of Iran regime”.

She said:

As the committee said in its report, it is essential that the Australian government is open with the community about the extent of foreign interference and threatening behaviour linked to the IRI regime.

However, the minister’s comments today raise more questions than answers. Why has it taken until now for the Australian Government to admit this behaviour has been occurring? What action has been taken or charges laid? What links were identified with those responsible and the IRI regime?

How can the minister declare to the Iranian-Australian community that this activity was “shut down immediately” when in fact Iranian-Australians continue to report harassment and targeting of their families in Iran?

James Paterson, the shadow minister for foreign interference and cyber security, said in the same statement:

The Albanese government has several options available to respond to serious acts of foreign interference including further sanctions under the Magnitsky regime, listing the IRGC as a terrorist organisation, and expelling Iranian embassy officials.

Every Australian is entitled to peacefully protest. It is the responsibility of the Albanese government to protect these democratic rights with the strongest possible response to deter this activity and send a clear message to those responsible that it will not be tolerated.

Comment has been sought from the Iranian embassy in Canberra.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.37am GMT

block-time published-time 1.28am GMT

Coalition opposition signals stoush on housing to come

To go back to the Coalition party room meeting, this is a confirmation today (and the rest of this week) might turn into a big stoush on housing. For a recap, the housing **Australia** future fund is a \$10bn Labor proposal to use government bonds to raise interest returns, with those returns intended to fund the construction of 30,000 new social and affordable homes within five years.

That would include 4,000 homes for women and children affected by family and domestic violence or older women at risk of homelessness - which is where the government's response to the Coalition's opposition will go.

Before the Coalition officially opposed the plan (but after it was publicly signalled that they would), housing minister Julie Collins today said it was "shameful Peter Dutton and the Liberals are considering standing in the way of this critical investment".

"Too many Australian women are facing impossible choices about how they will keep a roof over their head. The Liberals should hear these voices," she said.

The Coalition's concerns went to the use of the future fund system, with shadow housing minister Michael Sukkar telling the party room meeting that he was worried about the impact on the budget bottom line and that funds like this could lose money if the market drops.

Sukkar also claimed there would be no interest generated until late next year and that they believed it would be unlikely the government could deliver all 30,000 homes within coming years.

Now, with the Coalition to oppose the housing measure, it falls to the Greens (plus, of course, two more senators) to be the balance of power and deciding vote in the Senate. Greens housing spokesperson Max Chandler-Mather said this morning that they would "reserve their position on the legislation subject to good faith negotiations with the government".

Stay tuned!

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.33am GMT

block-time published-time 1.09am GMT

Peter Bol says he has tested negative for drugs

Breaking out of politics for the moment to announce that Olympian Peter Bol says he has tested negative for drugs and his provisional suspension has been lifted.

Bol, whose career was left in the balance after testing positive for the banned substance EPO in January, has said his B sample has returned a negative result, meaning the Olympic runner can return to training and competition.

Bol said in a tweeted statement that Sport Integrity **Australia** has lifted the provisional ban imposed on him after he failed an out-of-competition doping test last month. The results then showed signs of synthetic EPO, a performance-enhancing agent that is on the World Anti-Doping Agency's banned list.

zxxltr pic.twitter.com/4gyGirJmB9

— Peter Bol OLY (@pbol800) [February 14, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.16am GMT

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

block-time published-time 1.07am GMT

Coalition to oppose Labor's housing policy

The Coalition party room has officially resolved to oppose the Labor government's signature housing policy, deciding to vote against the \$10bn housing [Australia](#) future fund bill.

The opposition will, however, back two other bills on a housing supply and affordability council, and a treasury law amendment on housing measures.

Liberal leader Peter Dutton addressed his troops in Canberra this morning, signalling that he would keep up attacks on Labor's changes to temporary protection visas by calling the policy a "roll of the dice" as he raised concerns about whether it would lead to asylum seeker boats attempting to reach [Australia](#).

(Note: as we reported this week, only those who entered [Australia](#) before Operation Sovereign Borders started in 2013 who hold or have applied for a protection visa are eligible for the change – not any people in future)

Related: [Nearly 20,000 refugees to get same rights as other permanent residents after being kept 'in limbo'](#)

But Dutton told his party room that the government shouldn't "underestimate the impact" of the changes in potentially shaping the messages that people smugglers may give to asylum seekers trying to reach [Australia](#). Elsewhere in his address, Dutton claimed cost of living was "the only issue in town" for many Australians, with that problem only "ramping up".

Nationals leader David Littleproud spoke after, congratulating Dutton for his efforts in calling for more detail on the voice to parliament referendum. The Nationals have already come out to formally oppose the voice, despite having heard little details of how it would work, with the referendum likely to be eight months away and the government having promised more detail in the interim.

The meeting was relatively short today (with senators, of course, tied up in estimates hearings) but there was one contribution from a Coalition member who raised concerns about the ChatGPT text bot and called on his colleagues to consider the policy implications of this artificial intelligence.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.13am GMT

block-time published-time 12.57am GMT

The house sitting is about to commence.

Woo. Hoo.

block-time published-time 12.56am GMT

Interest rates will rise to 4.1%, NAB predicts

And on cue, given the buoyant business views, NAB has upped its forecast of how high the RBA will hike its cash rate.

Previously set as a peak of 3.6%, NAB now reckons it will rise to 4.1%, or effectively three more 25 basis-point increases from the current 3.35% rate.

"[W]e judge it to be unlikely the board will feel comfortable pausing before May," the bank said.

"A cash rate peak above 4% will have a significant impact on economic growth, and we expect GDP to be below 1% over both 2023 and 2024 despite the more optimistic near-term outlook," it said.

That compares with the RBA's latest estimate of 1.5% GDP growth this year and next.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

“We also expect the RBA will need to cut interest rates in 2024 to closer to neutral to support growth as inflation moderates.”

We can expect a few other banks to lift their estimate of the RBA's “terminal” rate in the next little while.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.00am GMT

block-time published-time 12.52am GMT

Business resilience up despite rising costs

While consumers might be dismayed by higher interest rates, businesses are not yet joining them, if the latest monthly survey by NAB is any indication.

Resilience seems to be an apt descriptor as firms reported business conditions actually improved in January, reversing some of the drop over the previous three months.

Perhaps the lack of a monthly RBA rate meeting helped, but firms were declaring conditions as +18, according to the NAB gauge, a “very high level”.

Confidence, too, rebounded to be +6, an “average level” and also a reversal after two months of negative numbers.

enltrNot so gloomy on the business front, NAB says. Its monthly survey suggests conditions were “very high” and confidence now back to “average” levels. Those readings were despite by then eight RBA rate rises to digest.

pic.twitter.com/iOb0PZKZ8F

— @phannam@mastodon.green (@p_hannam) [February 14, 2023](#)

The bullish conditions were broadly based, across industries and the nation.

