

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened



[Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened](#)

The Guardian (London)

April 3, 2024 Wednesday 8:53 PM GMT

Copyright 2024 The Guardian, a division of Transcontinental Media Group Inc. All Rights Reserved

theguardian

Section: [AUSTRALIA](#) NEWS; Version:24

Length: 13302 words

Byline: Caitlin Cassidy and Stephanie Convery (earlier)

Highlight: This blog is now closed Bruce Lehrmann defamation trial: Channel Seven offered Taylor Auerbach promotion after rebuking him for charging Thai massages to corporate card, court told Get our morning and afternoon news emails, free app or daily news podcast

Body

block-time published-time 7.47am BST

What we learned – Thursday 4 April

With that, we will shut the blog for the evening. Stay safe and dry out there. Here were today's major developments:

Sydney is bracing for [heavy rain to drench the city](#) over the coming days, potentially causing flash flooding, flooded rivers and the spillover of the Warragamba Dam. Rain is forecast to likely begin tonight in Sydney and become heavy on Friday before easing on Saturday. A [man has died](#) after his vehicle was found in flood waters on the outskirts of Brisbane this morning. Queensland police were called to conduct a welfare check of a vehicle submerged in flood waters at a private property on Begley Road in Greenbank. The Northern Territory's Don Dale youth detention centre [remains in indefinite lockdown](#) after a group of inmates set fire to the education centre and climbed the roof as part of a riot. Private and rental electric scooters will [become a permanent fixture](#) on Melbourne streets as Victoria puts the finishing touches on safety regulations. And the National Anti-Corruption Commission (Nacc) says it's [conducting 15 corruption investigations](#) and will soon publish a final report of one of its recently completed probes. The commission's latest figures, released on Thursday, show the federal integrity body received 2,747 referrals of potential corruption in the nine months since it opened its doors.

block-time updated-time Updated at 7.55am BST

block-time published-time 7.26am BST

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

All eyes on Warragamba Day as heavy downpour approaches

Back to the weather. All eyes are on the Warragamba Dam and its possible spilling in New South Wales, with forecasts predicting rain of up to 200mm into the weekend.

The atmosphere over the Sydney/Illawarra regions will be saturated from the ground up to an elevation of ~12km on Friday night. This will produce a thick slab of cloud and LOTS of rain, with 6-hourly rain rates possibly reaching 100-200mm on Friday evening into Saturday morning. pic.twitter.com/VJJVq2q7Ug

— Ben Domensino (@Ben_Domensino) [April 4, 2024](#)

The dam level is currently at 96.2%, with just 3.7mm of rain in the past week. Don't panic yet, though – it hasn't dropped below 90% all year.

block-time updated-time Updated at 7.38am BST

block-time published-time 7.12am BST

A taxi booking app was already facing challenges as UberX brought rideshare to **Australia** with an intent to “crush” the competition, a civil trial has been told.

Taxi Apps, the company behind the app GoCatch, is suing Uber in the Supreme Court of Victoria over claims it knowingly launched UberX illegally in **Australia** with the intention of injuring GoCatch.

Lawyers for GoCatch have claimed “tech bros” at the ride-share giant said they wanted to crush and destroy the business, suggesting they targeted Taxi Apps, but Uber on Thursday argued the language simply equated to “out-compete”.

Uber's barrister John Sheahan told the court:

It's just the language of the business... it's the way they hype each other up. 'Crushing' GoCatch is beating them. Its out-competing them at their own game.

Sheahan suggested GoCatch was to blame for its financial failings, with business plans to mandate in-app payments long-delayed and evidence some taxi drivers were 'gaming' the app.

Lawyers for Taxi Apps have conceded in court GoCatch had some management issues. But they maintain Uber tried to evade authorities' attempts to stop their illegal conduct, hacked GoCatch's computer systems and used spyware to scrape its data.

-AAP.

block-time published-time 6.57am BST

The North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) has renewed calls for the closure of the notorious Don Dale Youth Detention Centre following the latest riot at the facility and associated lockdown.

The agency urged the NT Government to immediately investigate alternative accommodation options for children currently detained in the Darwin facility, of which it alleged approximately half were being held on remand having not been sentenced for any crimes.

Its principal legal officer, Jared Sharp, said the events were a “direct result of the appalling conditions within Don Dale”.

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

On any given night, there are approximately 40 mostly Aboriginal young people detained inside Don Dale with little access to the support they need to address the complex array of factors that have contributed to them being there in the first place.

Sharp said Don Dale should have been closed on the recommendation of the Royal Commission more than six years ago, with recent redevelopment of youth detention facilities in Alice Springs providing a potential template for improved care.

The Northern Territory spends more on youth detention than any other state or territory and the only way to stop this is by investing in solutions that do work – drug and alcohol counselling, behaviour change programs, adequate healthcare, stable housing, education, training, and employment.

block-time published-time 6.46am BST

More on the heavy rain and flood warnings in NSW In New South Wales, a trough is forecast to deepen over eastern and central parts of the coast in coming days, bringing heavy rain and possible flash flooding for large parts of the state into the weekend.

If you were planning to hit the beach tomorrow in Sydney, maybe reconsider. The city is expected to be hammered with up to 100mm of rain.

enltrUpdated forecasts for [#Sydney](#) for Friday and Saturday. (Via [@bom_au](#)) [pic.twitter.com/u4sxxktunf](#)

— [@phannam@mastodon.green](#) (@p_hannam) [April 4, 2024](#)

A severe thunderstorm warning has been issued for parts of the north west slopes and plains, while a severe weather warning is in place for metropolitan Sydney, Illawarra, South Coast, Southern Tablelands and parts of the Hunter, Central Tablelands and Snowy Mountains districts.

Minor flooding is already hitting some waterways, with particular concern for the Upper Nepean, Hawkesbury and Lower Nepean rivers.

enltrThe Severe Thunderstorm Warning for heavy rainfall for far northern parts of the North West Slopes and Plains district has just been reissued and updated slightly. Keep an eye on the radar here [https://t.co/joGHpQeD2Z](#) [pic.twitter.com/eSCDajnAcu](#)

— Bureau of Meteorology, New South Wales (@BOM_NSW) [April 4, 2024](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.26am BST

block-time published-time 6.36am BST

Anne Aly: 'This is not war. War has rules'

Aly goes on:

I do want to make a really important point about war. This is not war. War has rules – rules that have been agreed upon by the international community.

War has principles, and war has standards of behaviour that are expected of those who are acting in the war.

Israel has been ... strongly urged by the international community and by the ICJ to abide by those rules of war. Now, the systemic destruction of an entire people, the deliberate withholding of food and aid to an entire people are not acts of war.

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

These are not things that just happen in war, and I think that if the Israeli government wants to continue to utilise war as a context for its actions, then it needs to start abiding by the expected principles of war and the agreed rules of warfare.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.03am BST

block-time published-time 6.33am BST

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Israeli PM's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death

The Labor frontbencher **Anne Aly** followed Birmingham on ABC's Afternoon Briefing, appearing alongside Barnaby Joyce.

Asked for her comments on the death of Australian aid worker Zomi Frankcom, a clear split in rhetoric of the two major parties continues.

Aly expressed her condolences to Frankcom's family and friends – and her "outrage" at Israel's response.

The dismissive way in which the prime minister of Israel has said this happens in war, and quite frankly the way in which Simon Birmingham has repeated that dismissive claim is offensive.

