

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters



[Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \\$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters](#)

The Guardian (London)

October 23, 2023 Monday 9:28 PM GMT

Copyright 2023 The Guardian, a division of Transcontinental Media Group Inc. All Rights Reserved

theguardian

Section: AUSTRALIA NEWS; Version:22

Length: 19046 words

Byline: Caitlin Cassidy (now) and Emily Wind (earlier)

Highlight: Some residents of Strathpine, in Brisbane's north, have been stuck in their homes since 4am. Follow the day's news livelsrael-Hamas war live updatesGet our morning and afternoon news emails, free app or daily news podcast

Body

block-time published-time 8.16am BST

Consultancy firm McKinsey was paid \$1.3m for just over a month's extra time on a contract for its work on the cybersecurity strategy released in September, Senate estimates has heard.

McKinsey was initially brought on for just over \$860,000 for two months' work between February and April, but in April the contract was extended for just over another month at a cost of \$1.3m, bringing the total value of the contract to McKinsey to more than \$2m.

Hamish Hansford, deputy secretary for cybersecurity in the home affairs department, said the extension was due to the "volume of work" being undertaken by the department with McKinsey's support. A second extension was considered but decided against.

He said the minister's office did not request for the work to be extended, but confirmed the minister met representatives from McKinsey during the strategy development 22 times. The expert advisory board met McKinsey eight times.

Hansard said value for money was one factor considered in granting the contract extension.

The contract went to tender in early February, and was open for one week. The firm was one of three brought on to work on the strategy, with CyberCX and Clyde & Co.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

McKinsey's consultancy work was the focus of [an episode of Last Week Tonight this week](#).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.29am BST

block-time published-time 8.09am BST

No ceasefire until Hamas terror removed 'once and for all', Israeli ambassador to **Australia** says

The Israeli ambassador to **Australia** has suggested a ceasefire between Israeli forces and Hamas is unlikely until the Palestinian militant group is removed "once and for all".

Amir Maimon, who will deliver an address at the National Press Club on Wednesday, told Sky News on Tuesday evening he did not think a ceasefire was possible while the threat of Hamas existed.

Israel's ambassador to **Australia** Amir Maimon (centre) arrives in the press gallery for a television interview at Parliament House. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

The ambassador said he believed it was going to be a "very long war", exceeding the length of other past military operations in the region.

Hezbollah, the Lebanese-based Islamist militia group, has [recently launched attacks on Israel's northern border with Lebanon](#).

Maimon said it was a "very tense situation" but Israel "will be ready" if the situation deteriorates further.

We are not interested in opening a new front but we are determined that if such a front will be open, we will be ready.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.21am BST

block-time published-time 8.01am BST

'Vast majority' registering to self-exclude from gambling websites are under 40

Almost 10,000 people have signed up in two months to self-exclude from gambling websites as part of the federal government's BetStop program, the vast majority aged under 40.

The program, which launched at the end of August, requires all wagering providers to close the betting accounts of people who have signed up, and must not let them bet or open a new account, and they cannot send marketing messages to anyone on the register, Australian Communications and Media Authority (Acma) chair Nerida O'Loughlin told Senate estimates.

O'Loughlin said the "vast majority" of the people registering were under the age of 40, and were registering for an exclusion from betting sites for life.

We're seeing this combination of younger people excluding for life, which we think really explains the importance of this initiative, particularly for younger Australians, who want to be in more control of their gambling.

O'Loughlin said people were also registering for a support person to help them stop gambling - that is typically a family member, friend or counsellor to assist through self-exclusion.

Acma is now focused on making industry comply with the register, and O'Loughlin said while the focus has been on building voluntary compliance, the regulator would not hesitate to take formal action.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.07am BST

block-time published-time 7.55am BST

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

ABC updates editorial policy after Four Corners report on Woodside protest

The ABC has updated its editorial policy to include procedures of what to do if a journalist learns of a crime or a potential crime as part of their reporting.

The question is in relation to the issue of protesters outside a Woodside executive's home, which was filmed as part of a Four Corners episode.

The ABC is still going through procedures to see what footage, if any, it would hand over to police, in response to a notice to produce from Western **Australia** police. ABC managing director David Anderson said the ABC has given undertakings they will not be revealing confidential sources.

Under questioning from Liberal senator Sarah Henderson, who has been very critical of a number of ABC editorial decisions, Anderson said the ABC's policy has been updated to advise journalists to contact managers if they learn of potential criminal activity.

What I'm doing is making it clear that should happen by making it crystal clear whoever the crew, wherever they are, they should be in touch with their manager about what they know at the time and a judgment should be made.

He said the journalist on the Woodside story had been in touch with their manager.

I think there was judgment that was exercised locally, without an upward referral. That I think probably should have happened. In fact, I think it should have happened.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.00am BST

block-time published-time 7.49am BST

Over to New South Wales, and a ["watch and act"](#) warning has been issued for Tenterfield, in the New England region.

A grass fire is moving in an easterly direction under strong winds.

enltrWATCH & ACT: Old Race Course Rd Fire (Tenterfield) A grass fire is moving in an easterly direction under strong winds. If you are in the vicinity of Kochs Road Prepare Now. pic.twitter.com/vRexnkDSk5

— NSW RFS (@NSWRFS) [October 24, 2023](#)

Under this warning, there is a heightened level of threat.

Conditions are changing and you need to start taking action now to protect you and your family.

Dozens of fires across the state are at an "advice" level – meaning they are either being controlled or under control.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.51am BST

block-time published-time 7.43am BST

Minister for foreign affairs Penny Wong has condemned reports of arson at Adelaide mosques this week.

There have been media reports circulating of two instances of arson at separate mosques in the past week, as well as an incident at a northern suburbs school, as conflict in the Middle East continues.

Wong took to X, formerly Twitter, to highlight the "responsibility to call out discrimination, hate speech and prejudice" in all forms.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

All of us – including every political leader – must stand together against Islamophobia.

enltrl am appalled by reports of arson at Adelaide mosques this week. All of us – including every political leader - must stand together against Islamophobia. We all have a responsibility to call out discrimination, hate speech and prejudice wherever we see it.

— Senator Penny Wong (@SenatorWong) [October 24, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.44am BST

block-time published-time 7.34am BST

Bushfires in Queensland are persisting into the evening, with seven communities under multiple warnings to leave their homes and one further community on alert to evacuate.

enltrlLEAVE IMMEDIATELY - Cypress Gardens and Millmerran Downs - Multiple Warnings - fire as at 4:13pm Tuesday, 24 October 2023. For all current warnings, updates and mapping go to <https://t.co/vqyJTUPBhe.pic.twitter.com/2rJMlc5CPY>

— Qld Fire & Emergency (@QldFES) [October 24, 2023](#)

The latest information has Cypress Gardens, Millmerran Downs, Tara, Wieambilla, Kogan, Goranba and Weranga under an emergency warning. Communities are being urged to leave immediately, as firefighting planes assist ground crews.

Weranga is under a “watch and act” warning and being told to prepare to leave, as is Millmerran Woods, which remains unsafe to return to.

Four areas are at the “stay informed” level, including Carnarvon Gorge, Westgrove and Injune, Captains Mountain, Tallebudgera Valley and Wolvi near Gympie. This means residents must follow their bushfire survival plan, stay indoors and monitor the situation lest it deteriorates.

If you’re in areas currently under warnings, monitor the latest [here](#) , including evacuation centres, and remember to check for road closures and stay hydrated.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.47am BST

block-time published-time 7.14am BST

Police lock down Strathpine streets in Brisbane, negotiating with armed man

A standoff with armed police has entered its 14th hour, with some residents of a north Brisbane suburb locked inside their homes since 4am.

Queensland police were called to the Peter Street home, in Strathpine, at about 1.30am this morning.

They began negotiating with the man, who was alone in the residence.

At 4am they locked down the area, issuing a emergency declaration.

The lockdown boundaries cover Gertrude Street, Peter Street, Rowland Street and Cavendish Street.

Members of the public are advised to avoid the area and those within the exclusion zone are asked to remain indoors until further notice.

Traffic is being diverted around the area.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.25am BST

block-time published-time 7.03am BST

ABC needs funding to protect vital broadcast assets from natural disasters

Circling back to ABC's Afternoon Briefing, Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young has called for an additional \$10m to be provided to the ABC in the light of a hot summer ahead.

In June, the federal government announced a three-year \$20m Broadcasting Resilience Program (BRP), to "improve the resilience" of 107 ABC radio sites used for emergency broadcasting, which are at a higher risk of service failure due to natural disasters.

Hanson-Young said the ABC played a "hugely important role" in updating the community during times of crisis.

This is the scary beginning of what is going to be a pretty horrifying summer ... We have to be better prepared. The ABC plays a hugely important role, they are the official emergency broadcaster across the country.

The government should bring the extra money needed. I wrote to the communications and emergency management [minister] today calling on them to give the ABC an extra \$10m, this is important. Summer is going to be hard, it will be hot and dangerous and Australians need to know they can trust that when information is needed it will be able to be provided by the ABC.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.25am BST

block-time published-time 6.54am BST

Environment department reviewing salmon fishing expansion in Macquarie Harbour

The federal environment department has told a senate estimates hearing it is examining three requests to review a 2012 decision to expand salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour in Tasmania without further assessment under national environmental laws.

The requests come after [scientists raised concerns](#) about a crash in the number of Maugean skate, an ancient fish species listed as endangered under the laws but which research has warned may be on the brink of extinction.

Under national laws, the environment minister may review a decision made under the act where substantial new relevant information comes to light.

This unique endangered Maugean skate, only found in Tasmanian waters, is at risk from polluted waters in Macquarie Harbour. Photograph: Jane Ruckert/AAP

Studies have found the Maugean skate's numbers have fallen sharply over the past decade as its environment has been degraded by human influence, including from salmon farming pollution, hydro power stations altering upstream river flows and rising harbour temperatures due to the climate crisis.

Senator Peter Whish-Wilson, the Greens spokesperson for healthy oceans, said the regulation of salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour had been "a disaster" and urged the government to "pull every lever available" to ensure the survival of the skate:

The federal government's 2012 decision to expand salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour was made with the proviso it would not significantly impact the Maugean skate. But scientists now warn the endangered species is fighting for survival precisely because of a decline in water quality attributed largely to salmon farming in the Harbour.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

If the federal environment minister does have the jurisdiction to reverse the 2012 decision to rapidly expand salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour then she absolutely should.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.02am BST

block-time published-time 6.40am BST

More local content quotas needed to offset competition from streaming services

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young has appeared on ABC'S Afternoon Briefing, fresh from Senate Estimates. Hanson-Young has been lobbying for greater local content quotas in [Australia](#) as streaming services attract viewers away from free-to-air television.

Free-to-air TV increasingly struggles to retain viewers in the face of a flood of content from streaming services such as Netflix, Disney+ and Amazon Prime. Composite: Netflix / Disney / Alamy / Stan

The Senator said the program rules and regulations were “not fit for purpose” and “way out of date” in light of the move away from commercial television.

For a long time we have had regulations for free-to-air television to create and invest in local stories. We do have this flood of Australians and audiences moving from free-to-air television to streaming services and we do not have the same rules in place, and we need them.

At the last election the Labor Party promised that they would put in place regulations ... Eighteen months out from the next election, we have not seen that legislation.