NAB's chief economist, Alan Oster, said: “The improvement in confidence suggests firms have a more optimistic outlook as concerns about global growth prospects ease, while strong conditions are also providing evidence that the economy is more resilient than previously expected.”

Of interest, so to speak, for the RBA will be January's rise in price and cost growth, reversing an easing of both late last year.

Purchase costs growth picked up to 3.2% in quarterly terms (was 2.6%) while labour costs growth rose to 2.7% (was 2.1%). Output price growth edged up to 1.7% (from 1.5%) in quarterly terms, with the retail component running at 2.7% (was 2.3%), NAB said.

enltrLabour costs, meanwhile, were among those picking up, NAB said in its latest monthly survey. pic.twitter.com/Os8fb0aHND

— @phannam@mastodon.green (@p_hannam) [February 14, 2023](#)

The strength of business activity is probably among the reasons why the RBA was so confident last week that “further increases” in its cash rate are coming.

In case you missed it, we had a look recently at how the economy was faring under higher borrowing costs, including industries supposed to be particularly sensitive to rising interest rates such as architecture:

Related: [Australia's economy running hot despite rising interest rates, but experts urge caution](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.58am GMT

block-time published-time 12.36am GMT

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

NSW premier on rethink on pill testing: 'Don't take drugs'

New South Wales premier Dominic Perrottet has responded to renewed calls for the introduction of pill testing following the death of a 26-year-old from a suspected drug overdose at a music festival by saying: "Stay safe, don't take drugs."

The death of 26-year-old Commonwealth Bank employee Kieran Ngo from a suspected drug overdose at the Transmission music festival in Sydney during the early hours of Sunday morning has sparked a push for pill testing in the state.

The NSW government has been stridently opposed to introducing pill testing, despite it being [a core recommendation of a landmark inquiry into drug use in the state](#). After more than two years, the government finally released its response to the inquiry in September last year. It [committed to a \\$500m investment in health and justice reforms but ruled out drug decriminalisation and pill testing](#).

On Tuesday, Perrottet was asked about Ngo's death and whether it should prompt a rethink on the government's position on pill testing. He said:

Obviously the first thing I'd say is my thoughts go out to his family at a very difficult time. The first thing as well is, don't take drugs. To people across NSW: stay safe and don't take drugs.

We had an inquiry into ice, [of] which we adopted many recommendations in relation to those issues, which we believe will make a real difference to families right across NSW.

But my clear message to people right across NSW [is] stay safe and don't take drugs and you will be safe.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.47am GMT

block-time published-time 12.35am GMT

Amy's analysis: the stage-three tax cuts

Now the elephant in the room when it comes to inflation – the stage-three tax cuts.

Part of the reasoning for the RBA to keep increasing interest rates is because it says that there is still strong spending occurring in the economy and that there is evidence of "saving buffers" from the pandemic. There has also been (modest) movement on wage growth.

Now, the RBA deals in data and there isn't a workers' representative on the board, so there aren't a lot of different viewpoints being filled in, but the wage increases have gone to the already highly paid because of the labour shortages (engineers for example) and the lowest paid, who have secured slight pay increases in minimum wages but are still behind in real terms.

Those savings? They exist – but for people who could already afford to save, ie: those on higher incomes.

So who do the stage-three tax cuts benefit? Those on higher incomes. So essentially, the stage-three tax cuts will be giving more money to people who are already spending and saving at a time when we are all being told we need to pay higher interest rates because of inflation.

The government hasn't changed its position on the tax cuts. And the opposition, for all its comments on other measures it considers inflationary, also hasn't mentioned them.

Wonder how many more interest rate increases that silence will last for?

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.51am GMT

block-time published-time 12.26am GMT

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Greens party room agrees to support housing fund – with terms

The Greens are a qualified yes on the government's future housing fund legislation, with the party room agreeing to a set of key negotiation aims that include:

A minimum of \$5bn invested in social and affordable housing every year (indexed to inflation) and removing the \$500m capA national plan for renters, including the prime minister putting a national freeze on rent increases on the national cabinet agenda and an immediate doubling of commonwealth rent assistance in the budget\$1bn investment in remote Aboriginal housing over five yearsAll housing funded through the fund should meet minimum inclusive design standards (liveable housing Australia silver)

The Greens also want some operational issues changed, like adding a definition of affordable housing. From its release:

The government has claimed the fund will finance the construction of 30,000 social and affordable homes over five years, which actually see the shortage of social and affordable housing continue to grow. Australia has a shortage of 640,000 social and affordable homes. That shortage will grow by 75,000 in five years.

The Greens continue to also have serious concerns about the \$500m spending cap that will see real term cut in spending on housing every year.

Max Chandler-Mather said there are still serious concerns, but there needs to be action on housing:

The Greens have serious concerns about a housing plan that will literally see the housing crisis get worse than it is now, and so we will seek to negotiate in good faith with the Labor government.

Labor's centrepiece housing legislation locks in permanent real-term cuts to housing funding, does nothing for renters and will see the shortage of social and affordable housing grow, seeing the housing crisis get worse.

Freezing rent increases and doubling commonwealth rent assistance will ensure we provide immediate relief to the millions of households in serious financial stress as a result of soaring rents.

Rather than gambling \$10bn on the stock market and investing sporadic returns capped at \$500m, the Greens want to see a minimum \$5bn invested in social and affordable housing every year.

If the government had introduced their housing plan last year, it could have seen a \$120m loss through the Future Fund and literally zero dollars spent on housing. Why should people in need of social and affordable housing be forced to rely on a volatile stock market to receive what should be a basic right?

A \$5bn investment every year could fund hundreds of thousands of good-quality public homes over the next decade, clearing the wait lists and ensuring we actually tackle the scale of the housing crisis.

With over 20% of First Nations people living in overcrowded homes, a \$1bn capital investment will help address the shocking inequality in housing outcomes in this country.

Ultimately the Greens are standing on behalf of the millions of people this bill leaves behind, whether they are homeless, stuck on social housing waitlists or struggling to pay the rent, and will fight to make sure Labor doesn't forget them.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.54am GMT

block-time published-time 12.12am GMT

Ley criticises housing future fund

The Liberal deputy leader, Sussan Ley, has also criticised the government's \$10bn housing future fund (the Coalition hasn't decided whether or not it is going to support it) this morning:

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Well, we'll discuss that in our party room today. But it's another of these off-budget vehicles and I don't see the government demonstrating how it will immediately solve the housing crisis. I just see another bucket of money off to one side with spending priorities all wrong when it comes to where Australians want to see leadership from Anthony Albanese.

Now, I don't deny that there are housing pressures that Australians face. I see it around me. But how do we solve that? Perhaps not by creating yet another off-budget vehicle of spending that pushes up inflation and interest rates and doesn't immediately solve the problem.