It is offensive to Zomi, her family, to the aid workers, the journalists, the medics who have been killed by Israeli forces, and it is offensive to the 30,000 Palestinians that have been cowed and starved by the actions of Israel.

I think that the world is watching very closely, and foreign minister Penny Wong has said, in very clear terms, that Israel needs to change its course, and that it needs to be held accountable, and that it is losing very quickly any kind of support that it has.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.26am BST

block-time published-time 6.27am BST

'This is a war situation and tragedies are occurring all the time': Birmingham

The shadow foreign minister, Simon Birmingham, appeared on the ABC's Afternoon Briefing earlier while on a visit to New Zealand with Peter Dutton.

Asked whether the deaths of the aid workers in Gaza could be "even partly explained as typical things that happen in war", Birmingham said the killings were "very tragic events" that "should not have occurred".

It entirely appropriate that Israel be expected to have a full investigation of them and to be completely transparent about the outcomes of the investigation ... any further steps should be taken based on the outcomes of those investigation.

Birmingham said while "tragedies" and "mistakes" do happen in war, it was important for Israel's prime minister to understand the "deep, deep concern and distress felt in **Australia**".

These tragedies are just part of what has been an enduring tragedy since the barbaric attacks from Hamas on October 7 and the way in which Hamas has used the citizens and people in Gaza as human shields.

This is a war situation and tragedies are occurring all the time. Unfortunately this has now involved an Australian citizen.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.56am BST

block-time published-time 6.16am BST

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

Protest outside Dfat offices in Sydney after aid workers killed in Gaza

A snap protest has been held outside the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Dfat) offices in Sydney this afternoon after the deaths of seven aid workers in Gaza, including Australian Zomi Frankcom.

The rally, attended by union members and grassroots community group Families for Palestine, called for an end to the deaths of innocent civilians and aid workers in Gaza.

enltrLoud throng of people outside DFAT in protest against the Australian government's abject complicity with Israel's slaughter of aid workers in Gaza. Large number of [@NTEUnion](#) flags here. Palestine is union business! pic.twitter.com/x6VFsF9hzs

— Nick Riemer (@NickRiemer1) [April 4, 2024](#)

enltrRally outside DFAT Sydney after the murder of Oz aid worker Zomi Frankcom & Israel's rampage at Al-Shifa hospital. Expel Israel's Ambassador ! End arms sales supplying the genocide pic.twitter.com/7xSiThA9lP

— UnionistsforPalestine (@unions4palestin) [April 4, 2024](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.37am BST

block-time published-time 5.59am BST

Don Dale detention centre in indefinite lockdown after riot and fire

The Northern Territory's [Don Dale youth detention centre](#) remains in indefinite lockdown after a group of inmates set fire to the education centre and climbed the roof as part of a riot.

Police were called to the centre on Wednesday afternoon after reports of smoke billowing from the education facility and 14 children on the roof of the building.

Territory Families chief executive Emma White said the centre would remain in indefinite lockdown until a department investigation was complete.

The NT chief minister Eva Lawler labelled the children "some of the worst-behaved children in the NT", with charges expected to be laid.

There are a number of young people who have displayed abhorrent behaviour. There will be actions that flow from that.

Graphic footage was shown on ABC TV in 2016 of four detainees being tear-gassed at the facility, leading to the 2017 royal commission into the protection and detention of children.

The NT government accepted in full or in principle all recommendations, including the closure of Don Dale. Five years later, the facility remains open and critics say the government is dragging its feet. Lawler said she remains committed to closing the facility.

– with AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.31am BST

block-time published-time 5.44am BST

Sixteen-year-old international student missing in Sydney

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

Police are appealing to the public to help locate an international student from China who has been missing in north-west Sydney since Sunday.

Jaiwen Zheng, aged 16, was last seen leaving a home on Beecroft Road, Beecroft on Sunday 24 February.

When he did not return home and was unable to be contacted, he was reported missing to officers, who hold serious concerns for his welfare due to his age and limited English-language skills.

Zheng is described as being of Asian appearance, about 170cm tall, of thin build, with brown eyes and black hair.

Anyone with information in relation to his whereabouts is urged to contact Ryde Police or Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.18am BST

block-time published-time 5.28am BST

Man's body recovered from NT river where crocodiles seen

The body of a 64-year-old man has been recovered by search and rescue crews in the Northern Territory after an abandoned tinny was found in waters where crocodiles were spotted.

The team was deployed yesterday evening after reports of the unoccupied vehicle, discovered near a boat ramp at South Alligator River in Arnhem Land.

Helicopters and boats scoured the area throughout the night and this morning, with multiple crocodiles spotted during the search.

With the help of Kakadu national park rangers, the body was found and recovered at midday.

Superintendent Jakson Evans said it was a "tragic outcome".

Our thoughts are with the family during this difficult time.

The cause of death is to be determined, with a report to be prepared for the coroner.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.39am BST

block-time published-time 5.19am BST

Electric scooters 'here to stay' in Melbourne

Private and rental electric scooters will become a permanent fixture on Melbourne streets as Victoria puts the finishing touches on safety regulations.

E-scooters were allowed in Ballarat from December 2021 and parts of Melbourne from February 2022 as part of a trial, with users since taking more than eight million trips. The trial will be extended for another six months before permanent regulatory settings are introduced in early October.

The Victorian Labor government said it would use the time to investigate extra safety measures and rollout a refreshed education campaign across trial areas.

Public transport minister Gabrielle Williams said e-scooters were "here to stay".

They've proven popular among commuters, especially shift workers, providing an additional option to travel home safely. We have more work to do on safety and compliance to ensure that e-scooters are safe when they're made permanent later this year.

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

In December, the Australian Medical Association called for stricter rules after a study by the Royal Melbourne Hospital showed 247 riders and nine pedestrians were treated for injuries in 2023.

In Victoria, people must wear a helmet, be at least 16 years old, not carry a passenger and cannot be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

- via AAP

block-time updated-time Updated at 5.34am BST

block-time published-time 5.07am BST

Sydney braces for heavy rain and possible flooding

Sydney is bracing for heavy rain to drench the city over the coming days, potentially causing flash flooding, flooded rivers and the spillover of the Warragamba Dam. Rain is forecast to likely begin tonight in Sydney and become heavy on Friday before easing on Saturday. Up to 200mm of rain could fall across greater Sydney in that time.

The intense rainfall may lead to flash flooding in the southern Hunter and Sydney metropolitan region on Friday morning as well as the Illawarra and Central Tablelands, before shifting south overnight into Saturday morning.

BoM said "dangerous and life-threatening flash flooding is possible between the Blue Mountains and Moruya from Friday evening into Saturday morning, with localised six-hourly rainfall totals between 90 to 150 mm possible, reaching up to 220 mm over the Illawarra Escarpment".

Warragamba Dam, which supplies water to the city, could spill in the coming days if rainfall reaches the high levels expected. The dam is already at 96% capacity.