Hanson-Young said the big tech companies weren't interested in investing in Australian jobs and stories, they just wanted to “make a quick buck wherever they can”.

We were told originally by the minister for arts, Tony Burke, that [there would be] legislation in the Senate this year. That has not happened. They confirm today ... that we will see these regulations in place by July next year ... we are running out of time to get the legislation done. This will be fight over the next few months ... You can understand that the political pressure and the money behind those [big] players will have a detrimental effect.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.53am BST

block-time published-time 6.27am BST

Hot, windy weather to persist, total fire bans Wednesday for large parts of NSW

Back to the fire situation.

Large parts of New South Wales will be under total fire bans tomorrow as hot and windy conditions persist. Be careful out there.

enltrTotal Fire Bans will be in place tomorrow, Wednesday 25 October, for the Far North Coast, New England, Greater Hunter, Upper Central West Plains, North Western and Northern Slopes. Hot and windy conditions are forecast across several parts of the state. <https://t.co/R9tDns8ts6> [pic.twitter.com/9phelDwv5h](https://t.co/pic.twitter.com/9phelDwv5h)

— NSW RFS (@NSWRFS) [October 24, 2023](#)

In Queensland, Tara, Wieambilla, Kogan, Goranba, Weranga, Cypress Gardens and Millmerran Downs communities are still being urged to leave. Millmerran Woods is not safe to return to because of the fires.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.36am BST

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

block-time published-time 6.19am BST

Husic doesn't back away from calling for protection of Palestinian civilians

Husic has been asked about comments he made last week about the conflict in the Middle East, urging the government to push for de-escalation so that innocent Palestinians don't pay the price.

Fellow Labor minister **Anne Aly** said it was "hard to argue" that children were Hamas and therefore deserved to pay the price of the terrorist group's actions.

Have you been surprised how that has been received, that people seem to think that you were breaking ranks with your fellow frontbenchers?

Husic said he had received "quite a lot of positive feedback" from people "equally concerned" about the potential for the conflict to put a huge burden on innocent people.

We're just trying to get a bit of balance, a bit of focus on innocent Palestinians that may be affected by what is going on.

I think no-one disputes that Israel needs to be able to respond to the terrible events of October 7 that happened on their soil ... and people understand Hamas needs to be held to account, but there is genuinely a concern in the community.

I am only one of many that has expressed this concern and I think it is important that we get that balance right and, to be frank, I think it would be weird for me to apologise trying to express a view that says, 'can we just please take into account that the toll has been borne by innocent Palestinians in terms of what we are seeing and to find a strategic, more precise way to deal with Hamas'.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.38am BST

block-time published-time 6.11am BST

A nation of tradies will soon have more 'digital tradies' thanks to Microsoft

Industry and science minister Ed Husic has described today's \$5bn Microsoft investment in increased cyber defence for **Australia** as an investment in "digital tradies" – language we can all understand.

Anthony Albanese confirmed the new investment on the opening day of his state visit to the US, flanked by Microsoft's vice-chair and president, Brad Smith, and Microsoft **Australia** and New Zealand Managing director Steven Worrall.

Husic told ABC's Afternoon Briefing the deal demonstrated a "huge vote of confidence" in **Australia**.

Our country is really leaning in to the proposition that technology plays an important part in sharpening our economy, strengthening our businesses, creating great jobs.

We have got a talent pool here that Microsoft can tap into and that can skill up ... we will see \$5bn investment into nearly 10 new data centres across New South Wales and Victoria, joining the other 20 that are already there.

It will provide Cloud and AI products to businesses that are wanting to sharpen up the way that they operate. It will see an investment, in particular, like, digital tradies – will help maintain data centres or provide digital skills across the broader economy ... and it will also provide some important work and investment to team up with us on cyber security as well.

Related: [Microsoft to help **Australia**'s cyber spies amid \\$5bn investment in cloud computing](#)

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.23am BST

block-time published-time 6.05am BST

ABC funding in real terms falling despite Labor reversing indexation cuts, Anderson says

Greens senator Sarah Hanson Young has turned estimates attention to ABC funding cuts.

Hanson Young asks if the ABC, in real terms, has lost half a billion dollars in funding from 1985 to today. That is based on page 153 of the ABC's annual report, which shows funding decreases over the past 38 years.

It's a decrease of \$484m or 34% when it comes to operational revenue from the government.

Hanson-Young asks about the most recent cuts the ABC experienced under the Coalition government, which Labor said it would restore.

ABC managing director David Anderson said the Albanese government returned \$84m lost in indexation cuts made by the Coalition, but it has done that over four years. It is not ongoing, so the ABC would have to reapply at the end of the four years for further funding.

And overall, the funding in real terms has been decreasing.

So the numbers might have gone up but in real terms, we've gone backwards.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.15am BST

block-time published-time 5.58am BST

Antarctic division clearly 'not fit for purpose' as report recommends overhaul of funding model

The federal government was warned its Antarctic division was "clearly not fit for purpose" and was urged to consider overhauling its structure to make it a corporate entity like the CSIRO.

The Australian Antarctic Division, which includes icebreaker RSV Nuyina, is accused of having complex funding arrangements and wasteful duplication of science programs. Photograph: AP

The report, by the Australian Antarctic Science Council, was requested by the environment minister Tanya Plibersek in response to a "complex and challenging operational environment" that showed the current arrangement was ineffective and confusing.

Months after the report was delivered to the government in April, [the division admitted it overspent \\$42m](#) and did not run internal budgets. A budget crunch has led to climate change research being restricted or delayed.

Here's a section of the report by the council, which has been provided to a senate inquiry into the Australian Antarctic Division. This section refers to the program's current funding model:

The status quo is clearly not fit for purpose.

The current model has poor coherence, with disparate funding streams pursuing multiple objectives that do not necessarily align with the national interest or operational capabilities.

It is inefficient, with complex funding arrangements, multiple entities, duplication of science programs, leadership, administration and governance overheads.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.32am BST

block-time published-time 5.50am BST

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

Police make two arrests in case of alleged defrauding of elderly Sydney woman

In Sydney's south-west, two people have been charged over an alleged fraud of an elderly woman in excess of \$100,000, NSW police confirms.

Investigations into the alleged fraud began in July, leading to the arrest yesterday morning of a 43-year-old woman at a school in the area. After further inquiries, detectives arrested a 48-year-old man in Narwee about 6.30am today.

The 81-year-old victim is believed to be known to the alleged perpetrators, who police allege stole jewellery, cash, and the elderly woman's bank cards before fraudulently using them to spend more than \$100,000 on clothes, food and other items.

Police allege the pair coerced the woman out of her unit in Mascot and illegally collected rent on the property.

The 43-year-old woman has been charged with two counts of dishonestly obtain financial advantage etc. by deception, while the 48-year-old male has been charged with fraudulently render false expense account and dishonestly obtain financial advantage etc. by deception.

The woman was granted strict conditional bail and will appear at Bankstown Local Court at the end of next month.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.58am BST

block-time published-time 5.38am BST

Property pundits confident house prices will rise over next 12 months

Nab is the latest group to report home prices continue to rebound, with their property index climbing to 40 points, marking a third quarter in a row of gains. (That level is more than double the survey's average of 18 points.)

There's a range of sentiment, though, with Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland among states on the up. Tasmania and the ACT are in negative territory, while confidence eased in Western Australia and South Australia (but still positive).

"Expectations for a housing market recovery over the next few years strengthened, with confidence levels among surveyed property professionals rising to their highest levels in around two years," Nab said.

These professionals on average see national home values rising 1.5% in the next 12 months and 2.4% in two years' time.

The pace of rental growth, meanwhile, is decelerating in most parts of the country but is still growing almost three times faster than the decade-average, Nab said.

Rents over the year and the next were predicted to grow a "still healthy" 3%, down from a prediction of 4% in the June quarter. Rental markets are "undersupplied" in all states, with about four of five professionals surveyed assessing supply as out of whack with demand.

Rents, by the way, are likely to be a notable contributor to the September quarter consumer price index scheduled to be released by the ABS tomorrow at 11.30am Aedt.

A pick-up in inflation will stock expectations of another RBA rate rise next month - and perhaps take some of the wind out of those property sales.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.20am BST

block-time published-time 5.28am BST

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

More Australians escape Palestine; **Australia** also helping New Zealanders leave, Wong says

Four Australians and one permanent resident have crossed the Palestinian border into Jordan from the West Bank overnight, Penny Wong has confirmed.

Palestinians and foreign nationals alike are trying to leave Gaza and the West Bank for safety elsewhere. Photograph: Xinhua/Shutterstock

Wong [said on X](#), formerly known as Twitter, on Tuesday afternoon the five were assisted by the Kingdom of Jordan to leave the conflict zone via the West Bank.

The government said more than 1,800 Australians have left Israel and Palestine since the conflict began on 7 October, adding it is helping New Zealand citizens also to leave.

Wong says:

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is dire. DFAT continues to support Australians, permanent residents and immediate family members there. **Australia** is working with partners to secure sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access and the safe passage of civilians from Gaza.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.10am BST

block-time published-time 5.21am BST

Queensland fire bans announced, three emergency warnings remain for fire zones

A fire ban will be in place until Saturday for a string of local government areas in Queensland because of heightened fire conditions.

They include: Diamantina, Boulia, Cloncurry, McKinlay, Mount Isa, Burke and Carpentaria.

enltr?? FIRE BAN FOR NORTH QUEENSLAND ?? Due to heightened fire conditions, a local fire ban will be in place for the Diamantina, Boulia, Cloncurry, McKinlay, Mount Isa, Burke and Carpentaria Local Government Areas. For residents in these areas, the ban will be in place from 0001hrs...

— Qld Fire & Emergency (@QldFES) [October 24, 2023](#)

A reminder, [three emergency warnings](#) remain in place for Cypress Gardens, Millmerran Downs, Tara, Kogan, Goranba, Weranga and Wieambilla, with residents urged to leave those areas immediately.

Millmerran Woods is under 'watch and act', and it is not safe to return.

enltrLEAVE IMMEDIATELY - Cypress Gardens and Millmerran Downs - Multiple Warnings - fire as at 2:14pm Tuesday, 24 October 2023. For all current warnings, updates and mapping go to <https://t.co/vqyJTUPBhe>. [pic.twitter.com/3igsQe1oNB](https://t.co/vqyJTUPBhe)

— Qld Fire & Emergency (@QldFES) [October 24, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.29am BST

block-time published-time 5.12am BST

Albanese visits US military cemetery ahead of White House dinner

And now for the latest episode in our favourite game titled: What in the world has Anthony Albanese been up to?

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

He has been visiting Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, prior to a White House dinner on Wednesday night.

Prime Minister Albanese takes a moment to reflect, after laying a wreath at Arlington National Cemetery's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Photograph: Drew Angerer/Getty Images

And a reminder, the B-52s will be providing live entertainment for the evening, despite not featuring on any of the prime minister's famed music playlists.

Could this be a nod to [US deployment of B-52 bombers](#) to **Australia** late last year, said at the time to likely fuel tensions with China?

Or is Joe Biden expecting a rousing rendition of 'Rock Lobster' to remind **Australia**'s seafood industry of one of the last tariffs in place in the lingering trade dispute with China?