Which is actually quite funny, given the impact the former government's [homebuilder program](#) has had on inflation (in terms of bringing forward construction).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.21am GMT

block-time published-time 12.03am GMT

Albanese and O'Neil speak to Labor caucus

The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, has addressed Labor caucus, revealing he will address the National Press Club on 22 February about national security.

Albanese said Labor's mantra leading into the budget will be "relief, repair and restraint", referring to elements of cost of living relief including cheaper medicine, childcare and energy.

Albanese said the opposition was making a "grave mistake" opposing manufacturing jobs. He accused them of running an opposition "straight out of Tony Abbott's playbook" because Peter Dutton "doesn't know what he's for, he only knows what he's against". That included opposing the national reconstruction fund, the housing fund, voting no to energy price relief, and a no to minimum wage increases.

Albanese said the opposition is becoming like a vuvuzela: "interesting at first, but soon ... very very annoying", [like at South Africa's world cup](#).

Albanese said Labor will field a candidate at the Aston byelection, but did not expect to win. No government has won a seat off the opposition at a byelection for 100 years.

The home affairs minister, Claire O'Neil, addressed the issue of foreign interference and espionage, which she labelled the "biggest domestic threat" and a "much bigger problem than the public conversation reflect".

O'Neil said Iran "needs to be called out for its behaviour", and urged MPs to provide any information about what they are seeing in their communities.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.08am GMT

block-time published-time 11.58pm GMT

High court to hear case on if states can tax electric vehicles

The high court is about to make a decision which could make an impact on if the states can tax electric vehicles, AAP reports.

Kath Davies and Chris Vanderstock have taken a Victorian tax on electric vehicles all the way to the high court, arguing it's unconstitutional. The pair say a tax on electric vehicles is not only counterintuitive for their take-up, but an overreach in an area where only the commonwealth can impose an excise.

"I want to see more climate action, not less," Davies said outside the high court on Tuesday. "This tax, in my mind, is a roadblock to reducing emissions and getting better air quality."

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

The case comes down to what the definition of an excise is in the constitution and what taxes states have the power to enact. David Hertzberg, the pair's lawyer, says the landmark case will have implications for the division of power between the commonwealth and the states.

"If our clients are successful, it will mean Victoria's electric vehicle tax is invalid and will likely also prevent other states from implementing similar legislation," he said.

But Victorians are unlikely to know whether they'll get a refund if the tax is ruled unconstitutional anytime soon.

"It depends on a number of factors and we'll have to cross that bridge when we get to it," Hertzberg said.

He also rubbished the suggestion of any hole being blown in the state's budget.

"The fuel excise is led by the federal government, not the states, so there's no shortfall as far as Victoria is concerned," he said. "This tax is just a cash grab."

Victoria charges electric vehicle owners 2.6 cents a kilometre, and plug-in hybrid owners 2.1 cents, with users submitting odometer readings annually.

A similar tax in South Australia was repealed last week after being described as "backwards-thinking". NSW and Western Australia have flagged an electric vehicle tax from 2027.

Queensland, Tasmania and the two territories haven't outlined plans for an electric vehicle tax but have written to the high court to support Victoria's position.

The case will be heard before the high court from Tuesday to Thursday.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.04am GMT

block-time published-time 11.48pm GMT

Assistant treasurer wants to make sure you don't get scammed this Valentine's Day

Stephen Jones (making no mention that Valentine's Day is actually the real scam):

Look, today is Valentine's Day and we want to ensure that it really is a day for lovers and not a payday for the scammers out there who are taking advantage of vulnerable people.

In the last twelve months \$40m was lost to romance scams, [an] 8% increase over the course of the year. We want today to be a day about chocolates and roses and true love, not a day when romance scammers are out there taking advantage of the vulnerable people, robbing them of their money.

A few things to look out for if you're meeting up on a dating app or a social media app: somebody's refusing to meet in face but they're after a loan of some money or access to your personal details, that's a red flag, beware. Let's make this a great day, not a great day for the scammers.

Q : Is there any Treasury investigation currently underway into the skyrocketing cost of roses on one day of the year?

Jones:

Well, laws of supply and demand are working today and I think ... all of us romantics have been hit with the abnormal price of roses and chocolates on the two days before Valentine's Day.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.50pm GMT

block-time published-time 11.31pm GMT

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Watt: Perrotett has 'serious questions to answer' regarding bushfire grants

The emergency management minister, Murray Watt, has held a press conference with some Labor NSW state MPs to talk bushfire grants and how they were handed out by the NSW government – which is how you know the NSW election is close.

It is based off a report from the auditor general:

Related: [Auditor general finds NSW Labor seats denied bushfire grants due to limit set by John Barilaro's office](#)

The former deputy premier John Barilaro is, of course, no longer in parliament.

Watt wanted to talk on who else may have been involved following a Senate estimates hearing yesterday:

What we learned at Senate estimates yesterday was that federal officials were informed: that these weren't just decisions of John Barilaro, that the New South Wales expenditure review committee – a cabinet committee – was involved in this decision to move funds away from Labor-held electorates to Liberal and National party electorates.

That is an absolutely disgraceful way to treat bushfire victims in their hour of need.

It's bad enough that these people had to go through those bushfires, lose their homes, in some cases lose family members and precious possessions. But to then learn that a Liberal and National Party government interfered directly and moved funds away from them because of the way they voted or the colour of the seat that they lived in.

That is an absolute disgrace and the premier of New South Wales has to answer for this. He was on [the] ERC at the time. In fact, he was chairing the ERC at the time. So he's got some serious questions to answer about why his government ... was in this up to their neck.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.36pm GMT

block-time published-time 11.23pm GMT

BoM to release fortnightly update on climate drivers today

Governments, particularly in the eastern states, have had to cope with multiple flood emergencies over the past three years. Since the NSW budget last year, for instance, floods in that state have cost \$2.6bn, that state said last week in its [half-year \(and pre-election\) review](#).

It would be understandable for emergency authorities to be looking closely at what's coming later this year. To that end, the Bureau of Meteorology is due to release its fortnight update of the main climate drivers affecting **Australia** later today.

The shift away from La Niña towards a possible El Niño has been [evident for a while](#), and the latest model runs continue to point that way.

Meanwhile, out to the west, the Indian Ocean Dipole also tilts towards the drier 'positive' phase. Same qualifier applies - re the autumn 'predictability gap' - but for now the models are pretty clear how the outlook for south-eastern Australian rainfall is tilting. pic.twitter.com/KhlEMIsQe

— @[phannam@mastodon.green](#) (@p_hannam) [February 13, 2023](#)

To be sure, the annual reset of conditions in the Pacific each autumn provides a challenge for models to clear the so-called "predictability gap", so an El Niño is certainly not a given.