Multiple rivers throughout Sydney could flood from Friday and the New South Wales SES has warned communities near the rivers to stay informed. The Hawkesbury-Nepean river in the city's west is at risk of major flooding from Friday, while the Colo River in the north-west is at risk of moderate flooding, the Bureau of Meteorology said. The Penrith, Liverpool and Camden areas are among those that could be affected. The Georges and Woronora rivers in the city's south and the Cooks River in the inner west may also flood from Friday.

block-time updated-time Updated at 7.56am BST

block-time published-time 5.04am BST

All right folks, that's all from me – I'm handing you over to my colleague Caitlin Cassidy now, who'll bring you all the updates from here on into the evening. There's stacks more to come, so stay tuned!

block-time published-time 4.56am BST

Greens back Zomi Frankcom's family's call for a war crimes investigation

The Greens have also thrown their support behind Zomi Frankcom's family's call for a war crimes investigation into her and her aid worker colleagues' killings – echoing calls of human rights organisations, like Amnesty (as we noted earlier), who want the international criminal court to be responsible for an independent investigation, not Israel.

The Greens' deputy leader, Mehreen Faruqi, said in a statement this afternoon the attack was "part of Israel's deliberate and sustained undermining of aid agencies in Gaza".

She pointed to Israel's [attempts to dismantle Unrwa](#), the United Nations' relief agency in Gaza, saying "a phone call simply isn't good enough" and that the Australian government "must respond with actions, not words".

Faruqi said:

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

An investigation by Israel into the murders is totally unacceptable. We don't ask murderers to investigate their murders. Why would we ask war criminals to investigate their war crimes?

The attack sent a stark message to the world that those who come to the aid of Gazans will not be spared, and it is having the intended chilling effect, with several aid agencies pausing operations in Gaza.

It is clear, no one and nowhere is safe in Gaza.

These attacks on aid agencies and aid workers are nothing less than an attempt by Israel to accelerate genocide and starve Palestinians of food and basic needs.

The Labor government must increase funding to UNRWA, sanction Israel, end military exports to Israel and call for an independent war crimes investigation into the deaths of Zomi and other aid workers, by an agency like the international criminal court.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.09am BST

block-time published-time 4.31am BST

Warning to keep safe as NSW hit with heavy rainfall

Many parts of New South Wales are enduring heavy rainfall, which the State Emergency Service is warning "may lead to dangerous and life-threatening flash flooding".

A reminder to look after yourselves and keep an eye on the warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology.

enltrAcross the state, many areas are currently enduring HEAVY RAINFALL which may lead to dangerous and life-threatening FLASH FLOODING. The NSW SES warns all affected communities to stay ALERT and stay SAFE. Check your [#HazardsNearMe](#) app or visit the [@BOM_au](#) for current warnings. [pic.twitter.com/XcdzjqBNUC](#)

— NSW SES (@NSWSES) [April 4, 2024](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.34am BST

block-time published-time 4.26am BST

Researchers liken Sydney's urban sprawl to cancer growth

Sydney is renowned for its sprawl. Its geographical size is on par with Mexico City (population 20 million), Paris (10.4 million) and Bangkok (14.6 million), but Sydney's population of 5.3 million pales in comparison.

Now researchers have [developed a model](#) of how it spread out, likening the city's sprawl to how cancer spreads through a human body.

Researchers used mathematical modelling to reconstruct urban growth in Sydney from 1851-2011. Along with finding that Sydney's population size and spread has evolved in a manner similar to a tumour, they also concluded the rail system has "coevolved" with the urban population: that is, transport investment is not only demand driven – it also causes urban change.

Read the full story here:

Related: [Sydney's urban sprawl grew along rail lines similar to way cancer spreads, researchers say](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.11am BST

block-time published-time 4.08am BST

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

Federal integrity body investigating 15 corruption referrals

The National Anti-Corruption Commission (Nacc) says it's conducting 15 corruption investigations and will soon publish a final report of one of its recently completed probes.

The commission's latest figures, released on Thursday, show the federal integrity body received 2,747 referrals of potential corruption in the nine months since it opened its doors.

Of those referrals, 2084 were dismissed because they did not involve a public official nor raise a corruption issue.

There are 209 referrals under assessment by the Nacc, including 19 under preliminary investigation where further information and details have been sought.

In total, the Nacc is investigating 15 corruption referrals and overseeing or monitoring 23 investigations by other agencies.

Just who or what these investigations are looking into remains unknown due to the body's secrecy provisions, including its default to hold closed-door hearings.

The Nacc has reiterated countless times it does not comment on ongoing investigations because doing so "may compromise operational activities or unfairly impact reputations".

It has so far completed one final report – which will be made public "shortly" – while another seven final reports are being prepared. Those investigations did not result in any charges being laid.

A further three matters are being considered by the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.40am BST

block-time published-time 3.56am BST

Amnesty calls for Australian support of independent investigation into Zomi Frankcom's death

Amnesty International **Australia** has written to the prime minister in support of calls from killed aid worker Zomi Frankcom's family for an independent investigation into her death.

In a statement released today, Amnesty said it is calling on the Australian government to:

... publicly support the International Criminal Court's ongoing investigation into crimes committed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and for the Court to investigate the death of Zomi Frankcom and humanitarian aid workers killed by Israel.

The calls for "full accountability ... are hollow words" unless such an investigation is conducted by the ICC, which already has an open investigation into crimes committed in the Occupied Palestinian Territories since 2014, the statement continues.

Amnesty International **Australia**'s spokesperson Mohamed Duar said:

The UN reports that 196 humanitarian aid workers have been killed attempting to deliver aid to people in Gaza since the crisis began.

There is no chance of an independent and credible investigation by the Israeli authorities that will lead to justice for Zomi Frankcom or any of the aid workers killed.

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

An Israeli investigation into the death of Zomi Frankcom and her colleagues risks an outcome similar to that of the Israeli investigation into the killing of Palestinian American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in 2022, which did not find anyone responsible for her death, and failed even to open a criminal investigation into her death.

It's vital that the current Australian Government publicly supports the International Criminal Court's investigation in the occupied Palestinian Territories.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.05am BST

block-time published-time 3.34am BST

Australians among the injured in Taiwan earthquake

A small number of Australians have been confirmed injured in the [earthquake in Taiwan](#) yesterday.

The earthquake, the strongest that has hit the region in decades, has killed nine and injured about 1000 people.

A Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade spokesperson said in a statement to Guardian **Australia** that they were "assisting a small number of Australians, some of whom have sustained minor injuries".

The statement said:

Australia's thoughts are with those killed and injured following the earthquake near Taiwan.

... Department officials in Taipei continue to work with local authorities to determine whether any other Australians have been affected by the earthquake.

Australians in the region are advised to follow the directions of local authorities.

You can read more about the earthquake here:

Related: [Taiwan earthquake: rescuers search for survivors amid landslides and aftershocks](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.44am BST

block-time published-time 3.21am BST

Thomas Kelly's parents issue statement

A little earlier, we brought you the news of the imminent release from prison of Kieran Loveridge, whose case triggered years-long venue lockout laws in Sydney.

The parents of victim Thomas Kelly have made a statement to the court, which they have circulated as Loveridge's conditional release was announced.

While Ralph Kelly made it clear he did not support the intention to release Loveridge, he also said he did not oppose it.

The family told the court:

[W]e are of the opinion that every effort should be made to ensure that [Loveridge] undertakes a period of supervision well before the expiration of his sentence in an attempt to successfully re-integrate him into lawful community life.

... [I]t is our view that for Thomas's death to mean something, it is imperative that every effort is made to ensure that a pathway is created to ensure Mr Loveridge's transition to community life is as smooth as possible.

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

To that end, we must consider the subjective features of his case.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.38am BST

block-time published-time 3.12am BST

State funeral announced for Les Twentyman

The Victorian government has announced that a state funeral will be held for community and youth worker Les Twentyman, who died last month aged 76.