Time will tell.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.51am BST

block-time published-time 5.02am BST

Thanks as ever to the lovely Emily Wind. Here for the next few.

block-time published-time 5.01am BST

Many thanks for being with me on the blog today. I'll now hand you over to the excellent Caitlin Cassidy to take you through the afternoon news. Take care!

block-time published-time 4.57am BST

Albanese's high speed rail agency yet to begin planning train line

A year and a half after [Labor](#) took a vision for high speed rail to the 2022 election, the agency created to develop the project won't begin planning the line until next year, because it is busy with its "strategic plan" and "organisational strategy".

The glacial pace of the [Albanese government's fast train ambitions](#) was revealed during budget estimates late Monday night.

The project drew comparisons to Utopia, the TV series satirising the absurdity of government bureaucracy, after its chief referred questions about progress to a "corporate plan" published on its website.

Read more:

Related: [Albanese's high speed rail agency at a complete halt, saying it's busy with 'strategic plan'](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.54am BST

block-time published-time 4.51am BST

It's a stitch in time for this cozy of crocheters in Senate estimates

In some lighter Senate estimates news, one eagle eye late on Monday night caught Labor senator and committee chair Louise Pratt working on a crocheting project.

Estimates days are long, starting at 9am and lasting until 11pm. The finance and public administration committee, which Pratt chairs, dragged on even later.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

At about 10.30pm, Pratt whipped out the crocheting needles while weary-eyed government witnesses answered question after question.

Labor senator and committee chair, Louise Pratt, crochets during estimates. Photograph: Senate live stream

When asked what she was crocheting, Pratt told Guardian **Australia** it was a shawl but that she was “an absolute beginner” compared with her party colleagues **Anne Aly** and Anne Urquhart.

We do what we can to get through the day, I suppose.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.00am BST

block-time published-time 4.48am BST

Robert Irwin to co-host of I'm A Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here!

Robert Irwin, the son of the late larrikin TV personality and “crocodile hunter” Steve Irwin, has been named as the 2024 co-host of I'm A Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here!

The 19-year-old, who works at the **Australia** Zoo, takes over the role from fellow animal lover, Bondi Vet Dr Chris Brown, and will co-host the reality TV series from South Africa alongside comedian Julia Morris.

On Tuesday morning, Paramount, which owns Network Ten and the streaming service Paramount+, said “the passionate conservationist, zookeeper, photographer, and presenter will swap **Australia** Zoo for the unpredictable wilds of Africa to run our latest crop of celebrities through their paces”.

I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here 2024 co-hosts Robert Irwin and Julia Morris. Photograph: Paramount

Irwin, who was nominated for a best newcomer Logie when he was just nine, described the role as “a huge honour”.

He said:

I can't wait to plunge back into the incredible African jungle and introduce our celebrities to the magnificent wildlife that call the jungle home.

Most of all, I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to work alongside the incredibly kind and talented Julia Morris. Crikey! This is going to be a wild ride!

The 10th season of I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here! airs from 24 March 2024 on Network Ten.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.04am BST

block-time published-time 4.40am BST

VCE students have some virtual fun with imaginary garden festival

Moving to some lighter news, and it hasn't taken long for year 12 students to take to social media with jokes about today's VCE English exam.

This education reporter couldn't understand why so many students were sharing videos on social media expressing their enthusiasm about attending the Narrow Valley Garden Festival.

What garden festival? It was just a bit of flip plant fun by VCE students. Photograph: Image Professionals GmbH/Alamy

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

"Screw Coachella when Narrow Valley is hosting a garden festival," one user posted on social media, donned in black shades. "Me on the way to the Narrow Valley Botanical Gardens for a meeting about the festival," wrote another.

But where is Narrow Valley? Why does this alleged festival not appear on Google? Why do teenagers suddenly love plants?

Turns out, the hypothetical festival was part of the English exam's Section C on persuasive language, where students had to identify – based on a prompt and an image – tactics used to convince the reader of the benefits the festival would bring the community.

To all those on their way to the festival, enjoy the ride!

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.54am BST

block-time published-time 4.32am BST

Queensland residents sheltering from fires in evacuation centres

The QFES superintendent said there are 50 people in evacuation centres as a result of the bushfires.

Some have relocated due to the smoke, or because it was part of their bushfire survival plan, he said.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.02am BST

block-time published-time 4.30am BST

Five homes lost in Queensland bushfires

As we just reported, five homes have been lost in the Queensland bushfires, a QFES superintendent said.

Taking questions from reporters, he says these homes are in the Millmerran and Tara in the Darling Downs.

They are sort of spread out.

He says so far no-one has been injured by the fires, while crews continue to watch about 10 other structures.

During the day, we use fire to curb the fire and push the fire away from structures where we can.

It is hard if our appliances cannot get to your house. It is important to make sure you have numbering on your gate and we can drive the appliance up to your house and around your house, can get access to your water supply. Help us to help you in your time of need.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.08am BST

block-time published-time 4.27am BST

Fires rage across Queensland, hot weather forecast to continue into the weekend

A QFES superintendent said there are 43 fires across Queensland currently, with 125 appliances and more than 400 volunteers and staff combatting them.

It is a partnership between local government, parks and stakeholders to control these fires.

The aircraft are on scene helping to contain the fires, but with the windy conditions today, spot fires are advancing 200m in front of the fire itself.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

He said the hot, dry weather is expected to continue into the weekend:

In some parts of the country we have to let the fires run until we can get to them because that is the safest thing and that is why it is important to notify the community what they can do.

He confirmed five houses had been lost during the bushfires, and further investigations will be conducted once the fires are contained.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.31am BST

block-time published-time 4.23am BST

Lack of rain to exacerbate Queensland bushfire season, aerial firefighting fleet contract extended

Staying with the Queensland bushfires, and the states minister for fire and emergency services, Mark Ryan, is providing an update to the media.

He said the state's bushfire season will be extended, due to the outlook for below average rainfall and intense dryness.

More bushfires like this one last week at Deepwater in Queensland, are expected this season thanks to below average rainfall. Photograph: Queensland Fire and Rescue Emergency Services

Ryan says the Queensland government has invested into the royal fire service over the past 12 to 18 months, especially in aerial firefighting fleets.

Today, the premier and I both announced the Rural Fire Service will be extending the contracted period for some of those aerial firefighting fleet assets.

That is an important thing for Queenslanders to be aware of that investments are being made, but alongside the commitment and dedication of all the members of the RFS, we will remain focused and committed on responding to bushfire in emergencies when they arise in supporting communities that have been impacted by those bushfires.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.40am BST

block-time published-time 4.20am BST

Queensland's Western Downs residents told to evacuate ahead of a fast-moving fire

Let's check in with the current bushfire warnings in south Queensland, where firefighters are continuing to battle a number of blazes:

Residents of Tara, Kogan, Goranba, Weranga and Wieambilla are all being told to leave immediately.

The Queensland Fire and Emergency Service said a large, fast-moving fire is burning along Guranba Road and is expected to impact Weranga North Road very soon.

A large, dangerous fire is also burning along Mary Road and Tomalou Lane, expected to impact Bennett School Road very soon.

QFES says firefighting aircraft is helping ground crews. A number of evacuation centres have been established for those who have to leave their homes.

Meanwhile, residents of Millmerran Woods, Cypress Gardens and Millmerran Downs are all being told it is too late to leave.

This comes as a fire near Primrose Drive is still burning and travelling towards Waratah Drive.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

A number of fires throughout the state remain at “advice” level (we had an [explainer](#) on this earlier).

Earlier, a QFES superintendent warned that conditions will deteriorate today and for the rest of the week, with high temperatures and low humidity drying out the fuel and creating erratic fire behaviour (you can read more on that [here](#)).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.28am BST

block-time published-time 4.16am BST

Dutton concerned about wind turbine impact on ‘wildlife’, ‘environment’

Peter Dutton has described the potential environmental impact of a wind farm off the New South Wales Hunter coast as “an absolute travesty”.

The opposition leader, flanked by shadow climate change and energy minister Ted O'Brien, has told reporters in Nelson Bay he held concerns for the project's impact on the local sealife.

We're all in favour of renewable energy, but not at any cost, and not where you're destroying jobs and livelihoods and the environment...

The government hasn't done its homework. We don't know about the environmental impacts on rare bird species. We don't know the impact on the seabed. You know, there are so many elements to this.

The federal government announced in July an area stretching 1800 square kilometres between Swansea and Port Stephens on the NSW coast had been selected to become a renewable energy hub due to be operating by 2030.

The wind zone would help contribute to the Labor government's target of achieving 82% renewable energy by the end of the decade.

Dutton's Coalition has so far continued to maintain its net zero emissions target by 2050 while in opposition, despite [rumblings by some from within the party to ditch it](#).

It's left the opposition without an obvious wedge on energy policy, beyond slowing down the race to adopt renewable energy or pushing for nuclear energy.

That's why, it appears, Dutton is now raising potential environmental considerations over these projects, pointing to the impact on whales, rare birds and fishing - an area he's not often synonymous with.

And just like that, the political spectrum becomes a circle.

block-time published-time 4.09am BST

Sighs of relief as students emerge relatively unscathed from VCE English exam

Thousands of students across Victoria have emerged victorious, or anxious, from the VCE English exam.

Examinations officially kicked off in the state at the beginning of the month with language and performance subjects however English is the first, and only, mandatory subject for year 12 students.

Dean of teaching and learning at Strathcona Girls Grammar Kara Baxter had a peek at the three-hour exam, which began at 9am, and said the mood amongst her students was one of “relief and excitement”.

They were quietly confident, happy with prompts and felt it played to their strengths. It was the first exam for most of them so we tried to put out good energy - saying their preparation has led them to this, that it's one of the many exams they'll undertake and it's about the learning and their journey.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

Baxter said ticking off the first in a lengthy exam period brought a “big sigh of relief” to the girls.

Last year was more curly compared to this year’s... I was relieved. Section B [in which students compared their set texts the Dressmaker and the Crucible] had an accessible prompt, and the open letter for section C gave argument analysis which was a good option to break it apart.

Exams run in Victoria until Wednesday, 15 November.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.33am BST

block-time published-time 4.02am BST

Ketter appointment not a case of ‘jobs for mates’, Gallagher says

In Senate estimates, finance minister Katy Gallagher has rejected assertions by the opposition that former Labor senator Chris Ketter appeared to be a “jobs for mates” appointment.

Ketter, who was a Labor senator between 2013 and 2019 and was more recently a staffer within Richard Marles’ office, was appointed [Australia](#)’s consul-general and senior trade and investment commissioner in San Francisco in July.

Hume has accused the former Queensland senator, now [Australia](#)’s consul-general in San Francisco, of having no trade investment experience. Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian

Liberal senator Jane Hume said in Senate estimates Ketter had “absolutely no experience in trade investment” before asking whether there was a “jobs for mates culture” within the Albanese government.

Gallagher responded:

No. I think we, in terms of my responsibility [as] the minister for the public service, and how we make appointments to government boards, we are already improving the process from what we inherited. There’s a lot more work to be done, and the Briggs recommendations will assist in guiding us on those.

Former public service commissioner Lynelle Briggs is undertaking a review into public sector board appointments processes and will report to Gallagher later this year.

Trade minister Don Farrell, who made the appointment, defended the decision last week, telling the Senate “all of the usual processes that apply in terms of selection of people that represent us in these missions overseas.