Australia's weather, of course, is influenced by oceans in all directions, including the Indian Ocean. Interestingly, the models are also indicating a tilt towards drier conditions there too.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

enltrUpdated [@bom_au](#) models reinforce the trend away from La Nina towards El Nino later this year. We still have the 'predictability gap' to clear in autumn but for now at least the shift towards drier conditions looks an increasing chance. pic.twitter.com/VwBIYqyPSj

— @[phannam@mastodon.green](#) (@p_hannam) [February 13, 2023](#)

We'll know with more confidence in a couple of months whether those tandem shifts are more certain.

Still, if you were Murray Watt, the federal minister for agriculture drought and emergency management, you'd be forgiven for thinking that "drought" role might soon be getting a workout.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.28pm GMT

block-time published-time 11.20pm GMT

Home affairs minister says foreign interference plots from Iran and China part of series of specific examples

After Clare O'Neil's speech about foreign interference and the disrupted Iranian plot, she sat down for a conversation with the head of the ANU's national security college, Prof Rory Medcalf.

In response to a question about China, the home affairs minister hinted that she would have more to say in the weeks ahead:

What I would really like to do is broaden the conversation to reflect the accurate picture and that is that we are the subject of foreign interference from very many countries. This is not just a China problem, although it is a China problem, and it's really important for me to be open and honest about the different directions from which this comes. Today I've chosen to talk about Iran – it's really important that we put that matter on the public record. But this will be the first in a series of interventions ... where I'm able to speak about some specific examples of foreign interference we see from specific countries and Iran is first cab off the rank.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.24pm GMT

block-time published-time 11.16pm GMT

Liberal attack lines on government spending continue

After a week and a bit of the Liberals pushing "why does everything cost more under Labor" we are now seeing the shift into the second part of the strategy – "the government needs to stop forcing the RBA to increase interest rates".

That's based on what is called "off-budget spending" – the budget is one thing, but then there are all these bits and bobs which pop up in between budgets. Promises are made, things happen during senate negotiations, programs are created – that sort of thing.

So the opposition is now trying to make the case that government spending is the reason the RBA has to keep increasing interest rates, falling back on that old adage that Labor spends more.

Here is is Simon Birmingham this morning:

It's crucial the Albanese government stops making the Reserve Bank's job harder and therefore life harder for many Australian families and starts to make it easier by contributing to the downward pressure on inflation. The Albanese government, at present, has put more spending programs in place, is creating multi-billion dollar funds, has industrial relations reforms that will hurt productivity and all of these things just add to the pressure on inflation and therefore the pressure on the Reserve Bank.

What we want to see is an environment where fiscal policy complements monetary policy in trying to put downward pressure on inflation, and the government needs to step up and make hard decisions to be able to do that.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Q : Are you saying the government should be spending less?

Birmingham:

The government should clearly be making sure they're not putting more pressure on spending and of late their policies have been putting more pressure on spending. They have legislated new areas of multi-billion dollar spending, they have created and are creating new multi-billion dollar funds that they want to establish just at the time when the Reserve Bank is sending a real warning out to the Australian community and to government that it should be helping with fixing the problem of inflation, not adding to the problem and challenging inflation.

The better question is where would Birmingham cut, given there is not exactly a lot of fat on any bones at the moment.

But again, one of the main issue with what we are seeing at the moment is that a good chunk of this inflation is because of supply chain issues combined with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. There is also the hangover of how much stimulus was spent during the pandemic by the previous government, and that the RBA cut the cash rate to 0.1% and kept it there for so long, which one could argue only made the housing market explode and wasn't entirely necessary, given the amount of government spending at the time.

But there is no room for facts when we're trying to get political.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.21pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.54pm GMT

Consumer sentiment dips after latest cash rate rises

The Reserve Bank's interest rate rises are intended to make us less inclined to spend, and if the latest weekly survey of consumer sentiment is any guide, they might be doing the trick.

The gauge of consumer confidence compiled by ANZ and Roy Morgan showed the biggest drop since June last year in the wake of last week's latest rate rise. The retreat was the most since the RBA launched the first of four 50 basis-point rate rises, and the measure is now at its lowest since early April 2020.

enltrThat RBA rate rise last week (with the promise of more to come) has not surprisingly dimmed consumer confidence. The latest weekly survey by [@ANZ_Research](#) and [@RoyMorganAus](#) has its gauge sinking to its lowest level since April 2020. pic.twitter.com/xgaVnhSTxo

— [@phannam@mastodon.green](#) (@p_hannam) [February 13, 2023](#)

Our spending behaviour, though, is not yet matching the gloom respondents are reporting.

The dim level of consumer sentiment wouldn't be out of place in a recession and – so far – that's not what we have, with the jobless rate still hovering near half-century lows. (We'll get January labour market figures from the ABS on Thursday.)

The weekly survey also tracks views about inflation and, for now, they are holding generally steady, if not ticking a bit higher. The RBA reckons our inflation rate probably peaked around the end of 2022.

enltrMeanwhile, inflation expectations that the RBA doesn't want to see become "unanchored" ticked higher last week. (Source: [@ANZ_Research](#) and [@RoyMorganAus](#)) pic.twitter.com/Kt2CxaLr3G

— [@phannam@mastodon.green](#) (@p_hannam) [February 13, 2023](#)

The central bank governor, Philip Lowe, meanwhile, will face Senate estimates tomorrow. We look at the questions he'll likely be asked, and speculate about what he might say in this piece here:

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Related: [Four questions Philip Lowe and the RBA need to answer over interest rates](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.58pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.53pm GMT

Attorney General's Department hearing suspended after Liberals accuse chair of running interference over union costs case

The Liberal senators Michaelia Cash and Paul Scarr have been pursuing the attorney general's department about a settlement between the Australian Building and Construction Commission and the Construction Forestry Mining Maritime and Energy Union.

Lend Lease took court action against the ABCC, disputing its interpretation of the building code, a case the CFMMEU intervened in on a constitutional point about whether the ban on the Eureka flag infringed freedom to political communication.

The ABCC won, and was entitled to costs. The ABCC sought a settlement, which was approved by the attorney general Mark Dreyfus. The Coalition has complained that decision amounts to a loss of \$150,000 of costs that were not pursued from the union.

This morning, Labor's Nita Green and the Greens' David Shoebridge have been running defence, establishing through their questions that the ABCC did so to prevent the CFMMEU appealing and in the context that the new building code had removed the section banning flags.

Scarr has just read a series of facts into Hansard about the CFMMEU's significant donations to Labor, and officials sit on Labor's national executive.