Premier Jacinta Allan announced this afternoon that the state funeral would be held in Melbourne's St Patrick's Cathedral at 10:30am on Tuesday 16 April. It will be open to the public and livestreamed.

Allan said:

Les Twentyman represented the very best of us, showing the power of kindness through a lifetime devoted to helping others.

His passion and hard work changed lives, and his legacy will always live on in the young Victorians he fought for and believed in.

You can read more about Twentyman here:

Related: [*'One of Melbourne's big characters': youth worker Les Twentyman dies aged 76*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.18am BST

block-time published-time 3.02am BST

Nationals MP Adam Marshall resigns

New South Wales Northern Tablelands residents will head to the polls for the first byelection of this term of state parliament after the resignation of Nationals MP Adam Marshall.

The MP, who has held the seat for more than a decade, announced he would step away from politics on 13 May.

The NSW Nationals leader, Duglad Saunders, said:

Since winning the seat in 2013, Mr Marshall has been a great local member and advocate for his community.

Whether bushfires, drought, Covid or the escalating regional crime crisis, Adam and the NSW Nationals have always had the region's best interests at heart.

Saunders thanked Marshall for his service and said the party looked forward to "continuing to serve the great people of the electorate".

Marshall retained the seat at the 2023 state election with a 33% margin.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.13am BST

block-time published-time 2.54am BST

Death of man in flood waters described as 'tragic'

The acting commissioner of Queensland Police, Steve Gollschewski, has described the finding of a 71-year-old man's body in flood waters overnight as a "tragic circumstance".

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

He told AAP that emergency services had been called to rescue people who had driven into flood waters in the same area.

Our investigation is under way as to what the circumstances [surrounding the man's death] were.

Early days on that yet but clearly an absolutely tragic circumstance.

Gollschewski said the SES had received 12 calls for help across the region overnight.

A severe weather warning has been issued in Queensland for the central west, Marranoa and Warrego regions, with 91mm recorded at Old Tambo Road, north of Charleville, in six hours on Thursday morning.

The Bureau of Meteorology's Angus Hines said more warnings could be issued as thunderstorms moved through much of the state's south:

The most vigorous activity is generally over that Marranoa and Warrego region but potentially a little bit later today that could move somewhere else.

The primary threat is going to be heavy rainfall, much like it was last night; localised pockets of very heavy rainfall.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.08am BST

block-time published-time 2.49am BST

Kieran Loveridge granted parole

The man whose unprovoked attack killed a teenager and helped trigger years-long lockdown laws in Sydney has been granted parole and is set to be released from prison, AAP reports. The NSW State Parole Authority on Thursday determined it would release Kieran Loveridge on supervised parole no later than 25 April. Parole authority chair Geoffrey Bellew acknowledged there would always be some risk to community safety with the 30-year-old's release, but that was mitigated by several factors. They include his completion of a violent offenders program, his positive progress in custody, an agreed post-release plan and strict conditions upon his release.

Bellew told the court:

A substantially greater risk is posed to community safety if the offender was released at a later time with a shorter period of released supervision or no supervision at all.

Loveridge killed Thomas Kelly, 18, during an alcohol-fuelled rampage through the inner-city entertainment precinct of Kings Cross in July 2012. Loveridge, who was also 18 at the time, punched Kelly in the face, knocking him to the ground, causing a severe brain injury when his head struck the ground.

Bellew said Kelly "had no reason to be on the lookout for trouble and was entirely unsuspecting of danger".

Appearing via a video link, Thomas's parents Ralph and Kathy Kelly said they "continue to grieve every day" but supported Loveridge's release before the end of his sentence in order to "reintegrate him into lawful community life".

Loveridge was initially jailed for seven years and two months after pleading guilty to manslaughter and the assaults of four other men on that same night. His sentence was increased following a prosecution appeal, after which he was handed a maximum term of 13 years and eight months with a non-parole period of 10 years and two months.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.01am BST

block-time published-time 2.39am BST

Greens announce candidate for Higgins

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

The Greens have announced Angelica Di Camillo as their candidate for Higgins at the next federal election.

In 2022, the Greens came within 2.4% of taking the Victorian seat, which is one of the youngest electorates in the country, with 28% of voters under 35.

It's currently held by Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah, the first Labor member in the seat's history.

Di Camillo is an environmental engineer who grew up in Victoria's south-east and has recently bought an apartment in the area. She previously ran in the Aston byelection, defeated by Labor's Mary Doyle.

enlrIntroducing Angelica Di Camillo, your Greens candidate for Higgins! ?? "As an environmental engineer, I've dedicated my working life to sustainability & transitioning our energy systems to renewables to combat the climate crisis. I'm thrilled to be your candidate this election!" pic.twitter.com/JRZD9xrnNV

— Victorian Greens (@VictorianGreens) [April 4, 2024](#)

The Greens leader, Adam Bandt, said she was "experienced, energetic and ready to work hard to show the people of Higgins that a better world is possible".

Di Camillo said she was "campaign-ready" for the fight.

I'm looking forward to giving my community a real choice at the next election: a safe climate future, or more coal and gas? Affordable housing, or unlimited rent increases and skyrocketing house prices thanks to massive tax handouts for wealthy property investors?

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.47am BST

block-time published-time 2.25am BST

Household spending growth accelerates but discretionary outlays get a trim

If dwelling approvals for February pointed a down arrow for the economy ([see recent post](#)), household spending was a bit more promising.

Spending in February was up 3.6% from a year earlier, narrowly exceeding [the 3.4% inflation rate recorded](#) for the month, the ABS has just stated. Growth quickened from a dismal 1.2% pace in December and 2.9% in January.

In a hint, though, to the ongoing cost-of-living squeeze, spending for so-called discretionary items was 0.2% lower than a year earlier. Non-discretionary outlays were up 6.9%.

Among the states, spending in New South Wales and Victoria (which account for close to half the Australian economy) was notably weak. Discretionary spending in February was down 2.2% in NSW and 1.6% in Victoria – the only states to post a negative result.

In terms of overall outlays, South **Australia** were the most spendthrift, up 7.9% from February 2023. ACT residents weren't far behind, forking out 7.6% more and Western **Australia** next in line with a 5.9% growth pace.

As for what we're spending more on, transport was up 12.3% from a year earlier – thanks in part to more costly fuel. Recreation and culture outlays were up 5.9% with spending on hotels, cafes and restaurants rising 5.8%.

Spending on services gained 5.1% from a year ago while food and goods expenditure was up 1.9%

Lower interest rates might eventually buoy spending by those on variable mortgages but probably not until very late in 2024 on current market forecasts. (Tax cuts from 1 July should help before then.)

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

Investors see very little chance of the Reserve Bank cutting the cash rate at its 6–7 May meeting and are only fully pricing in a rate cut by November, according to the ASX's rate tracker.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.28am BST

block-time published-time 2.15am BST

'Misidentification' of Australian aid worker's convoy by IDF 'never good', shadow treasurer says

Circling back to the prime minister's demands for accountability from Israel over the deaths of seven aid workers this week, including an Australian, in Gaza – and the Coalition has been a little more muted in its response.

The shadow treasurer, Angus Taylor, appeared on the ABC this morning, and was less confrontational towards Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Allegations made about the intent of Israel – that I think need genuine scrutiny ... misidentification is never good.