I am very comfortable with the appointment of Mr Ketter.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.22am BST

block-time published-time 3.55am BST

Investigations into robodebt code of conduct breaches have begun, commissioner says

Investigations into [the 16 bureaucrats referred to the central public service agency for their involvement in the illegal robodebt scheme](#) have begun with around half being issued notices outlining their potential code of conduct breaches.

Australian public service commissioner Gordon de Brouwer delivered the update in Senate estimates on Tuesday afternoon, noting those referred were “current and former APS employees and former agency heads”.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

The top bureaucrat said the public service commission currently had around “two dozen” formal investigations underway, beyond just those referred following the robodebt royal commission report, which he said was “well above” the usual two-or-three that had been the norm in recent years.

DeBrouwer said:

The inquiries underway reflect the expectation of the Australian people, the government and indeed the public service itself.

The royal commissioner Catherine Holmes handed down the report in July, describing robodebt as a “crude and cruel” scheme and a massive failure of public administration.

At least seven public servants, including the former Department of Human Services secretaries Kathryn Campbell and Renée Leon, were the subject of adverse findings.

A spokesperson for Leon told Guardian [Australia](#) in August she had been advised by the royal commission that she has not been referred to any other body for investigation.

Related: [Robodebt: 16 bureaucrats named in royal commission report face investigation by public service agency](#)

block-time published-time 3.51am BST

The New South Wales state government has spent half a million dollars disposing of out-of-date hand sanitisers left in schools over the pandemic.

In budget estimates this morning, deputy premier Prue Car was asked why \$536,000 had been spent in August on a contract simply disposing of hand sanitiser.

Chief executive of School Infrastructure NSW Dr Anthony Manning replied that the hand sanitiser, as it was expired, had to be handled as a “hazardous material”.

The contract is for the collection and disposal... it has an expiry date and a lot of it has been sitting in schools and would need to be managed... as a hazard material. I think at a point in time hand sanitiser was being consumed at a great rate [and] stock has still existed at schools... so we just had to cross that bridge.

block-time published-time 3.47am BST

Greens' Hanson-Young, Liberal's Hughes spar over Sky News' coverage of the voice

At Senate estimates, ABC managing director David Anderson is asked for some detail on the voice coverage review and says:

There's two different sorts of review we'll do after the voice referendum one, which is what we do anyway, but we do it after a federal election where we invite external reviewers to view or to review our coverage over that period of time to give their assessment of it.

Anderson says that is something the ABC does under its own initiative.

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young quips ‘imagine if Sky News did a review of their election coverage!’

Liberal senator and Sky after Dark regular, Hollie Hughes, comes to Sky's defence, saying it isn't taxpayer funded.

Hanson-Young: “Well, they take a lot of taxpayer handouts”.

Hughes says again they aren't tax payer funded.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

Hanson-Young: "No, and I wish they didn't get any taxpayer handouts, but they still put their hand out every bloody time they can."

Both senators are told to stay on track.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.56am BST

block-time published-time 3.41am BST

Minister defends spit hoods, used more than 80 times last year in Queensland prisons

Queensland's police and corrective services minister has defended the state's use of spit hoods in prisons after [data revealed the devices were used 82 times](#) on detainees last year.

The Queensland police service announced in September it would no longer use spit hoods in watch houses after a "thorough review into the matter" but they continue to be used in the state's prisons.

In parliament on Tuesday, Greens MP Michael Berkman asked the minister for police and corrective services, Mark Ryan, whether the government would ban the devices "before we see another death" occur.

Berkman was referring to an inquest into the death of Selesa Tafaifa, who died in prison in 2021 with a spit hood over her head. Tafaifa's family have been calling for the devices to be prohibited.

Berkman said:

Selesa Tafaifa died in a spit hood after asking for her puffer and telling prison officers four times that she couldn't breathe. Yet spit hoods have been used hundreds of times in Queensland prisons since then.

Ryan said he would not comment on Tafaifa's death as it was before the coroner but he said he supported custodial officers who do "dangerous work."

I support the work of custodial officers... They make decisions about [the] appropriate use of force in very dynamic situations... We need to remember that people in custody are there for a reason, sometimes because they're violent and dangerous.

Spit hoods are not used in Victoria, New South Wales or South [Australia](#). The ACT police and Australian Federal Police have also banned their use.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.47am BST

block-time published-time 3.35am BST

Don't assume most farmers vote for the Nationals, Farmers Federation president says

Back to the National Press Club where Fiona Simson is wrapping up questions.

She is asked whether rural [Australia](#), particularly the farm sector, is better represented by independents or the Nationals.

The reporter says "farmers overwhelmingly vote for the National Party on average", but Simson said "I don't think you can make assumptions about that anymore".

I think ... farmers are wanting people who represent their interests. Farmers are wanting people who care deeply about their communities. Farmers want people who can get outcomes. [And that's why] I think we can't take anything for granted. Nobody can take anything for granted. At the end of the day, the face of farming is changing and I think some of those things will change along with it.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.42am BST

block-time published-time 3.28am BST

Monash University signs MoU with 'constructive' journalism centre to rebuild media integrity

Monash University has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Constructive Institute based in Denmark to rebuild media integrity via the establishment of a Constructive Institute Asia Pacific.

The institute, to be opened in Melbourne next year in partnership with Constructive Institute in Aarhus, Denmark, is being led by ex ABC journalist, Professor Stan Grant. Grant was appointed the inaugural director of Constructive Institute Asia Pacific earlier this year.

The institute's central mission is to foster healthier democracies by helping journalists and news organisations via fellowship programs, reporting projects and academic research.

Grant said the institute had a crucial role to play in promoting democratic conversation.

The institute focuses on a solutions-based, nuanced and constructive approach to journalism, which improves public discourse by steering us away from the sensationalised and polarised narratives prevalent in news reporting today.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.40am BST

block-time published-time 3.23am BST

Better to 'walk away' from EU trade talks than settle for a bad deal, Simson says

Responding to a question from Guardian [**Australia**](#)'s rural and regional editor Gabrielle Chan, Fiona Simson said she would rather the Australian government walk away from the current EU deal than sign something that will "last for probably a generation" and take "some elements of our industry backwards".

At the moment with the current offers on the table – and of course, our negotiators are in Brussels right now, so who knows whether that may change before Osaka next week – but at the moment our industry have said they would rather stay at the table, they would rather minister [Don] Farrell walk away from what's currently on the table, even given it could take some time to get a new deal, rather than to subject us to something that will last for probably a generation, 40 or 50 years, and will take some elements of our industry backwards ...

We understand that there's been a lot of work done, the negotiators have been working really hard in this space. But at the moment it's really not a good deal, it's not a commercially viable deal for nearly any sector of our industry.

Simson adds:

It's not walk away and go away, it's walk away and stay at the table.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.28am BST

block-time published-time 3.15am BST

Rural communities must be consulted about renewable energy infrastructure, Simson says

Back to the National Press Club, where outgoing NFF president Fiona Simson is responding to questions.

She is asked whether the farming sector needs to "bend a little" when it comes to renewables infrastructure. This comes as some rural communities are protesting transmission line rollouts that go through their properties:

Related: [**Australia** urgently needs a grid upgrade – but the march of new power lines faces a bush revolt](#)

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

Simson said the NFF is in favour of renewable energy, but that doesn't mean the rights of landholders should be "trodden over by developers who think they have a carte blanche to talk to farmers and walk all over their land".

You can be in favour of renewables and insisting on a proper go for land holders at the same time and that's what we're doing.

She receives loud applause after this statement, and goes on to make another point about community consultation around renewable projects:

It's involving communities at the very first stage. So instead of communities being told a transmission line is coming through, instead of land holders being told there's been a 100m easement driven up, it's about involving communities in the planning of these things.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.17am BST

block-time published-time 3.07am BST

ABC voice reporting aimed for impartiality, was never about '50/50' coverage, says Anderson

Back to Senate estimates, where Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young has asked ABC managing director David Anderson about the broadcaster's voice coverage.

Anderson talks about the voice tracker – which has been reported on in other media – which, much like happens at the ABC during elections, records where someone sat on the voice issue – yes, no and other.

Australian prime minister Anthony Albanese speaks to reporters during the referendum... the ABC found it easier to get yes supporters on the record. Photograph: Dean Lewins/AAP

Anderson says it was never about 50/50 – in terms of making sure that "we were tracking and gaining other perspectives".

Anderson says it was a lot easier to get people to speak for the yes campaign, and there were a lot of rejections from people representing the no camp.

It was difficult for our teams to ensure that we were having a balance of perspective over time. We weren't aiming for 50/50 but it is important to gain it. You think about the platform, you think about programmes and you want to make sure that again, over that time, that impartiality standard that you're reaching similar people. For instance, if you've got a programme that is, you know, a big audience that sits on broadcasts, you want to make sure that you do have that balance of perspectives that sits across that programme throughout that period.

A review of the voice coverage is being carried out, as a matter of course.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.52am BST

block-time published-time 3.05am BST

Growing food and fibre not a luxury, 'it's an absolute necessity', Simson says

Turning to food security, Fiona Simson said the need to feed and clothe people amid climate change needs to be "on equal footing with any other challenge we face".

She pointed to figures showing there are 345m people facing acute levels of food insecurity, having more than doubled since 2020.

As we look towards a future of climate change and an extra 2bn mouths to feed, the need to feed and clothe that population should be on equal footing with any other challenge we face.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

Unfortunately, all too often it's the poor cousin, an afterthought, which is frequently the collateral damage of the climate agenda, or a knee jerk reaction to price spikes.

That's not to say the climate agenda isn't important, but ... we need to do two things at once.

Simson said policies that lower farm output should "never be taken lightly", and policies that "shave a per cent here and a per cent there" are just "widening a future food supply gap that should be narrowing".

[We need to remind] global decision makers we can walk and chew gum at the same time, that growing food and fibre isn't a luxury, it's an absolute necessity.

She is now taking questions.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.10am BST

block-time published-time 2.57am BST

Hollie Hughes leads Coalition attacks on ABC coverage during Senate estimates

The managing director of the ABC, David Anderson, is in front of the communications committee for Senate estimates. (For those who don't know, any senator can drop in to ask questions as part of estimates.)

Liberal senator Hollie Hughes is leading the Coalition charge against the ABC coverage of issues such as Israel and Palestine, for example. Anderson is not doing anything to inflame the situation. Hughes is making some quite theatrical statements, to which Anderson calmly answers by saying he will look into it.

Hughes has the microphone for some time, but ominously says it is just "page one" when she is forced to give up the call.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.01am BST

block-time published-time 2.56am BST

Farmers federation president says farmers bring 'moderating voice' to politics

Continuing to speak at the National Press Club, outgoing National Farmers Federation president Fiona Simson said she is passionate about ensuring farmers are heard in the national dialogue.

She said the traditional label of farmers as "conservative" doesn't sit well in her view, because "any successful farmer embraces change and embraces new ideas".

In a world where people are so insulated and disconnected from forces beyond their control, farmers are now able to keep things in perspective, to understand that most things are cyclical in the long run.

It's that moderating voice in an increasingly polarising world that I think farmers bring to the political debate right here in [Australia](#).

Simson says farmers "don't suffer nonsense" and "aren't easily swayed by ideas that might be fashionable, but lack merit".