Scarr and Cash have questioned AGD officials' claims they weren't aware of this matter at the last Senate estimates session. Scarr accused Green, the chair of the committee, of running interference, so Green suspends the hearing.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.02pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.46pm GMT

Anne Aly: discussion needs to be had on if senators should resign if they defect from their party

The minister for early childhood education, **Anne Aly**, has said she believes a discussion needs to be had about whether Australians want to see senators resign if they defect from their party.

Her comments came on ABC's Q&A program Monday night after an audience member asked about whether changes are needed in this space to ensure the intentions of Australian voters are upheld.

The new Greens spokesperson for Indigenous Australians, Dorinda Cox, said "it's a live issue, particularly for our party," referencing the recent decision by Lidia Thorpe to quit the Greens and join the Senate crossbench.

While Cox said she didn't have a particular view whether a person should step down when they leave a party, Aly said she believed there was a greater imperative to discuss the issue of upper house members leaving their party.

I think it's different for lower house [members] and [the] Senate. When you go to vote in the lower house, you're voting for the person and you've got the choice of maybe seven candidates. Voting in the Senate, unless you vote below the line, you are voting for the party. Right? And that's how most people vote. Most people vote above the line, and they vote for the party.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

So I do think that a discussion needs to be had about is this something that the Australian people feel so strongly about that it should be changed, that if you leave your party in the Senate and go to sit on the crossbenches or go to a different party, if Australians have voted for your party, they've voted for your party.

The party chooses who goes on the Senate ticket, right? But in the lower house you are choosing based on individuals and it's reflected in the fact that you know for lower house members, there is a lot more campaigning that we do. We do a lot more of the one on one, the door knocking, the personal because you put yourselves as the candidate. Yes you're representing a party, but you are the candidate.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.54pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.46pm GMT

Shorten: we are looking at all areas for cuts to curb inflationary growth while still looking after people

But wait, there is more!

Host: Okay. Neil, are they going to be able to deliver on all of that?

Neil Mitchell (the radio host) then weighs in:

It's going to be tough. Where's the fat, though, Bill? I mean, what you've outlined there is right? I mean, you need to help people. But we've started out in the real world, people have started to cut their spending. The JB Hi Fi figures show that. Yeah, it's not the Reserve Bank, it isn't an economist, but it's also a legitimate point. Government spending is inflationary.

There must be fat in government that you can cut out and get the balance right. So, you help the people who are desperate but, you know, cut out jobs for the mates or something. Is there no fat in government that you can cut the fat ... without hurting people and reduce the spending? There has to be. There has to be.

Host: Bill, you've been always pretty good at cutting out the fat.

Shorten:

Well, I'll take my own – oh yeah, yeah. Post-Christmas, post-Covid, yeah gotta work on it -

Host : I didn't mean in like that!

Shorten:

No, in all seriousness – oh no, you are body shaming me, but that's cool. Oh, you know, sort of. The NDIS is an area which, whilst we're not going to cut it, I think that there is waste that we can reduce there, which still keeps the services going for people on the scheme. But you know, I think there is something we can do there to tackle some service providers overcharging.

So yeah, I know the government is looking across all of our big areas to make sure that we can do what we've got to do to look after people but also curb the growth.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.53pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.42pm GMT

Shorten: Real wages not moving faster than inflation

We are at the stage of the media cycle where every man and his producer is an expert of inflation and what needs to happen to lower inflation. Which leads to exchanges like this, on the Nine network this morning (with Bill Shorten):

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Host: Do you concede ... that raising real wages, raising unemployment benefits and also giving power rebates, feeding that into the economy, do you concede that's inflationary?

Bill Shorten:

Well, let's just cut through the trifecta. Real wages are not moving faster than inflation. I think about all the teachers and the people working in our hospitals and people who work in our emergency services, their real wages have fallen and trying to relieve some of that pressure actually as a bulwark against the impact of inflation.

In terms of energy, thank goodness Labor actually just before Christmas put in place our cap on the gas companies, making sure that there was enough gas in the Australian energy system, putting Aussies first. So that's important and good work.

And in terms of expenditure and unemployment benefits, I'm not aware the government has made a decision there, so I'm not sure that's quite right, mate.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.45pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.26pm GMT

Liberals: Chinese lack of engagement or transparency on balloons 'troubling'

The rhetoric between the United States and China over the "spy balloons" is getting more and more fraught, at least publicly.

Asked about it on Sky News this morning, the shadow foreign affairs minister Simon Birmingham said:

Well, this is troubling and the lack of engagement or transparency from China in relation to this is also troubling, that they have declined to engage in official-level conversation with the United States to be transparent about what it is that they've been doing, what they've been undertaking, and to try to make sure that they can move beyond this increased area of tension.

Now we want to see an environment which is pursuing as much peace and stability as possible, but it's hard to see that advancing when ... the United States are dealing with now not one but four incidents in the space of just a couple of weeks.

Birmingham says he wants to see the US secretary of state Antony Blinken's cancelled and deferred trip to China proceed (it was meant to happen before spy balloon became something we all learned about, mostly against our will).

... from an Australian perspective, it just puts increased tension across China's engagement with much of the world. And that, again, can't help in terms of all aspects of the relationship.

But we do wish the Australian government well in trying to get the trade sanctions that China unfairly placed on **Australia** removed. And we do want to see continued breakthroughs in that, particularly if China is genuine about trying to work to stabilise the relationship.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.32pm GMT

block-time published-time 10.06pm GMT

Turnbull: argument to vote for a voice backed by few details may seem like a 'blank check' for voters

Speaking of former PMs, here is a little bit more from Malcolm Turnbull's interview on ABC Radio RN Breakfast this morning.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

While prime minister, Turnbull's cabinet rejected the proposal from the Uluru Statement from the Heart and said it "would inevitably become seen as a third chamber of parliament". Here's a piece from back then:

Related: [Indigenous voice proposal 'not desirable', says Turnbull](#)

That wasn't true (the voice isn't and never has been a third chamber of the parliament) and Turnbull has since said he will be voting yes:

Related: [I will be voting yes to establish an Indigenous voice to parliament | Malcolm Turnbull](#)

He reiterated he would be voting yes on Tuesday's program, but asked whether or not the government needed to provide "more detail" as Peter Dutton is demanding, Turnbull said:

In terms of providing detail, the the difficulty is that Albanese can't provide it, right, because he basically needs Indigenous Australians to to design ... the voice themselves and that obviously has to be you know, approved and legislated by the parliament.

Now ... in a sense, it's too late to provide detail. And, you know, pointing to Marcia Langton and Tom Calma's report is ridiculous with great respect.

I mean, it's a great report, but it hasn't been adopted, it's 300 pages long, it's a very good work, but it is not government policy.

So I think the the government is sort of stuck with the position they're in and there is a very sincere, calculated, intelligent, informed view among the yes campaign that the more detail you have, the more likely it is it'll go down.