I think that Israel's been very clear on the fact that this has occurred. But look, it is incumbent on Israel to do what it can to avoid these sort of tragedies. We've got to respect the fact that Israel was attacked, there's still many people who are being carried as hostages, they have asked for them to be released, they haven't been. And the tragedy moves on.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.23am BST

block-time published-time 2.06am BST

Queensland adds 140 Great Barrier Reef islands to protected areas estate

The Queensland government has added 140 islands within the [Great Barrier Reef marine park](#) to its protected areas estate.

The acquisition, totalling a land size of 1,390 hectares, will protect endangered and of-concern ecosystems as well as habitats for a number of species including green and flatback turtles, seabirds and shorebirds.

It follows confirmation of the [fifth mass coral bleaching event](#) at the Great Barrier Reef in only eight years, driven by global heating and the El Niño climate pattern.

Queensland's terrestrial protected areas currently cover 8.39% of the state's total land area.

The premier, Steven Miles, said it was his promise to Queenslanders and the world that the government would "always take care of the Great Barrier Reef and its natural wonders".

When we say something, we do something ... our commitment to expand the protected areas within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park will mean important breeding areas and nesting sites can be preserved.

One of my first acts as Premier was a commitment to take strong action on emission reductions, and we are progressing the legislation to lock in a 75% by 35 target.

Related: [We can't pretend we're doing enough if we want to give the Great Barrier Reef a chance to survive | Adam Morton](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.14am BST

block-time published-time 1.58am BST

Dwelling approvals fell in February, defying expectations of a pickup

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

One remedy for [rising home values and soaring rents](#) is increasing supply. Unfortunately, there's little sign of a turnaround in dwelling approvals that economists and others have been looking for.

Last month, **Australia** saw approvals for new dwellings reach 12,520, the ABS has just reported. That tally was down 1.9%, seasonally adjusted, from the previous month, and off 5.8% from a year earlier.

Economists had been expecting a 3% month-on-month increase in February after several months of declines.

Private house approvals did rise 10.7% in February, with a pickup in all states - including just over 20% in Western **Australia**. Unfortunately, that was countered by a drop in approvals for "large apartment projects", the ABS said. (We assume the retreat involved "large projects" rather than projects of large apartments.)

In value terms, the approvals involved \$5.79bn worth of new residential buildings but that was down 19.1% (no mean feat given how much costs have been on the increase since the pandemic disrupted supplies and labour).

The federal government has set a target of 1.2m new dwellings over five years, starting from the coming July.

That would translate into 20,000 on average each month. At the current pace of approvals, there will have to be some serious ramping up of supply over those years if that goal is going to be reached, we noted in this article not so long ago:

Related: [Australian housing approvals sink to lowest level in 12 years amid rising costs and planning delays](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.01am BST

block-time published-time 1.45am BST

Large increases in mercury and particulate pollution recorded at Eraring power plant

Mercury and particulate pollution from **Australia**'s largest coal-fired power station soared last year, prompting an environmental group to argue it would be "absurd and harmful" for the [New South Wales](#) government to extend its operations.

Origin Energy 's 2,880-megawatt Eraring power station, slated by the company to close in August 2025, reported mercury pollution jumped 130% in 2022-23 compared with the previous year, according to data from the national pollution inventory. The heavy metal permanently damages brains and kidneys, especially those of children.

The plant, near Lake Macquarie, also reported an 88% increase in PM2.5 particle (particles with a diameter of 2.5 micrometres or less) pollution. Emissions of PM10 particles (particles with a diameter of 10 micrometres or less) emitted by Eraring also rose 16%, while sulfur-dioxide pollution rose 15%.

Two other NSW power stations also reported large increases of toxic pollutants.

Read more on this story here:

Related: [Mercury pollution at Eraring power plant rose 130% in 12 months](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.36am BST

block-time published-time 1.21am BST

Bandt outlines Greens electoral targets in Victorian seat of Wills

The federal Greens leader, Adam Bandt, has just released a statement on the nomination of the Victorian leader, Samantha Ratnam, to run as the party's candidate in the seat of Wills.

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

His comments suggest the party will target renters, first home buyers and supporters of the plight of Palestinians in the looming contest against Labor's Peter Khalil, who currently holds the seat by a comfortable 8.6% margin.

Bandt said:

Peter Khalil and Labor have failed renters, failed people who are trying to buy their first home, and failed to condemn the State of Israel's invasion of Gaza.

The people of Wills are progressive and compassionate, but their values are being betrayed by a Labor party approving new coal and gas projects and backing the invasion of Gaza, while ignoring renters and offering band-aid solutions to the cost of living crisis. The people of Wills can send Labor a message without helping Peter Dutton.

He said only one in 10 voters needed to change their vote to the Greens for the party to win the seat, "make history and elect one of the most powerful MPs in the country":

Almost 40% of households in Wills are renting, but under Labor it's almost impossible to find an affordable rental or buy your first home because Labor backs unlimited rent increases while giving billions in tax handouts to wealthy property investors.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.48am BST

block-time published-time 1.13am BST

PM repeats call for accountability over strike that killed Zomi Frankcom

Albanese says it "isn't good enough" to say that "this is just a product of war". (Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, said on Tuesday it was "a tragic incident of an unintended strike" but that "this happens in wartime").

Albanese says:

Zomi Frankcom was travelling in a vehicle that was clearly identified as an aid vehicle. It should not have been at risk, and we need accountability for how this occurred and for people to be held to account for this.

... The Israeli defence force have accepted their responsibility for this tragic event. We need to have accountability for how it has occurred, and what isn't good enough is the statements that have been made, including that this is just a product of war. This is against humanitarian law – international humanitarian law makes it very clear that aid workers should be able to provide that aid and that assistance free of the threat of losing their life.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.20am BST

block-time published-time 1.07am BST

PM reiterates demands for accountability for Israeli strikes that led to death of aid workers in Gaza

The PM is speaking in Sydney at the moment at a press conference. He is asked if he would back an investigation specifically into whether those responsible for Zomi Frankcom's death should be charged with war crimes.

His comments reflect those we reported earlier, but here they are in full:

What I have said is there needs to be full accountability and transparency for this tragic event ... Zomi Frankcom was going about her business, helping humanity, and her being killed in this way is a catastrophic event that is devastating for her family, but is also felt keenly by our nation.

I spoke with Prime Minister Netanyahu yesterday morning. I have demanded full accountability for what has occurred. They have committed to a full and proper investigation. I want that to be transparent and I want those findings to be made public so that we find out how exactly this can occur.

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

What we know is there had been too many innocent lives lost in Gaza. What we know is that the impact of this war is such that it should not be the case that innocent Palestinians or people assisting them are made to pay the price for the actions of the terrorist group Hamas.

I feel very strongly about this. **Australia** has called for a humanitarian ceasefire, we have voted that way at the United Nations, I have issued multiple statements with the prime minister of Canada and New Zealand as well as with Asean leaders.

From the very beginning we have said every innocent life matters, whether it is Palestinian or Israeli, and now we've seen an innocent Australian assisting her fellow humanity (sic) lose her life and this tragedy.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.09am BST

block-time published-time 1.03am BST

Aerial shooting to cull brumbies and other feral animals in Kosciuszko national park

Parts of Kosciuszko national park will remain closed for the next six months as aerial shooting is used to target brumbies and other feral animals, AAP reports.