That's why I hope that despite numbering fewer than we had a generation ago, we'll always hear the farmer's voice in our discourse here in [Australia](#), and of course, globally as well.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.23am BST

block-time published-time 2.49am BST

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

B-52s to play at Albanese's state dinner at the White House

Anthony Albanese may be getting a healthy serve of (rock) lobster at the upcoming White House state dinner – if the B-52s have anything to do with it.

Is it a US jet? No, its the band of Rock Lobster and beehive hair-do fame. Photograph: Lynn Goldsmith/Corbis/VCG/Getty Images

The American New Wave band has been announced as the official performers at Wednesday's state dinner, as reported by US media outlets. As 2013 watchers of Rage would know, the prime minister is a big music fan, so hopefully we'll see him up on his feet having a boogie.

The love shack White House is a little old place where We can get together

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.09am BST

block-time published-time 2.44am BST

Simson says there is 'widespread acknowledgement' among farmers the climate is changing and an acceptance climate action is happening

Simson turns to climate change, an issue that has long been "vexed and divisive" within the farming sector. She says she's noticed a recent shift in acknowledgement amongst her peers firstly that the climate is changing, and second that climate action is now inevitable.

Climate change has long been a vexed and divisive political issue in our sector, with farmers in various camps frustrated their deeply held views didn't represent a consensus among the farming population.

What we've seen in recent years is a series of acknowledgments, firstly a widespread acknowledgment the climate is changing, with many farmers believing they're witnessing these effects firsthand. Second, an acceptance the world is changing and that regardless of what we might think or what we may want, our governments, customers, and financial institutions globally are moving towards climate action, with real consequences for our sector.

And lastly, a recognition that we need to keep ahead of this change ... we're entering the climate transition with our eyes wide open, we're alive to the threats, such as the impact of changing climate, or poor planning of renewables, transmission infrastructure, and carbon offsets on agricultural land. But we are also alive to the opportunities, like positioning **Australia** as a global leader in low emissions farming. And enabling farmers to make informed decisions about monetising their carbon assets.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.50am BST

block-time published-time 2.40am BST

Fiona Simson: inflaming city-country divide 'isn't leadership',

Simson says it's easy for politicians to carry favour in some parts of the bush by inflaming a supposed divide between the city and the country – a tactic she believes "isn't leadership".

Talking about us and them. About the latte sippers and how they don't care and don't understand. That talk in my view isn't leadership – and despite the fact you can get a bloody good latte in the country these days.

The us and them rhetoric pushes us farmers away from the people we ultimately serve, the people who eat our food and use our fibre. It builds on the damaging misconception some farmers hold about what they do isn't valued by the broader community, and we know that has real repercussions.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

At the same time, she acknowledges there's "no shying away" from the reality there is a growing disconnect in the communities' understanding of agriculture, one that needs to be bridged.

We need them with us. The big conversations about the future of farming impact them too. And they deserve to have an informed view on what lies ahead.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.52am BST

block-time published-time 2.37am BST

National Farmers Federation president Fiona Simson gives outgoing speech

Over in Canberra, the National Farmers Federation (NFF) outgoing president Fiona Simson is appearing at the National Press Club. She has helmed the organisation for the past seven years.

She thanks her family, colleagues and peers, before thanking, "in a roundabout way", BHP.

I have never gone looking for a career in advocacy. As many of you will know, it wasn't until BHP came knocking and they wanted to dig up the Liverpool plains, I realised the need to speak up on behalf of food and fibre production and the people who care so deeply for their land.

Like many people going about their lives, running their businesses, caring for their families, you don't think that something as essential as feeding and clothing ourselves would require much advocacy. Who could disagree or want to limit something that satisfies the most basic of human needs?

She says in the 17 years since, she's learnt through "sheer ignorance" bad ideas gain traction – particularly in an environment "the average voter knows increasingly less about us as farmers and the work we do".

Connecting city and country is one of the things I have dedicated much of my time to, trying to bridge the gap between farmers and consumers, to improve the shared understanding of the challenges and the opportunities that we both face, and to foster a more collaborative and proactive approach to policy making.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.42am BST

block-time published-time 2.32am BST

Queensland Fire and Emergency issues leave now warning for Tara and Wieambilla residents

Queensland Fire and Emergency is urging residents in the Western Downs region of Tara and Wieambilla to leave immediately due to dangerous fire conditions.

enltrLEAVE IMMEDIATELY - Tara and Wieambilla - Multiple Warnings - fire as at 11:24am Tuesday, 24 October 2023. For all current warnings, updates and mapping go to <https://t.co/vqyJTUPBhe>. [pic.twitter.com/OlAqc07la9](https://t.co/vqyJTUPBhe)

— Qld Fire & Emergency (@QldFES) [October 24, 2023](https://t.co/vqyJTUPBhe)

A large, dangerous fire is burning along Mary Road and Tomalou Lane. It is expected to impact Bennett School Road very soon.

You can check all warnings [here](#).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.35am BST

block-time published-time 2.24am BST

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

Greens push government on closing the gap targets and Indigenous youth detention after death of 16-year-old in Perth prison

Greens senator Dorinda Cox has appealed to the federal government to take action on youth detention and incarceration after the death of a young Indigenous boy in a Perth prison last week.

In Senate estimates this morning, Cox asked the attorney general's department what it was doing around implementing recommendations of the 1991 royal commission into deaths in custody and advancing Closing the Gap targets around reducing rates of Indigenous people in criminal justice and youth detention systems.

The 16-year-old boy died in Unit 18 of the Casuarina men's prison, a separate youth facility within the maximum-security jail. Cox asked if the commonwealth could do more in helping prevent such deaths in future.

Cox said the Closing the Gap targets should be "front and centre" in these discussions, and that she was "lost for words" at the situation.

We should be doing something in this. 223 recommendations [of the royal commission] that are the responsibility of the federal government ... I want to hear about what your government are going to do for the people in custody right now and the children. After the loss of that young boy, my communities are reeling. They are being denied.

The Western Australian senator asked Labor senator Anthony Chisholm, representing attorney general Mark Dreyfus at the desk, what more the government could do.

There is a serious emergency about the situation of incarceration in this country, and we are doing nothing. Can this government please provide some action in relation to target 10 and 11 of the Closing the Gap targets, under the power of the attorney general?

Chisholm said juvenile justice was "a matter for states and territories" but that Dreyfus was providing national leadership on issues around raising the age of criminal responsibility, and the over-representation of children in justice and detention.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.27am BST

block-time published-time 2.18am BST

Shortage of mental health specialists in NSW 'highest priority' for state government

A shortage of mental health clinicians in New South Wales schools is leading to students who "seriously need" help missing out on receiving support.

Speaking in budget estimates, the deputy premier, Prue Car, said the demand for student wellbeing services across the state was "very high" and the "highest priority" of the government.

There are serious problems left to us by the former government... there are children who seriously need help and aren't able to access it.

Car said the problem came back to the workforce challenge facing schools and was "working hard" to increase staffing numbers.

We are committed to actually increasing the number of school counsellors and psychologists... we're working hard on that commitment.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.19am BST

block-time published-time 2.12am BST

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

Queensland fire conditions likely to deteriorate this week

ABC News just spoke with superintendent Wayne Waltisbuhl from Queensland Fire and Emergency for an update on the bushfires across the state. He said the bushfire at Tara is out of control, with firefighters working through forested areas today. Evacuations are occurring, with more expected throughout the day.

The Millmerran bushfire is slowly coming under control, Waltisbuhl said, hoping it will be under control later today.

Unfortunately, we did lose a few structures there yesterday but we were able to save quite a number as well.

He said five structures had been lost “and we could get more today”.

The fire is out of control, running hard. The best we can do is make sure people are safe, out of harms way and we’re starting to work along the edges of the fire with some sort of containment strategy.

Q : How are conditions looking into this afternoon?

They were bad yesterday but they’ll deteriorate more today and for the rest of the week. We can see high temperatures, really low humidities, which is just drying out the fuel and fire behaviour is quite erratic there at the moment.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.22am BST

block-time published-time 2.06am BST

Katy Gallagher says cost of superannuation on paid parental leave likely higher than estimated \$200m figure

At Senate estimates, Katy Gallagher has also been asked about the cost of superannuation on paid parental leave.

Gallagher says she doesn’t know where the \$200m figure which has been bandied about came from. She said yesterday that she understands it is “higher than that” but she hasn’t had a recent briefing.

Asked about it again today, she said that the last number she had, it was more than \$200m, but she does not have an up-to-date costing. She can’t remember when the last time she was given the figure though – “months and months” ago, she says.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.08am BST

block-time published-time 2.02am BST

Attorney general’s department says no policy work has occurred on Makarrata commission

The attorney-general’s department says it hasn’t done “any work” around the development of a Makarrata commission, the body called for in the Uluru statement to oversee truth and treaty processes – despite the federal government committing millions of dollars to the project in this year’s budget.

In Senate estimates this morning, the shadow attorney general, Michaelia Cash, asked if the AG’s department had done any work at all in the development of a Makarrata commission. Tamsyn Harvey, deputy secretary for the Justice and Communities Group, responded:

The department has not done policy work around the development of a Makarrata commission.

Pressed further by Cash, Harvey added that she is “not aware of any work that we’ve done generally around a Makarrata commission.”

The AG’s department has said questions about the Makarrata commission were a matter for the National Indigenous Australians Agency, which is leading the project. The government had promised \$27m for a Makarrata

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

commission, part of the Uluru statement, to oversee truth and treaty processes. This year's budget committed \$5m to the project.

Related: [*Makarrata commission has so far spent barely half the \\$900,000 allocated by Labor, documents show*](#)

Guardian ***Australia*** revealed in September the federal Makarrata commission had spent just a small amount of the funds it was allocated by the government, with the body focusing on research and talking with state governments about treaty processes already underway.

Following the defeat of the voice referendum, the government's stance on the remaining elements of the Uluru statement - truth and treaty, linked with the Makarrata commission - is still to be decided. The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, has said he is eager to discuss next steps with Indigenous leaders before committing to new policies.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.04am BST

block-time published-time 1.57am BST

Where is the gender pay gap? Taking into account part-time workers, which are mostly women, it is at 22.8%.

Which is the same as it was the previous year. It stayed the same, which is a small win, because of the modest gains in wage growth for some sectors.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.06am BST

block-time published-time 1.55am BST

Gallagher says further consideration on implementation of women's economic equality recommendations is required

Greens senator Larissa Waters tries pushing Katy Gallagher on what recommendations from the women economic equality taskforce report the government will be accepting.

Gallagher is not taking the bait:

I've put the report before cabinet so they have that and then how we implement recommendations will be subjected to another process.

... I can't be tied to something that I haven't actually done yet. I don't think we would take every recommendation at once. Like I said it's a 10-year plan to implement recommendations and so we'll just consider how ... best we can do that.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.05am BST

block-time published-time 1.51am BST

Minister for women explains delay on women's economic equality report

Over in estimates, the finance and public affairs committee is examining all things office for women, with the minister for women, Katy Gallagher, in the hot seat. Labor ministers seem a little more comfortable being on the other side of the table this time round.

Greens senator Larissa Waters wants to know why the government response to the women's economic equality taskforce report won't be released until next year. Gallagher says it is something which needs time for a proper response:

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

It's a significant document that, as it's titled, [is] a 10-year plan.