But having said that, when people say we want to know what we're voting for, it is a pretty reasonable request, so it isn't ... changing the constitution isn't easy.

They've taken a course of action, elected on one, which says no detail, just vote for the heart of, the generosity of spirit if you like, vote ... on the principle – that will sway a lot of people, but others will say, I think this sounds like a bit like a blank check.

So that's the challenge.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.12pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.54pm GMT

A blog watcher has spotted former prime minister Kevin Rudd in the parliament.

As the incoming ambassador to the US, there are all sorts of briefings he needs to receive, although it is also not unusual for former PMs to drop by parliament when they are in town.

block-time published-time 9.52pm GMT

February 14 is also the date Captain Cook was killed in Hawaii, but you won't see politicians make social media videos about that.

enlrlt's Valentines Day and it's a day to make sure we are showing our small businesses some love around the Hunter electorate. Happy Valentines Day to my beautiful wife Alex. I'm sorry I've missed another Valentine Day. Thank you for my present. pic.twitter.com/DTfT4VINX9

— DanRepacholi (@DanRepacholi) [February 13, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.56pm GMT

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

block-time published-time 9.47pm GMT

O'Neil: foreign governments are attempting to exert influence over diaspora communities

In her speech about foreign interference, Clare O'Neil vowed to “call out the egregious acts of individual countries when it is in the national interest to do so”.

The home affairs minister told the ANU she wanted “a public discussion about this problem that is open, apolitical and commensurate with the size of the challenge – and to build a community of people who know what foreign interference is, what it looks like, and what to do when they see it”.

Our best defence against foreign interference is to arm people who are possible targets of this behaviour with the information they need to recognise and report it. And partisanship is a problem because if this discussion becomes polluted by craven political interests, our citizens will lose trust with our attempts to explain it.

We must change the nature and tone of the discussion.

While Iran was the only country she named explicitly in today's speech, O'Neil said the anecdote about the disrupted plot was “not the only story of Asia detecting foreign interference in Australia”. She said there were other examples “of foreign governments tasking human sources to collect sensitive personal information of individuals seen as dissidents by the foreign government due to their activism” and “individuals arranging counter-protests to instigate arguments with activists with the intent of provoking violence – all at the request of a foreign intelligence service”:

So when and where do we see this problem most commonly in Australia?

We see it in the covert influence foreign governments attempt to exert over diaspora communities. To be clear, this is almost always unsuccessful due to the deep loyalty of Australia's migrant communities to our beautiful shared country.

We see it when diaspora communities peacefully protest about the actions of their governments back at home. In some instances, they will be photographed, harassed or followed as a result. We see it when members of those communities speak out publicly against violence or intimidation in their home country. We see it when people in those communities or their families back home are threatened, harassed or intimidated. To be clear, this type of foreign interference is commonplace, it is happening around our country every day.

We see it too, on social media, where foreign governments covertly try to sow division around political issues that are felt deeply in the Australian community, to deliberately deteriorate our social fabric and cause conflict and painful rifts.

We see it in our universities, where foreign governments attempt to covertly influence how topics are discussed and covered in our fiercely independent university lecture theatres.

We see in politics, where foreign governments try to win over elected leaders and party activists push for changes in everything from planning laws to foreign and national security policy, or simply to build a picture of how decisions are made.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.52pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.40pm GMT

Liberals step up attacks on Labor border protection policy

The deputy Liberal leader, Sussan Ley, was out and about early today with this message:

There are two absolute truths you know about a Labor government. Australians know they will always pay more under Labor and Labor does not have what it takes to keep our borders safe.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

The concerning information that's come out of Senate estimates about the dismantling of temporary protection visas should concern every Australian ... We've seen this movie before. I was in the parliament in 2008 when Kevin Rudd did exactly this, dismantled our border protection, and the result was absolutely horrific. Australians saw that and they don't want to go back there.

This Labor government does not have the heart to understand the importance of keeping our borders safe. So let's see how Anthony Albanese responds to this issue today, but it is incredibly important.

Except the boss of home affairs, Mike Pezzullo, said Labor did not act against advice. He was very clear in saying that reports that Labor had were "not correct". And yes, the Rudd government did get rid of TPVs in 2008. But it also stopped naval (boat) turnbacks at the time, which is the key difference – boat turnbacks will continue under the current Labor policy.

It's something that the opposition has been leaving out of its attacks: it has been referencing 2008, but leaving out key points. Boat turnbacks remain Labor policy this time around.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.54pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.37pm GMT

Iranian foreign interference plot disrupted

Australian security agencies have shut down a foreign interference plot by Iran, the Australian government has said. The plot allegedly included individuals conducting surveillance of the home of an Iranian-Australian and extensively researching this person and their family.

The home affairs minister, Clare O'Neil, revealed the incident in a speech to the Australian National University today while saying a number of diaspora communities in **Australia** face pressure when they peacefully protest about the actions of their governments back at home.

O'Neil also described foreign interference as "one of the core threats our democracy faces". She vowed to "bring foreign interference out of the shadows, and into the light" so that people can be ready to face the challenge.

O'Neil told the ANU's National Security College this morning:

Today I want to speak in more detail about foreign interference from one country in particular: Iran. I stress that foreign interference does not just come from one country – it is being conducted and directed by many countries across the globe. Iran is but one of them.

Since September last year, Iran's theocratic regime has been jolted by nation-wide protests in response to the tragic death in police custody of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, Kurdish name "Jina".

Tehran's brutal response to those protests – with more than 400 people killed, including at least 50 children – has not only failed to quell the uprising, but triggered further protests against the regime around the world, including here in **Australia**.

Obviously, Tehran's response to protests could not be farther than our own. In our country, we respect the right of Australians to peacefully express their views ... it is perfectly legal for anyone in **Australia** to criticise a foreign regime, as tens of thousands of people across the country have been doing in response to events in Iran.

What we absolutely will not tolerate, under any circumstances, are attempts by foreign regimes to disrupt peaceful protests, encourage violence or suppress views. Nor will we tolerate hostile acts in the form of surveillance, harassment or intimidation against individuals or family members here in **Australia**.

The Australian government and our security agencies will act to protect Australians and their democratic rights.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Late last year, Asio disrupted the activities of individuals who had conducted surveillance of the home of an Iranian-Australian, as well as extensive research of this individual and their family. I'm pleased to say our agencies were onto it like a shot. Asio tracked the operation and shut it down immediately.

We're not going to stand back and have Australians or indeed visitors to our country watched and tracked by foreign governments on our soil. This is **Australia**, this is our democracy, and if you engage in activities like this, you will be discovered.

To those states who operate in the shadows, I have a simple message – we are watching you. Where our national interest is served by calling out your operations, we will. And to those in **Australia** making their voice heard, we are acting to protect you.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.40pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.36pm GMT

David Pocock launches 3,000km Heart 2 Heart charity walk

Happy Valentine's day to those who observe, or just wanted to hear it.