Tracks, trails, campgrounds, huts, picnic areas and accommodation in the affected areas of the park have been closed on Thursday and will remain so until October, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service said. The agency said on its website:

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service will be conducting aerial shooting operations in Kosciuszko national park.

Horses, deer, pigs and other feral animals will be targeted.

Major ski resorts and other popular tourist areas will be unaffected by the changes.

NSW has a legislated target to reduce the number of brumbies in the park to 3,000 by mid-2027 – from an estimated population of more than 22,000 – announcing in October that the state would return to aerial shooting of the wild horses.

The feral horse count in the national park exploded after then-NSW Nationals leader and deputy premier John Barilaro opposed culls in favour of trapping and rehoming in 2018.

The federal government has flagged intervening if the NSW control program is not effective, including a possible push for the zero-tolerance approach employed in the ACT.

The federal environment minister, Tanya Pliberse, has long said horses do not belong in the national park and are pushing unique native species towards extinction. Some animal welfare advocates have called for non-lethal brumby controls.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.06am BST

block-time published-time 12.55am BST

Australian republicans welcome Sam Mostyn as new governor general: 'perhaps the first Australian president'

Following on from the previous post about the new governor general, the Australian Republic Movement, advocating for a local head of state rather than the British monarch, yesterday backed Mostyn as "an exceptional Australian" and:

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

...the very model of a modern head of state – one who should have been elected to serve as Australia's head of state, not simply appointed to represent him.

Its national director, Isaac Jeffrey, said:

An Australian republic would honour people like Samantha by electing them on merit to represent Australia. I wish Samantha all the best in the role and hope she'll be the last governor general and perhaps the first Australian president.

ARM co-chair Craig Foster called Mostyn "an inspired choice to serve as governor general":

Sam is someone that I'm sure Australians would choose as head of state if we had the choice, rather than asking for approval of a king. In fact, Sam would be a wonderful president of an Australian republic.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.58am BST

block-time published-time 12.53am BST

Monarchists say new governor general a 'divisive nomination' and part of PM's republican political plan

The Australian Monarchist League is the latest to join the pile-on against newly named governor general Samantha Mostyn, branding her a "divisive nomination".

The appointment of Mostyn, a well-regarded business figure and equality advocate, has been met with praise across the political spectrum in parliament, but attracted some ire from select conservative commentators.

Those who know her said she is "strategic, clever and an elevator of voices of people who ordinarily don't get one", Amy Remeikis reported today:

Related: [How will Sam Mostyn's career-long advocacy shape her role as governor general?](#)

But the AML, one of the major pro-monarchy groups in this country, was upset at Mostyn's appointment.

Its chair, Philip Benwell, wrote in an email to supporters this morning:

Someone who has so aggressively attacked the heritage of modern Australia should never be allowed to become its executive head of state.

His basis for such a claim was that Mostyn had advocated for the Indigenous voice referendum, had supported changing the date of Australia Day and referred to 26 January as "Invasion Day."

Benwell also alleged:

Her nomination is a part of the prime minister's political plan to bring on a republic as has been the appointment of so many republican state governors.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.25am BST

block-time published-time 12.49am BST

Greens leader Samantha Ratnam to run in federal seat of Wills

Victorian Greens leader, Samantha Ratnam, has announced she's put her hand up to run as the party's candidate in the federal seat of Wills.

In a thread on X, Ratnam said:

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

I am excited to nominate as your Greens candidate to represent the federal seat of Wills... As the preselection is open, I am not able to comment further until the process is completed. If you're a member of the Victorian Greens, message me to find out more.

The Greens have been eyeing off Wills, which takes in increasingly the gentrified suburbs in Melbourne's northwest such as Brunswick, Coburg, Pascoe Vale, Fawkner, Hadfield and Glenroy, for several elections.

It is currently held by Labor's Peter Khalil on a healthy 8.6% margin against the Greens. (In that part of Melbourne, just 17% of voters backed the Liberal party).

Ratnam has been the leader of the Greens in Victoria since 2017. Her running as a candidate for the seat shows the party thinks it's in with a good chance this coming federal election, which is due by the middle of 2025.

If you want to know more about Ratnam, here's a profile of her I wrote before the 2022 election:

Related: [Samantha Ratnam, the march of the Greens and the unfulfilled promise of the 'most progressive government' ever](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.59am BST

block-time published-time 12.39am BST

Couple charged after death of two-year-old

A man and woman will appear in court today charged following to death of a two-year old child in the New South Wales Riverina region last year, according to a statement from NSW police.

The charges relate to an incident in December, when a two-year-old boy was presented to Griffith base hospital with significant head injuries. He was airlifted to the Sydney children's hospital for further treatment but died on Sunday 3 December 2023.

Police launched an investigation into the circumstances of the toddler's death. Yesterday, just before 11am, local police and officers from the Murrumbidgee child abuse squad arrested a 21-year-old woman and a 33-year-old man in the Griffith region.

They were both charged with manslaughter and the woman was also charged with assault occasioning actual bodily harm in relation to the alleged assault of a two-month-old baby in November last year.

They were both refused bail and will appear in court today.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.45am BST

block-time published-time 12.25am BST

NT chief minister says youth detention riots sparked off 'in the education setting'

NT's chief minister, Eva Lawler, said her understanding of the situation was that the incidents "sparked off" "in the education setting". Lawler said:

It is tough work, working in youth justice facilities. So I'm sure that the staff there did what they could to manage that incident. ... I've seen the education aspect of Don Dale in the past. There are staff there that are really passionate – that really work to support the children. But there was obviously an incident yesterday there that triggered a larger incident.

Lawler said the government was aiming to have a new youth detention centre open by the end of June.

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.27am BST

block-time published-time 12.18am BST

NT police report riot and fire at Don Dale youth detention centre

The acting commissioner of Northern Territory police, Martin Dole, is giving a press conference with the Territory's chief minister, Eva Lawler, on reports of a riot and a fire at Don Dale youth detention centre yesterday afternoon.

Dole says:

Yesterday afternoon, after 4:00pm, [police] were called to the Don Dale centre as a result of some youth rioting at the facility. We've spent the night there with resources committed to resolving that incident overnight.

Initially, 14 youths climbed on to the roof of that facility and were throwing projectiles at the attending members and staff. Eight of those youth have since surrendered to police and have been taken back into custody. And as of my briefing at 7:00am this morning, six remained on the roof of that facility.

Dole says a police officer was injured and taken to hospital after one of the young people threw a projectile at him.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.23am BST

block-time published-time 12.00am BST

Apple app store and related services down globally

Apple's app store is down globally on Thursday morning, the company has confirmed.

It went down around 9.30am AEST, and also brought down the Mac OS store, Apple Fitness, Apple Arcade, Apple Music and Apple TV+.

The company said "some users are affected."

Users are experiencing a problem with this service. We are investigating and will update the status as more information becomes available.

It comes as Apple is in the federal court in [Australia](#) over alleged anticompetitive behaviour in the operation of its app store, brought by Fortnite creator Epic Games.

The company's CEO, Tim Sweeney, has spent this week being questioned in court by Apple's lawyers, with Google taking over questions yesterday afternoon into today.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.31am BST

block-time published-time 11.44pm BST

Queensland man found dead in flood waters

A man has died after his vehicle was found in flood waters on the outskirts of Brisbane this morning.