It's not just government responsibility in this report. There's a whole range of other areas which require cooperation to to implement – government obviously has a leadership role and we've got capacity to make decisions about particular recommendations, and we will work them through our processes as we have in October budget and in May, where I think you can see the genuineness of the government's commitment to shifting the dial.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.55am BST

block-time published-time 1.39am BST

Dandenong hospital in Victoria reopens Covid-19 ward

The head of infectious diseases at Monash Health, Dr Rhonda Stuart, told 3AW Radio that a "Covid pod" with 12 beds has been re-opened at the hospital, with each room filled. She said the hospital "may open another one in the near future" if more patients come through.

[It's] really an operational response to make sure that we're looking after the patients in the right way, protecting them, our teams and our health service, to make sure we can still meet other patients as well.

Stuart said that Covid "never really disappeared" but is a "much more manageable disease" now. She said people often come into hospital for another reason, but end up having Covid as well, so the pods can be utilised in those circumstances.

We are not seeing really sick people, but there are still very vulnerable people, so the very elderly and those who are immunosuppressed, you can still get very sick with Covid ... but the waves are getting smaller and smaller as time goes on.

Unlike previous Covid waves during the height of the pandemic, Stuart said this one "doesn't really have a name":

It's another variant of Omicron, a bit of a soup of different Omicron strains out there in the community.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.45am BST

block-time published-time 1.33am BST

Queensland to legislate public ownership of energy system and renewable energy targets

Queensland will introduce laws to enshrine public ownership of its energy system and legislate the state's existing renewable energy targets.

The state's energy minister, Mick de Brenni, told parliament on Tuesday laws to enshrine public ownership will make it clear "Queensland's energy system is not for sale." The laws would secure 54% majority public ownership for generation assets and 100% ownership of transmission assets.

The director of the Queensland Conservation Council, Dave Copeman, said "every new solar and wind project that connects to the grid is bringing down power bills, reducing the state's emissions and creating regional jobs."

That's a win-win-win for our hip pocket, environment and economy.

It comes after the Palaszczuk government announced it will invest in a wind farm in Moah Creek as part of a \$500m pipeline of solar and wind projects across central Queensland (we brought you this on the blog [here](#)). The state government will also formally legislate its target of 70% renewables by 2032 and 80% renewables by 2035.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.38am BST

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

block-time published-time 1.21am BST

NSW issues 'watch and act' alert for Riverstone grass fire

A "watch and act" alert has been issued for Riverstone, near Blacktown in Sydney's west due to a grass fire.

The fire is burning between Guntawong Road, Clarke Street and McKenna Crescent. The NSW Rural Fire Service has warned residents along Guntawong Road to prepare now.

enltrWatch and Act: Guntawong Rd, Riverstone (Blacktown LGA) A fire is burning in the vicinity of Guntawong Rd, Riverstone between Guntawong Rd, Clarke St and McKenna Cres. Residents along Guntawong Rd should prepare now. <https://t.co/SwFG8PzKTA> [pic.twitter.com/Z2bAlt9Q](https://t.co/Z2bAlt9Q)

— NSW RFS (@NSWRFS) [October 24, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.24am BST

block-time published-time 1.17am BST

BoM management 'not aware' of issues involving 'insufficient numbers of staff with the right competencies'

Continued from last post:

Andrew Johnson, however, declined to give any indication of the final cost of the program nor the savings the Bureau has had to make to get Robust completed without additional federal funding. He said:

Some of those contracts, yes, have required extensions and increases and others we've been able to deliver the scope for less than was envisaged.

So it's unders and overs.

Johnson was also asked whether the BoM was short of specialist bushfire weather forecasters and had to reassign forecasters whose experience was in other fields such as thunderstorms. He said was not aware of issues involving "insufficient numbers of staff with the right competencies".

Certainly the advice I've had from the relevant senior staff in the bureau is that we have the relevant teams in place.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.24am BST

block-time published-time 1.11am BST

BoM chief Johnson rejects criticism over IT blow-out report

Andrew Johnson, executive director of the Bureau of Meteorology, was quizzed at length last night during senate estimates about this Guardian article covering the delayed and costly new IT program, dubbed Robust :

Related: [Bureau of Meteorology super computer delays 'very concerning' ahead of summer](#)

Most of the questions came from the Greens senator Barbara Pocock, who has been a fierce critic of the use by the government of consultants, while the Nationals senator Perin Davey also chimed in.

Deloitte and Accenture have been the two main consultants involved. Insiders have derided the skills and ability of the consultants they have worked with and believe they should have copped penalties (at least) when the program failed to meet deadlines and capabilities.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

Anyway, the record will show Johnson wasn't a big fan of the article. He said several times he couldn't go into some of the points "because there are some national security and commercial sensitivity matters associated with this", or similar wording.

However, "almost everything that was in that Guardian article was inaccurate", Johnson said.

Apparently the "very main reason" the IT overhaul was a year behind is because of the "quite significant disruptions" caused by Covid to the supply of materials, staff and so forth.

"I'm very proud actually of the achievement of our people, and our suppliers and vendors and so on, to be in a position where we should be able to deliver almost all the program's scope by 30 June [2024]", he said, confirming the date cited in the article.

(Continued in second post)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.15am BST

block-time published-time 1.00am BST

University of Sydney's Prof Ben Saul appointed to UN human rights and counter-terrorism role

Professor Ben Saul from the University of Sydney Law School has been appointed to the United Nations as the Special Rapporteur on human rights and counter-terrorism.

From 1 November, Saul's appointment will focus on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism.

Saul, who is the Challis Chair of International Law at the Sydney Law School, said he is "honoured" to be "entrusted by the international community to help all countries uphold human rights when countering terrorism and protecting its victims".

Excessive terrorism laws and practices can obviously affect the basic rights of terror suspects, whether through extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, torture, unfair trial, or even war crimes by state forces.

But they can also harm the completely innocent, by invading the privacy of citizens, shutting down legitimate democratic protest, restricting NGOs and civil society, criminalising political opposition or dissent, or attacking the media.

Dean of Law at the Sydney Law School, Prof Simon Bronitt, said:

Ben brings his extensive expertise in international terrorism law to a role that exists to ensure that nations, caught in the thick of fighting terrorism, never abandon their fundamental duties to respect human rights.

Saul has taught counter-terrorism law at Harvard Law School and has long taught terrorism-related courses to postgraduates and undergraduates at Sydney Law School.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.03am BST

block-time published-time 12.52am BST

Father of children killed in shed fire 'broken-hearted'

The father of two Victorian children killed in a shed fire says the tragedy has left him heartbroken as their siblings fight for life in hospital, AAP reports.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

The four children were playing together in the rear shed of a Corio property near Geelong on Sunday morning when it caught alight. Saige McGregor, three, and Ashlynn McGregor, 18 months, died at the scene while their older brother and sister, aged six and four, were flown to the Royal Children's hospital in a critical condition.

The pair suffered life-threatening injuries and have reportedly been placed in induced comas after undergoing surgery.

The children's father, Kane McGregor, says it has been the worst 36 hours of his life. He wrote in an emotional social media post:

Absolutely broken hearted having to let go of my two youngest baby's (sic). [The] only thing keeping me together is holding onto and fighting for my other two.

You are both so strong and way to (sic) stubborn to give in so keep fighting the winning fight as youse have this far and I'll lift the world for youse.

Couldn't be any prouder of you two. Long road to recovery but (the) only way to go is up. Rip (rest in peace) wiggles and saigey. I love you two so much.

Related: [Two children fight for life in hospital after Geelong shed fire killed baby and toddler](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.55am BST

block-time published-time 12.42am BST

Victorian premier slams 'sexualised' News Corp cartoon

Victoria's premier, Jacinta Allan, has slammed a cartoon by News Corp cartoonist Mark Knight, saying the Herald Sun should be able to depict women without using "sexualised" imagery.

In a cartoon published in the Herald Sun on Tuesday, Knight depicts Allan as a new nude catwalk model – using some pixelation – with the caption: "from the Commonwealth Games cancellation... the premier's new clothes."

It comes after a parliamentary hearing on Monday heard that Allan – then minister for Commonwealth Games delivery – gave games officials assurances in April its additional budget would be signed off. Speaking to reporters, Allan responded to the cartoon:

It's 2023 and I think it's pretty reasonable to expect that the Herald Sun in-house cartoonist should be able to draw women without using sexualised imagery.

They've done that, it's a matter for them.

Asked if she had seen a male politician depicted as a nude catwalk model, Allan said, "not to my recollection."

She says all women "deserve to be able to open the paper, look at images that are there for public consumption and not see sexualised imagery being used to represent them."

It's not the 1950s, it's 2023.

Allan says she hoped younger women would "see this for what it is" and continue to pursue their dreams and aspirations.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.19am BST

block-time published-time 12.39am BST

What does an 'advice' level fire actually mean?

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

With more than 50 fires across NSW currently at “advice” level, let’s take a look at what that actually means:

The NSW RFS has three alert levels, used to give an indication of the level of threat from a fire.

The first is “advice”, meaning a fire has started and there is no immediate danger. People are told to stay up-to-date on the situation in case things change.

A “watch and act” alert level means there is a heightened level of threat. Conditions are changing, and people need to begin taking action.

The final alert level, an “emergency warning”, means you may be in danger and need to take action immediately.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.47am BST

block-time published-time 12.31am BST

NSW RFS says 53 fires burning across state

The NSW RFS said there are 53 fires burning across the state, with 13 not yet contained.

The fires are currently burning at an “advice” level.

High fire danger is forecast for the majority of the state today, with firefighters continuing to establish containment lines around the fires.

enltrAs of 9am, there are 53 fires burning across the state, with 13 not yet contained. The fires are currently burning at an Advice level. High fire danger is forecast for the majority of the state today, with firefighters continuing to establish containment lines around the fires. pic.twitter.com/j7QCGBd4M

— NSW RFS (@NSWRFS) [October 23, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.38am BST

block-time published-time 12.22am BST

David Pocock says government exemption from draft misinformation bill ‘doesn’t pass the pub test’

Independent senator David Pocock says it “doesn’t pass the pub test” that the government isn’t covered by the draft misinformation and disinformation bill currently under development.

The federal government is currently considering the extensive feedback provided on its plans to legislate to force digital platforms like Facebook and TikTok to take action on “content [that] is false, misleading or deceptive, and where the provision of that content on the service is reasonably likely to cause or contribute to serious harm”. [It has faced a pushback on the proposal](#) from the Coalition and other groups over claims it will stifle free speech.

In Senate estimates, Pocock questioned why the government had been exempted from having its communications covered by the proposed bill. Minister Carol Brown said that the exemption was designed “to ensure that when a government body is providing like emergency advice on social media, for example, to evacuate during bushfire period that should not be removed by digital platforms.”

But when the department said that the exemption was not limited to emergency messaging, Pocock said it “just didn’t pass the pub test” and asked whether it would undermine the ability to hold government to account.

Brown said seriously harmful misinformation and disinformation threatens the safety of Australians and Australian democracy and doing nothing is not an option.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

There isn't a stated timeline on when the legislation might be introduced. There were 3,000 submissions on the draft bill, over 1,200 of which have been published so far. 500 asked not to be published, and 20,000 comments were provided on the bill.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.24am BST

block-time published-time 12.14am BST

Only 91 homes eligible for free noise insulation under Western Sydney Airport environmental plan

Only about 100 properties will be eligible for free insulation to dull the noise of 480 weekly flights out of Western Sydney Airport under a preliminary plan, AAP reports.