The independent ACT senator David Pocock is using the day to host the launch of a new charity walk – Heart 2 Heart – to raise money and awareness for first responder mental health research and initiatives.

The Heart 2 Heart Walk is a 3,000km charity walk linking Lambert Centre of **Australia** in the Northern Territory (Heart of Country) to **Australia**'s Parliament House in Canberra (Heart of Nation) aiming to draw attention to challenges around First Responder mental health and wellbeing.

It's also about trying to bring about more progress on the recommendations made in the 2019 [The people behind 000: mental health of our first responders](#) Senate inquiry report.

The Heart 2 Heart Foundation is coordinating the walk and wants the government to enact the recommendations, including a national action plan on first responder mental health, a national register of health professionals who specialise in mental health for first responders and support for those who have retired.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.41pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.23pm GMT

I am once again asking political parties to please stop.

enltrlIt's Valentine's Day and we're celebrating by sharing with you some of our favourite rom coms: (1/4) pic.twitter.com/WJLLN7R88W

— NSW Labor (@NSWLabor) [February 13, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.24pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.20pm GMT

The agenda for today

It is round two for the committees we heard from yesterday.

So that means legal and constitutional affairs, where today the attorney general portfolio will be examined and no doubt Michaelia Cash will pop up with some questions there.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Over in finance and public administration, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet is still under question, but then finance will get a go.

The environment and communications committee is all about arts and comms today which also means it is ABC day. But that section hasn't been the same since Eric Abetz didn't get preselected.

And then there is rural and regional affairs (and transport) where the agriculture department will be questioned. Bridget McKenzie will be living her best life.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.24pm GMT

block-time published-time 9.12pm GMT

Senate estimates will continue today, but the House of Representatives is going to be a little bit slower because of all the party room meetings which will be going on, for those wondering.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.13pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.58pm GMT

Labor visa changes not done against advice: government

Home affairs boss Mike Pezzullo confirmed in Senate estimates overnight that [Labor's change to temporary protection visas](#) was not done against advice.

There were reports that Labor had acted contrary to advice from the department which had been given in its incoming brief (an incoming brief is something all new governments/ministers get, which give an update on what is going on in the department, operations and that sort of thing).

They are mostly redacted when you ask for them under freedom of information, so it was hard to tell what the department had told the Labor government. But Pezzullo had no such qualms in saying what was what.

enltrThe Government listens to advice to keep our borders strong. Any reporting to the contrary is wrong and should be called out. pic.twitter.com/W83DfJur3I

— Senator Nita Green (@nitagreenqld) [February 13, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.03pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.54pm GMT

NZ government: worst of Cyclone Gabrielle is over but more rain still to be expected

Back to New Zealand for a moment:

Kieran McNulty, New Zealand's minister for emergency management, says the worst of the weather from ex-Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle – which lashed the North Island overnight – appears to be over, but more rain and high winds are expected. Speaking to reporters in Wellington moments ago, he said the government has declared a rare national state of emergency due to extensive flooding and slips as well as damaged roads and infrastructure in half a dozen regions.

Cyclone Gabrielle has cut off roads, communications, power and water for the city of Gisborne and caused further chaos in Auckland, which is still cleaning up from a major storm a fortnight ago that killed four people. The defence force is helping with evacuations in Hawkes Bay. Northland, Bay of Plenty and Waikato have all also been hard-hit since Sunday.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

The national state of emergency – a designation that has only been used in New Zealand twice before – is a “significant legal instrument”, McAnulty said, allowing the government to send more resources to affected regions with “a nationally coordinated approach”.

One firefighter is missing in Muriwai – a coastal community on Auckland’s west coast – and another is in hospital after a house collapsed.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.02pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.50pm GMT

Turnbull: even if politicians are on the wrong side of history, in most cases they can survive it

Malcolm Turnbull is then asked by Patricia Karvelas about Peter Dutton’s position on the voice to parliament (so far) and whether he risks being on the wrong side of history.

Turnbull sounds tired and says:

Well ... he could be but you know, look, during the republican referendum, he accused all sorts of people who oppose the republican movement of being on the wrong side of history ... they seem to be able to survive that experience [of] being on the wrong side of history and go on to be prime minister and all sorts of things.

... You know, when Julia Gillard was prime minister, she was very publicly opposed to legalising same-sex marriage. And I used to say she and Tony Abbott [were] both wrong on this issue, but at least [Abbott] was sincerely wrong, because I never believed Julia believed what she was saying. But she did say it.

But do the people remember that? Do they decry her for having opposed same-sex marriage? I don’t think so.

I think the reality is that, that even though you may think somebody’s taking the wrong political position at a given time, in most cases, they’ll be able to survive that and go on to whatever else.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.58pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.46pm GMT

Turnbull on Aukus: will Australia have full control over nuclear submarines?

The former prime minister Malcolm Turnbull is on ABC Radio RN Breakfast and has questions over Aukus – mostly over sovereignty and whether we will have control over the submarines that are coming as part of the deal, or if the submarines can only operate with US supervision.

The fundamental question is, if American technical support and supervision and oversight ... given that these are weapons-grade reactors, if that were withdrawn, would we be able to operate the submarines?

Turnbull says that question needs to be answered.

My simple point is, that I believe if we’re going to invest what will amount to about 1% of GDP in the submarine program, we need to know that those submarines can be ... thoroughly autonomously by Australians.

If the answer is that we will always need to have US oversight and supervision, then sovereignty is shared and the government should at least be honest and upfront about that.

It may be the people say okay, America’s our ... great friend and ally. We never doubt that there’d be any issues, but 40/50 years is a long time.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.53pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.33pm GMT

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Labor: Liberal opposition to reconstruction fund 'beggars belief'

Labor is working to get its national reconstruction fund through the parliament. The Coalition is against it so the Greens and senators like David Pocock and Jacqui Lambie and Lidia Thorpe are in the negotiating seat.

The Coalition being against the fund has been a stick in Labor's craw for some time and is now dominating its parliamentary questions to its ministers.

Stephen Jones continued that line:

The opposition is basically defining itself as a party which is opposed to everything. The national reconstruction fund, about kickstarting manufacturing in this country and having more things made in Australia, seems to be a no-brainer to me. Who could be against that? Peter Dutton.

The housing fund is about ensuring we build more houses in the middle of a housing crisis, and provide more social and affordable housing for people struggling, and for people who are homeless.

It really beggars belief any politician in the country, let alone a major political party, could be threatening to block a fund which will put more houses into the market, more roofs over the head of people doing it tough.