Queensland Police were called to conduct a welfare check of a vehicle submerged in floodwater at a private property on Begley Road, Greenbank, around 5.20am on Thursday.

A 71-year-old Greenbank man was located deceased near the vehicle, police said in a statement.

The death is considered not suspicious. A report will be prepared for the coroner.

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

Queensland has been hit by heavy rain overnight, with a flood watch alert for the southern inland catchments issued on Wednesday afternoon and residents across the south-east of the state told to be alert for flash flooding.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.47pm BST

block-time published-time 11.37pm BST

Melbourne park closed after asbestos found in mulch

[Asbestos](#) has been discovered in recycled mulch at a park in Melbourne's west, prompting the closure of a playground.

A resident had reported items found in tanbark near a new playground at Donald McLean Reserve in Spotswood to the local council earlier this week.

The Hobsons Bay city council, in Melbourne's west, confirmed the two pieces of material were sent for testing, with results on Wednesday confirming they contained asbestos. The playground has been closed since Tuesday and council said it was working with a material hygienist and the state's Environment Protection Agency to ensure hazardous material was removed.

A council spokesperson said in a statement:

The safety of our community is our priority and council is working with the EPA and the hygienist to inspect other sites using this mulch.

All playgrounds within Hobsons Bay are regularly inspected by a safety auditor, which also includes new reserves prior to them being opened.

The council said the asbestos material was discovered in a recycled mulch product around mature tree-planting. A "virgin soft mulch" is also used around the playground.

Read the full story here:

Related: [Asbestos found in recycled mulch next to playground in Melbourne's west](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.43am BST

block-time published-time 11.27pm BST

Advocates call for investigation after police brief media on alleged crimes involving five-year-old

New South Wales's peak Indigenous legal body has called for an independent investigation after state police briefed media outlets about the alleged involvement of a five-year-old in a break-and-enter and car theft before officers had spoken to the alleged offenders or laid charges.

Repeatedly asked about the incident in the outback town of Bourke over subsequent days, police media refused to officially confirm the ages of the alleged offenders despite two metropolitan mastheads quoting separate officers referring to a five-year-old.

Guardian [Australia](#) understands the assertion that one of the alleged offenders was five was based on an eyewitness account, which responding officers held confidence in.

Read the full story here:

Related: [Call for investigation after NSW police brief media on alleged crimes involving five-year-old](#)

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.45pm BST

block-time published-time 11.14pm BST

Dingo bites 9-year-old girl on K'gari

Rangers are searching for a dingo after a nine-year-old girl was bitten on the leg in the latest incident at a popular Queensland holiday spot, AAP reports.

The girl was with adults, wading in shallow water on K'gari (formerly known as Fraser Island), about 4.30pm on Wednesday when a dingo approached and bit her on the leg as she crouched down.

Nearby witnesses created a distraction and provided assistance.

The girl was transported from Yidney beachfront to the Happy Valley ambulance station where she received first aid for minor wounds. Arrangements were made to transport her to the mainland for further medical assessment.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) rangers are investigating the incident and working to confirm the identity of the dingo involved.

There has been a spate of dingo incidents on the island this year. An 18-year-old woman was bitten on the back of the leg when she was part of a tour group walking to Lake Wabby on 17 February.

Hours later a person on a separate tour was nipped while walking on the beachfront near Dilli Village, marking six dingo incidents in as many weeks.

A German tourist was also bitten on the leg at Gerowweea Creek on 15 March.

Related: [*Dingoes pay the ultimate price on K'gari but some believe people are the real menace*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.20pm BST

block-time published-time 11.06pm BST

Conservation groups begin court challenge against Queensland coal mine

Conservation groups say they have begun a legal challenge seeking to overturn the Queensland government 's approval of the proposed Winchester South coal mine, citing climate, biodiversity and human rights concerns.

The state government granted an environmental authority to Whitehaven 's Winchester South coalmine in February. The project – which plans to produce 15m tonnes of thermal and coking coal a year over three decades – still [*requires federal government approval*](#).

The Australian Conservation Foundation and the Mackay Conservation Group will seek a review of the state's approval in the Queensland land court.

The ACF said the mine would destroy 2,000 hectares of wildlife habitat that is home to threatened and endangered species including koalas, and impact water resources.

It would also "impact human rights due to the climate consequences on generations of Queenslanders".

ACF's chief executive, Kelly O'Shanassy, said:

This coal mine would be a climate disaster, generating more pollution over its lifetime than every source in **Australia** does in a year.

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

With the Great Barrier Reef in the midst of yet another serious mass coral bleaching event, the stakes for Queensland and **Australia** are higher than ever.

The mine, proposed near the town of Moranbah, was recommended for approval by the Queensland coordinator general last year, despite a concession that it “has the capacity to limit human rights” due to “climate change consequences that may arise from the project”.

According to the company's environmental impact statement, the project would contribute 583m tonnes of greenhouse gas pollution – more than **Australia**'s national annual greenhouse gas emissions – including 14.2m tonnes of on-site emissions and 567m tonnes of scope three emissions created when it is burned overseas.

Approximately 58% of the mine's coal is for steel production, while the other 42% would be exported to Asian countries for use in producing electricity.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.08pm BST

block-time published-time 10.58pm BST

Corporate racial diversity in boardrooms down, report says

There are fewer racially diverse people in Australian boardrooms than there were seven years ago, despite efforts to make the corporate sector more multicultural, AAP reports.

The 2024 Board Diversity Index, which analyses **Australia**'s top 300 ASX listed areas, found the nation has made significant strides in some areas. Since 2015, the number of board positions held by women has surged by 89%, for example. But on other measures, diversity has stalled or isn't reported.

“They're still mostly ‘stale, pale and male’,” the report read.

In smaller companies, female representation fell from 44% in 2022 to 32% the year after. There has been no change to the number of First Nations directors. And the number of directors with an Anglo-Celtic background has grown to 91%, up from 90.5% in 2017.

Australians with a disability represent about one-fifth of the population, but there appears to be no people from this cohort on ASX300 boards.

The information, gathered by Watermark Search International and the Governance Institute of **Australia**, could be a worrying omen of **Australia**'s future. The Governance Institute's chair, Pauline Vamos, said:

The recruitment of directors has become trapped in a cycle of repetition and reliance on the same outdated processes and skills matrices no longer suited to contemporary demands.

It is imperative that we break free from this inertia.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.04pm BST

block-time published-time 10.49pm BST

New koala national park to be established in NSW

Nearly 1,000 hectares of land along Sydney's Georges River has been transferred to the New South Wales Parks and Wildlife Service for a new koala national park.

The Minns government announced the new park in south-western Sydney last year to protect koalas and add to a planned north-south movement corridor for the species, which it says will protect about 1,830 hectares of land in total.

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

The park – which is part of the government's \$80m commitment to protect koalas in the area – will include bushland in Long Point, Ingleburn, Minto Heights, Kentlyn, Airds, St Helens Park, Gilead and Appin.

The government says 63% of the public land transfer commitment for this park has been achieved. It will also give \$220,000 worth of grants to the Wollondilly and Liverpool councils for improved signage for motorists in koala "hot spots".

The environment department says it is aware of six instances in which koalas have been hit by cars in south-west Sydney in this year alone, and 63 since July 2022.

The environment minister, Penny Sharpe, is in Campbelltown today to host a koala forum with 70 local experts and carers. She said:

Too many of these precious animals are getting hurt on roads.