The federal government has released the draft environmental impact statement for Sydney's second international airport, including mitigation measures for sound.

It says between 7,000 and 12,000 residents will experience five or more aircraft noises a day as loud as a washing machine once the airport reaches capacity. But the report estimates that only about 91 homes and other premises fall in the zone eligible to receive free insulation to abate noise.

While the number of those eligible appears low, the draft report says as few as five properties would have been eligible if the criteria used for Sydney Airport was applied. It also reflected lower residential density and planning over many years in anticipation of the airport's construction.

The transport minister, Catherine King, said people could have their say on the draft report and their feedback would be considered when finalising the flight path design.

Related: [*Western Sydney airport flight paths reveal suburbs to face vacuum-level noise 100 times a day by 2040*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.19am BST

block-time published-time 12.06am BST

NSW's transport net zero plan

Rail, light rail and metro trains in New South Wales powered by electricity source 98% of power from renewable energy, with the figure to reach 100% by 2025.

The progress was revealed by NSW's transport minister, Jo Haylen, on Tuesday as she outlined the Transport for NSW net zero and climate change policy.

Other targets in the policy include 100% of the department's car fleet transitioning to all-electric by 2030; net zero in the transport sector by 2050; and net negative sector emissions by 2060.

Transport for NSW has also signed a memorandum of understanding with National Highways, the body responsible for managing England's motorways and major roads. The partnership will help each agency "to share best practice and reach our goals faster and more cost effectively", National Highways' environment director, Steve Elderkin, said.

Haylen said she is "proud" that NSW is "laying the groundwork with world-leading innovations in the race to net zero transport." Transport for NSW's secretary, Josh Murray, said:

Some of these targets may be ambitious, but they are achievable if we all work together – and our industry partners are excited to be part of this future-shaping change.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

Transport contributes about 20% of NSW's greenhouse gas emissions. NSW has also led a [plan to measure indirect carbon emissions from public works in a nationally consistent way](#).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.08am BST

block-time published-time 11.59pm BST

Streaming content quotas being refined in consultation with industry

During Senate estimates the assistant secretary for the Australian screen industries branch of the Department for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, Rebecca Rush, said the department had been refining the models for Australian content quotas on streaming services in consultation with industry.

Sarah Hanson-Young asked whether Australian companies were getting as much consultation as the US giants.

There are some big gorillas in the room and then some smaller players who we obviously need to make sure don't get squeezed out through the process.

Hanson-Young questioned whether the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, was raising the matter in his talks with US president Joe Biden this week in the United States, but the department could not answer.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.20am BST

block-time published-time 11.52pm BST

Local content quotas for streaming services still set for 1 July 2024

The federal government remains committed to bringing in local content quotas for streaming services in **Australia** from 1 July 2024, Senate estimates had heard.

Greens senator Sarah Hanson-Young has questioned the communications department on the status of the content quota legislation, as well as anti-siphoning legislation, legislation to give Australian content prominence on TVs, gambling ad legislation, and the misinformation and disinformation bill.

Carol Brown, the minister representing the communications minister, told estimates that anti-siphoning and prominence were a priority, but would not say whether the other pieces of legislation would be going through parliament in the remaining four sitting weeks in 2023.

Brown said, however, the government was planning to meet the 1 July 2024 target for the new content quotas to be introduced.

But it can't all be Bluey ... or can it? Photograph: Ludo Studio

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.58pm BST

block-time published-time 11.46pm BST

Sinodinas suggests 'world situation' will be focus of Albanese-Biden talks, including potential US-China meeting

Arthur Sinodinos – the former ambassador to the US – also provided some context for the broader talks the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, will be undertaking in the US in the following days. He told ABC RN there is a “thread” connecting a lot of the crises going on in the world at the moment, which will likely dominate discussions.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

There will be bilateral issues discussed clearly, like Aukus, critical minerals and clean energy. There'll be some other potential initiatives including relating potentially to the Pacific and other things, but I think a lot of their focus will be on the unfolding world situation.

Sinodinos suggested Albanese and US president Joe Biden may "compare notes" on their upcoming visits with China's leader, Xi Jinping :

The Americans are very confident that the president will meet with Xi, perhaps in the margins of the APEC summit.

So there's a lot to discuss. But look, in Washington, the hardest, most difficult problems in the world ended up in one place: on the President's desk in the Oval Office. And that's the conjunction of circumstance and the context in which this visit occurs.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.48pm BST

block-time published-time 11.39pm BST

Former US ambassador says 'complicated dance still to come' on Assange

Circling back to former US ambassador Arthur Sinodinos ' interview on ABC RN, where he was also asked about potential talks regarding Julian Assange.

Last month, more than 60 Australian federal politicians explicitly called on the US to drop the prosecution of Assange, warning of "a sharp and sustained outcry in Australia" if the WikiLeaks founder is extradited. You can read the full story from Daniel Hurst below:

Related: [Julian Assange: more than 60 Australian MPs urge US to let WikiLeaks founder walk free](#)

Sinodinos said he is not expecting something to come directly out of any discussion this week:

But there's no doubt the prime minister [Anthony Albanese] is on the record on this that he's been concerned about the length of time it's taken. And I think Peter Dutton has weighed in on this as well, and he may well take the opportunity privately to reinforce that message.

It's a delicate issue for the Americans. They don't want to just, in inverted commas, 'let someone go'. So really, there's quite a complicated dance still to come. But certainly the Australian system, I think, has been quite active in seeking to find a way through.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.43pm BST

block-time published-time 11.29pm BST

Three structures lost as bushfires blaze in southern Queensland

The mayor of Western Downs council, Paul McVeigh, said three structures have been lost as bushfires continue to blaze through southern Queensland.

Multiple warnings are in place across the state. McVeigh's community is battling a major fire between Tara and Kogan, west of Toowoomba.

McVeigh told ABC News Breakfast that three structures, "probably houses", have been lost during the fire and 33 people are in evacuation centres.

We have a major situation with power lines down. There's over 360 residents without power ...

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

He said firefighting capacity has been a challenge, with resources and firefighters stretched between this fire and one in Millmerran nearby:

We have to share some of the capacity to fight these fires, so [it's] a very critical situation across our community and certainly everyone is doing their best to contain this fire.

Queensland police spent last night door-knocking, urging residents to leave amid the danger. McVeigh echoed these concerns and called on his community to follow the advice:

We do not want to lose a life. Structures can be replaced...

McVeigh said he expects more residents to be told to leave today, and the council is prepared for this.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.31am BST

block-time published-time 11.23pm BST

Former ambassador to US 'optimistic' on Aukus deal

Australia's most recent former US ambassador, Arthur Sinodinos, said the Aukus deal is "looking more positive than [it was] even a week ago".

Speaking to ABC RN, Sinodinos said this is because the US has put another \$3bn on the table for a submarine industrial base, meeting the concerns of Republican senators like Roger Wicker.

The Aukus deal hit a roadblock in the US when Senate Republicans, like Wicker, threatened to block the sale unless the president Joe Biden boosted funding for the domestic production line.

Sinodinos said:

...Senator Wicker, I think, is sort of becoming a lot more positive towards letting the legislation through on things like submarine transfers... So I think things are looking up. And so I'm quite optimistic about that.

Q : Albanese won't be able to address the Congress as he planned. Is that likely to set back further progress?

Sinodinos:

No, I don't believe so. He'll have an opportunity to talk to some of the senior players in the Congress. There was talk at one stage he might address the Senate, but I mean, he will see a lot of the players he needs to see. And frankly, as I say, I think things are trending in the right direction.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.31am BST

block-time published-time 11.12pm BST

Boroondara council votes to drop prayer from meeting citing separation of church and state

A Melbourne council has dumped its traditional prayer from meetings after lawyers complained it was a breach of human rights law, AAP reports.

The City of Boroondara voted on Monday night to stop reading the council prayer along with the Acknowledgement of Country to begin its meetings.

The motion passed nine votes to one.

Councillor Victor Franco said it was not a matter of causing offence but rather the separation of church and state:

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

Boroondara council is not a church.

We need to focus on what we were elected to do, namely our roles and responsibilities as defined by the Local Government Act.

It's about our meetings being inclusive and welcoming for all. Something that when we have an official prayer, they are not and have not been.

Law firm Maurice Blackburn wrote to the council about the issue on behalf of Cr Franco earlier this year, alleging the prayer was a breach of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

Its principal lawyer, Jennifer Kanis, said the firm's view was that the prayer was unlawful and welcomed the council's decision to scrap it.

In 2021, the Victorian attorney general, Jaclyn Symes, promised Labor would workshop a replacement for the Lord's Prayer in state parliament if it was re-elected last year.

Labor was re-elected with an increased lower-house majority, but the century-old tradition remains.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.14pm BST

block-time published-time 10.56pm BST

Mayo backs Indigenous advisory committee independent of legislation

Referendum working group member and key yes campaigner Thomas Mayo conceded the defeat of the Indigenous voice was "embarrassing", but has backed suggestions for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory committee which could exist outside of legislation.

Mayo, one of the most prominent faces on the yes campaign, told RN Breakfast this morning that the voice should have been a "lay-down misere", noting it had 60% support in polls at its highest, but that it was defeated due to "lies" from opponents.

Mayo - a Kaurareg Aboriginal and Kalkalgal, Erubamle Torres Strait Islander man - said he feared Indigenous Australians "will continue to go backwards" without major changes in the way governments operate.

The referendum result has prompted a re-examination of treaties and reconciliation policies on a state level by various governments, including plans for a NSW state treaty not progressing past consultation and planning until after the next election.

Related: [NSW treaty will not progress beyond consultation until after election, Chris Minns says](#)

Mayo encouraged politicians "not to walk away from" such plans.

The Yes23 campaigner was among those who supported an open (but unsigned) letter from Indigenous leaders and organisations on Sunday, which made blistering criticisms of the no campaign and of the referendum defeat.

Related: [Yes supporters say voice referendum 'unleashed a tsunami of racism'](#)

The statement recommitted to the Uluru statement from the heart and suggested "independent of the Constitution or legislation – an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice to take up the cause of justice for our people."

Mayo said he backed such a body.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.05pm BST

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

block-time published-time 10.48pm BST

NSW fire warnings for the week

AAP has the latest on the bushfire outlook for NSW throughout the week ahead:

The majority of the state is forecast to experience high fire danger with high temperatures predicted to soar into the 30s today.

The Bureau of Meteorology's Angus Hines said Wednesday was the day of most concern:

We have a broad area of extreme fire danger for northern NSW. Watch out for fire weather warnings there and possible total fire bans.

Grafton in the Northern Rivers region was expected to hit 40C on Wednesday.

I don't know if we've had many 40C temperatures in NSW this side of winter. This is certainly one of the first. It will be very, very warm there.

On Monday, people in Nymboida (30km south-west of Grafton) were warned to seek shelter as bushfire barrelled towards homes. The fire has been downgraded to a watch and act alert, however crews are preparing for renewed threats as the weather heats up.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.54pm BST

block-time published-time 10.41pm BST

Albanese: Microsoft deal will ensure **Australia**'s place as world-leading digital economy

The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, has just posted about the \$5bn Microsoft deal on social media, and said:

This partnership will ensure **Australia**'s place as a world-leading digital economy.