It beggars belief, which is why we're calling on the opposition, the crossbench, the Greens, in fact, all the members and supporters of those parties who send a message to them, to say: don't block the housing fund, don't block the rebuilding Australia fund, made in Australia and more roofs over people's heads. Who could be against that?

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.38pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.28pm GMT

Assistant treasurer: Labor hoping Reserve Bank won't lift interest rates 'further than they need to be'

The assistant treasurer, Stephen Jones, was on ABC News Breakfast this morning speaking on the only thing politicians are really speaking on at the moment – the cost of living.

We know there's around 800,000 mortgage holders who haven't yet felt the full brunt of the interest rate increases that are already in the system. They don't start to cycle off until midyear.

Which is why we think there's already a fair bit of pressure in the system. And we're hoping that we don't see further interest rate increases and we're from our part saying that budget restraint will be delivered [and] budget repair also delivered, doing our bit to firm up the supply chains that are also adding inflationary pressures to the Australian economy.

The Australian government will do its bit to ensure we're bringing down the pressure on inflation. That is why we hope the Reserve Bank board can see its way clear to ensuring we aren't lifting interest rates any further than they need to be to tame the inflation dragon.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.37pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.21pm GMT

NZ declares state of emergency after Cyclone Gabrielle hits North Island

New Zealand's government declared a national state of emergency less than an hour ago after ex-Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle wrought a trail of havoc down the North Island.

It's the third time in New Zealand's history that a national state of emergency has been declared. The designation means that the national government can send resources across the country, bolstering civil defence efforts across the country.

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Kieran McAnulty, who called the storm an “unprecedented weather event” for New Zealand, will begin a news conference in Wellington in just a moment. We’ll bring you more from that soon.

This is the second major storm to hit the North Island in as many weeks. Flooding in Auckland after heavy rain late last month led to four deaths.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.25pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.19pm GMT

Good morning from Amy

A very big thank you to Martin for starting off this morning.

We’ll switch to politics now, but will keep you up to date on some of the big stories today, including what is happening in New Zealand following Cyclone Gabrielle making landfall.

You have Amy Remeikis with you for most of the day, with Katharine Murphy, Paul Karp, Daniel Hurst and Josh Butler rounding out Canberra.

Ready?

Let’s get into it.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.24pm GMT

block-time published-time 8.13pm GMT

Residents of far west NSW have worse life expectancy and health outcomes than those born in Sydney, report says

Residents born in far west New South Wales are dying almost six years earlier and have substantially worse health outcomes than those born in Sydney, according to a new analysis from the **Australia** Institute.

The report, released on Tuesday, found that people born in far west NSW had a life expectancy of 5.7 years shorter than those born in Sydney, meaning a person born today would be expected to live to 79.1 years compared to 84.5 years.

It also found people born in the region are twice as likely to die prematurely; and carry a risk of “potentially avoidable death” that is 2.5 times higher than people born in Sydney. A potentially avoidable death, according to the report, refers to death from a condition that could be prevented with health screening or well-funded primary prevention services, or is potentially treatable.

Rates of suicide are also two times higher in the far west, making it the 10th highest cause of death.

Kate McBride, a researcher at the **Australia** Institute, said people living in that region had significantly poorer health outcomes, inferior access to health services, and face financial barriers to accessing health care. She said:

Life expectancy, premature deaths, and ‘potentially avoidable’ deaths are key statistical indicators of whether our health system is working.

It is clear from the analysis in this report, sirens should be sounding from the far west of the state ... Where you live shouldn’t dictate how long you’ll live, but unfortunately in NSW it does.

The report is the first in a series called The Unlucky Country: Life expectancy and health in regional and remote **Australia**, which will focus on NSW.

block-time published-time 8.07pm GMT

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

Mental health organisations advocate with MPs to mark Youth Suicide Week

A leading youth organisation is meeting with MPs at Parliament House this morning to advocate for reforms to the mental health sector during Youth Suicide Week.

Youth Insearch supports at-risk youth to overcome trauma and improve mental health.

Among those present are the assistant minister for health and aged care, Ged Kearney, the shadow assistant minister for mental health and suicide prevention, Melissa McIntosh, and the CEO of Youth Insearch, Stephen Lewin.

This year's theme "trauma to triumph" will acknowledge the 402 young people who lost their lives to suicide in 2021, 80 of whom were under 17 years old, via an installation on the lawns of Parliament House.

Referred to as the "forgotten middle", the organisation has developed a [report](#) as part of lobbying efforts with the government to highlight gaps in the current model – which facilitates mental health services to young people via headspace as a sole provider.

Lewin said with recent NSW suicide rates indicating the rate of suicide in young girls had almost doubled (40%), it was evident the current model is not working:

Suicide remains the biggest killer of Australians aged 14 to 24 years. We know that 20% of those young people who present for mental health support have experienced complex trauma from three or more adverse life events.

We know that complex trauma increases the risk of suicidality. So when we consider that those who have experienced trauma are unlikely to present to traditional psychologists, who may represent the same adults or authority figures who have let them down in life, it starts to become pretty clear that as a nation, we need to find another solution.

Parliamentarians will receive a blue heart to wear during the week.

block-time published-time 8.02pm GMT

Welcome

Good morning and welcome. I'm Martin Farrer and I'll be bringing you the main breaking stories from overnight before my colleague Amy Remeikis takes over with all the action in politics.

A leading Australian thinktank has weighed into the spying balloon controversy this morning, arguing that the Jindalee radar network [would be able to spot any such device in our airspace](#). The Australian Strategic Policy Institute also suggested how one might be shot down. Although **Australia** doesn't have F-22 jets, it does have F-35s, and the ASPI says they would be able to hit a balloon using a "zoom climb".

It comes as China's foreign ministry accused the US overnight of flying high-altitude balloons over its airspace [more than 10 times since the beginning of last year](#), and as the US president, Joe Biden, comes under pressure to reveal [what Washington knows about the devices](#) it shot down, with his administration [accusing China of running a spy balloon program for many years](#), including through the Trump administration.

Queensland is on high alert as bushfires rage in a country area of the state, fuelled by hot conditions. An emergency warning is in place this morning for a bushfire near the town of Miles as crews battle a number of blazes in rural areas west of Brisbane. [The leave-immediately alert](#) was issued for the Myall Park and Hookwood fire on Monday afternoon.

Vanuatu's prime minister, Alatoi Ishmael Kalsakau, will embark on a three-day tour of **Australia** today, joined by his trade and business minister as well as his agriculture minister. Anthony Albanese says the visit will give the government the opportunity to listen to Vanuatu's priorities and strengthen co-operation in trade, security and

Government receives strategic defence review – as it happened

climate. “**Australia** and Vanuatu have a strong relationship and a shared commitment to work with our Pacific family to secure the best outcomes for the region,” he said ahead of the visit.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.06pm GMT

Load-Date: February 14, 2023

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