We're building stronger foundations for the future by attracting more investment, creating more jobs and opportunities for Australians.

enltrToday Microsoft are announcing an additional \$5 billion to build more data centres across the country, and partner to train Australians for the jobs of the future. This partnership will ensure **Australia**'s place as a world-leading digital economy. pic.twitter.com/HRyQDMEpSU

— Anthony Albanese (@AlboMP) [October 23, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.04pm BST

block-time published-time 10.31pm BST

Microsoft signs \$5bn cloud computing deal with **Australia**

In case you missed it: Microsoft is set to invest an additional \$5bn in **Australia** over the next two years, as part of the first major announcement to come out of prime minister Anthony Albanese's visit to the United States.

The investment will be used to expand hyperscale cloud computing capacity while collaborating with the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) to boost domestic protection from cyber threats.

Albanese confirmed the investment during an event at the Australian embassy in Washington, flanked by Microsoft's vice-chair and president, Brad Smith, and Microsoft **Australia** and New Zealand's managing director, Steven Worrall.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

My colleagues Katharine Murphy and Daniel Hurst have the full story here:

Related: [Microsoft to help **Australia's** cyber spies amid \\$5bn investment in cloud computing](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.04pm BST

block-time published-time 10.21pm BST

Queenslanders in fire zones urged to pay attention to warnings

Turning to Queensland now, where the state's Fire and Emergency Service chief, Tony Johnston, has spoken to ABC News Breakfast with an update on the bushfires across the state.

He said there were 59 fires burning across the state, at different warning levels. Firefighters' main focus at the moment is on the Tara fires, where crews worked through the night to steer the fire away from buildings.

Johnston said he is aware of one home that has been affected but to what extent, he doesn't know:

There's been a number of structures that have been impacted but as you can appreciate, until the fire is actually contained, we won't have a good picture of what's actually been lost ... When the crews can actually get in and ascertain the damage, we'll have a full report.

Johnston said the work on the ground was hot, dry and dirty for crews, with fire behaviour "very erratic for this time of year":

Fires are spotting 200 metres in front of the fires themselves.

Because of this, in some locations fire crews need to let the fires run until they can get to them safely:

We're asking residents to pay attention to the messaging. The messaging is important to enact your plan and what you're going to do. Today is not a day to go sightseeing to see what's happening in a fire area.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.05pm BST

block-time published-time 10.13pm BST

NSW bushfire update

The NSW Rural Fire Service's commissioner, Rob Rogers, told Sunrise this morning that there are 54 fires burning across NSW, with 10 of these of concern:

A lot of them are not easily contained. Some of those fires have been burning for quite some time. There's a number of challenging fronts that we've got and obviously, worsening weather tomorrow that will cause a lot of problems with these fires and potentially new ones.

Rogers said how the fires started was being investigated and "some are suspicious":

I know investigators are looking into a number of those fires and working with [police]. We have to wait for these fires to get under control before we can get in and assess the damage and carry out these investigations.

Earlier NSW police appealed for public assistance as they investigate the cause of several bushfires along the state's mid north coast.

According to a statement, officers were called to Belmore River, 15km east of Kempsey, on 17 October by reports of a bushfire. It had been brought under control after burning through nearly 3,000 hectares of bushland in the Hat Head national park.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

Police say the circumstances surrounding the blaze are believed to be suspicious and detectives are keen to speak with the driver of a white Nissan Patrol with a broken taillight seen in the area about 3pm that day.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.06pm BST

block-time published-time 10.09pm BST

Union hails wage deal for NSW teachers

The NSW Teachers Federation says a wage agreement struck with the state government will help replenish teacher numbers as public schools confront a shortage of 3,000 casual teachers a day.

A survey released today by the NSW education department shows almost 10,000 lessons each day have inadequate teaching due to a 42% shortfall in the number of casual teachers available to cover classes.

The NSW Teachers Federation's acting president, Henry Rajendra, said this data "comes as no surprise":

The teacher shortage in NSW public schools is a direct consequence of the former government's wage cap that artificially suppressed teachers' pay. The wage cap made the profession less attractive.

Worse still, and adding to the unattractiveness of the profession, is unmanageable teacher workloads due to the policies of the previous government. The situation was so bad that resignation rates outpaced retirements.

This week the starting salary for a NSW teacher will increase from \$75,791 to \$85,000 and the salary for a top-of-the-scale teacher will increase from \$113,042 to \$122,100. All teachers will move to a new higher paying step, including casual teachers.

Rajendra said this wage agreement struck with the state government was "critical to rebuilding the teaching workforce".

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.06pm BST

block-time published-time 10.00pm BST

Victoria widens outside school hours care for children with disabilities

About 1,000 Victorian students will soon have access to free high intensity outside school hours care for the first time, as part of a state government investment to young people with disabilities and their families.

The services, designed and staffed for students with disability, will be rolled out at 15 specialist schools from next year, joining five established as part of a pilot in 2018.

Victoria's further 10 specialist schools will follow in 2025 and 2026.

Victoria's premier, Jacinta Allan, said subsidised before- and after-school care was part of the state government's work to transform special schools.

Disability inclusion is not about closing specialist schools. It aims to make all schools more inclusive by recognising the strengths and responding to the needs of every student who enters the school gate.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.02pm BST

block-time published-time 9.53pm BST

Police declare exclusion zone in Strathpine

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

Some more breaking news out of Queensland this morning, where police have set up an exclusion zone after an incident at Strathpine, north of Brisbane.

According to a statement, police made an emergency declaration under the Public Safety Preservation Act.

Just after 1.30am this morning, police attended a Strathpine address in relation to a disturbance. Upon arrival, police say they began negotiations with a man, who was at the residence alone. An emergency situation was declared just after 4am.

The emergency declaration was made with boundaries encompassing Gertrude, Peter, Rowland and Cavendish streets.

Members of the public are warned to avoid the area and those within the exclusion zone are asked to remain indoors "until further notice".

Traffic diversions are in place and police said there was no more information at this time.

A Queensland police spokesperson told Guardian [Australia](#) there was no ongoing danger to the public, and as of 7.50am AEDT the exclusion zone was still in place.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.01pm BST

block-time published-time 9.47pm BST

Queensland windfarm to power up to 200,000 homes

The Queensland government has announced it will invest in a windfarm in Moah Creek as part of a \$500m pipeline of solar and wind projects across central Queensland.

The windfarm, west of Rockhampton, is the first project in a partnership between publicly owned generator CleanCo and Central Queensland Power.

It will power up to 200,000 homes and employ 400 workers during its construction.

It is expected to provide a boost of \$600m to the Queensland economy and will transition to public ownership in mid-2025.

The state's energy minister, Mick de Brenni, said the 2.3GW pipeline of large-scale projects will "protect jobs in the nation's industrial and manufacturing heartland by delivering the transition to renewable energy".

The government also expects the suite of renewable energy projects to put downward pressure on household electricity bills.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.00pm BST

block-time published-time 9.42pm BST

Albanese lays wreath at Arlington

Overnight, prime minister Anthony Albanese took part in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Arlington National Cemetery.

This comes as part of his four-day visit to the US. Albanese shared some photos of the visit to X (formerly Twitter), and said:

The friendship between [Australia](#) and the United States runs deep.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

Generations of our service men and women have fought together for peace.

And together, we honour those brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

The friendship between **Australia** and the United States runs deep. pic.twitter.com/CUEIHBfJEv

— Anthony Albanese (@AlboMP) [October 23, 2023](#)

Generations of our service men and women have fought together for peace. pic.twitter.com/rQ4NIHzdu5

— Anthony Albanese (@AlboMP) [October 23, 2023](#)

At the cemetery Albanese laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and paid respects to two Australians who rest there.

Updated at 10.26pm BST

Published-time 9.37pm BST

Queensland bushfire warnings

Here's an update on the bushfires in Queensland, as of this morning:

Residents of Tara and Kogan are being told to leave immediately due to a large, fast-moving fire burning near Chinchilla Tara Road.

The Queensland Fire and Emergency Service said the fire was expected to impact Bennett School Road very soon, and residents should leave now as it would soon be too dangerous to drive.

Nearby, residents of Tara and Wieambilla are being told to prepare to leave, as the same fire burns closer to properties between Blackburns Road, Wieambilla Road, Bennett School Road and Upper Humbug Road.

Meanwhile, residents of Millmerran Woods are being told it is not safe to return due to a fire near Primrose Drive. It is travelling towards Waratah Drive.

If you left the area, it is not safe to return.

Firefighters are working to contain the fire.

The same warning was given to the nearby communities in Cypress Gardens and Millmerran Downs.

Updated at 9.41pm BST

Published-time 9.34pm BST

Pay gap between First Nations women and non-Indigenous men 21%

Indigenous heritage, cultural diversity, disability and gender identity are leading to significantly bigger pay gaps for women, a landmark report by Victoria's Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector has found.

Analysing workforce and survey data from almost 300 organisations, the report found:

The pay gap between First Nations women and non-Indigenous men was the largest, with a 21% gap. Culturally and racially marginalised women are paid on average 19% less than men. Women with disabilities experienced large pay gaps of 19% when compared with men without disabilities.

Australia news live: Brisbane police standoff enters 14th hour; call for \$10m to protect vital ABC assets from natural disasters

Lesbian women hold managerial positions at a similar rate to both straight and gay men and have higher salaries than women in all other sexuality groups.

Transwomen and other trans, non-binary or gender-diverse people reported far higher rates of experiencing sexual harassment (16% and 15% respectively) than transgender men (8%) and cisgender women (6%) and men (4%).

Niki Vincent, the Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner, said:

For too long, gender equality initiatives have excluded those that do not fit the default mould of the straight, white, able-bodied woman – this is no longer acceptable.

This report shows that compounding forms of discrimination have notable impacts on career progression, pay inequality, and the experience of sexual harassment and discrimination at work. An intersectional approach to gender equality is no longer a nice to have, it's a must have – without it, our work will continue to reproduce some of the very patterns of inequality we seek to address.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.39pm BST

block-time published-time 9.28pm BST

Good morning

And happy Tuesday! Welcome back to another day on Guardian **Australia**'s live news blog. I'm Emily Wind and I'll be taking you through our rolling coverage today.

Making news this morning, prime minister Anthony Albanese is wrapping up his first full-day visit to the United States. He will be visiting the country for four days, undertaking talks around the Indo-Pacific and Aukus deal.

Along the east coast of **Australia**, fires are continuing to spread. In Queensland, residents of Tara and Kogan are being told to leave immediately, while residents in Millmerran Woods, Cypress Gardens and Millmerran Downs have been warned it is too late to leave. While there are no total fire bans in place across NSW today, the majority of the state is forecast to experience high fire danger.

Also making news this morning: Indigenous heritage, cultural diversity, disability and gender identity are leading to significantly bigger pay gaps for women, a landmark report by Victoria's Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector has found.

And the Queensland government has announced it will invest in a windfarm in Moah Creek as part of a \$500m pipeline of solar and wind projects.

We will have all the details on these stories shortly on the blog.

As always, if you see anything that needs attention, you can send me an email: emily.wind.casual@theguardian.com

With that, let's get started!

Load-Date: October 24, 2023