These signs will make a real difference by alerting drivers to the risk as they're passing through the area.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.23pm BST

block-time published-time 10.40pm BST

Israeli spokesperson says Hamas regularly uses ambulances and aid workers as cover

One more on the interview with Israeli government spokesperson Avi Hyman. I'm going to give you this full back and forth because I think it's quite important.

He was asked, that if the IDF had information about aid workers' movements and their cars were clearly identified, how could they have been "misidentified" by the IDF when all of that information was provided?

He says he doesn't know, but follows with:

What I can tell you, which is what you may be missing ... is that Hamas fights from hospitals, Hamas uses ambulances to transport their terrorists, Hamas shoots from schools, from UN facilities, from mosques.

Sally Sara asks again:

When we're talking about this particular case. You had information about this, the travelling plans, the vehicles, how could they be misidentified? Are you saying that because you believe genuinely that Hamas are fighting for maybe fighting for medical areas, that you just hit these kinds of convoys anyway? Is that what you're saying?

Avi Hyman :

Yeah, I'm telling you that war is hell, war is foggy. It was the middle of the night. There was limited visibility. This is just me speculating, which is something that I don't want to do.

Sara asks, why would he speculate in such an important case as this, particularly when the Australian community is wanting answers about what happened?

Hyman:

Because I can tell you definitively that Hamas uses ambulances, uses aid workers as cover for their activities. I can tell you that just at the beginning of the week, we finished a two week operation in the biggest hospital in Gaza that had been turned into a full military base.

But was there evidence in this particular case that militants were in the convoy?

Hyman:

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

There's an ongoing investigation, like I said, so we don't we don't know.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.02pm BST

block-time published-time 10.12pm BST

Further reading on Gaza aid worker deaths

I've got some other news for you unrelated to Gaza in a moment, but here are a couple of pieces we've published recently which, if you're interested in reading more about what happened this week, might help you orient yourself on the issue.

Here's a report from Bethany McKernan in Jerusalem about the incident, including comments from the World Central Kitchen [founder, the chef José Andrés](#), who said the IDF had targeted the convoy "systematically, car by car", even though they were in touch with WCK and were aware of the aid workers' movements.

Related: [Israel accused of targeting aid convoy 'car by car' as pressure grows over Gaza tactics](#)

We've also got some analysis from Peter Beaumont, Guardian's veteran (so to speak) war correspondent. He says:

Even though [Israel](#) has promised a full and professional investigation into the killing of the aid workers from World Central Kitchen, the reality is that human rights organisations, inside Israel and beyond, have long raised questions about the IDF's rules, amid allegations that the ones that do exist are being ignored by soldiers and commanders on the ground.

Related: [Israel's rules of engagement seem looser than ever – if they are followed at all](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.15pm BST

block-time published-time 10.06pm BST

Israeli spokesperson says deaths of aid workers in IDF air strike 'appears to be a grave mistake'

There is a lot of back and forth about how the Israeli military could possibly have misidentified clearly marked aid vehicles, the movements of which had been communicated to the IDF in advance to ensure safe passage. Hyman's answer, eventually, is that he doesn't know.

I can only echo the words of the prime minister as the president of the head of the IDF, which is to say that it was a grave mistake. It appears to be a grave, regrettable mistake. And we will do our utmost to look into it to find out exactly what happened. And make sure that nothing like this happens again.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.53pm BST

block-time published-time 9.57pm BST

Israeli spokesperson says Hamas stealing food aid and claims of Gaza famine 'widely exaggerated'

OK, I'm going back through that interview now – there was a lot in there, including a number of unverified and heavily disputed allegations, but I'll try to pull out the most salient points for you.

Asked why, when Israel has some of the most sophisticated military technology in the world and in this case, specific information about the aid organisation and their movements vehicles, the military still attacked its vehicles and killed the organisation's workers, Avi Hyman says:

That's what makes it all the worse and all the more painful. Because this was one of the organisations who was doing tremendous work that would actually get the aid to the people that need it.

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

He claims there isn't a problem getting food into Gaza, but rather, "having food distributed around Gaza to the people that need it before Hamas and their cronies steal it and take it to their underground lair."

He's asked what his evidence is for that claim, given even the UN is expressing concern about significant hunger and famine in Gaza. He says:

Obviously the evidence I have is that we are on the ground and know exactly what's going on in Gaza. What I can tell you is there's no allegations to my knowledge of actual starvation, actual famine, they've been projections on mathematical or mathematical assertions based on false data based on old data based on out of date information.

He claims the risk of famine has been "wildly exaggerated" because the international community wants to stop the war.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.01pm BST

block-time published-time 9.46pm BST

After a number of comments about the state of famine in Gaza, which Hyman appears to be disputing – it's quite difficult to keep up with his comments, though they seem to include allegations that Hamas is stealing aid – he is asked by host Sally Sara if he's rejecting UN concerns of hunger and starvation in Gaza. I will come back and check his comments shortly but the upshot seems to be that he is, more or less.

I'll bring you more direct lines from this interview shortly, bear with me.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.47pm BST

block-time published-time 9.40pm BST

Israeli spokesperson suggests killing of aid workers not 'on purpose' and rejects figures of 200 aid workers killed in Gaza

Still with an ear to ABC radio, we're now hearing from Israeli government spokesperson Avi Hyman. He's asked how the Israeli government can say it's a mistake rather than a deliberate strike when the investigation is not yet completed?

Hyman responds that the "preliminary investigation" suggests it was not intentional:

I mean, obviously, we know that this isn't something that the IDF would do or the Israeli Air Force would do on purpose.

When it's put to him that nearly 200 aid workers have been killed in Gaza so far during this war, Hyman says he "rejects these numbers":

There's a war going on. Wars are awful. Nobody wanted this war, we certainly didn't want this war, but we're forced to fight it because it's a war for our very existence.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.47pm BST

block-time published-time 9.31pm BST

Albanese opaque on specifics on cost-of-living measures in budget

Moving away from Gaza, Albanese is asked about his comments to the Council of Small Business Organisations of **Australia** last night, where he said cost of living relief for families would be a high priority in this May budget.

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

He effectively dodges the question about whether households can expect the same level of cost of living relief they got last year (cheaper medicines, household bill relief, etc.). Instead he sticks to variations on:

We're looking at what we can do to provide further cost of living relief without putting pressure on inflation.

Read more on his speech here:

Related: [*Albanese signals May budget likely to include extension of energy price relief for small business and families*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.33pm BST

block-time published-time 9.25pm BST

Albanese says killing of of aid workers 'completely unacceptable'

Asked about Frankcom's family's response to her death (as we mentioned earlier, they're also calling for an investigation), Albanese says:

They're very proud of what Zomi was contributing there, her life was about making humanity better, and for her to lose her life [has had] devastating impact. Not just Zomi, of course – she was one of seven aid workers. But in addition to that, the driver, the Palestinian man who was driving the car to lose, their life in this way is completely unacceptable.

And we do need a full investigation and proper accountability. Prime Minister Netanyahu has assured me ... and we need to ensure that the Israeli government is held to account for the commitments that they've made.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.33pm BST

block-time published-time 9.21pm BST

PM says Israeli government must be 'held accountable' for Gaza aid worker deaths

Albanese says Israel's government must be "held accountable" for the deaths of those aid workers:

Humanitarian workers are protected under international law, and the Netanyahu government must publish a full and transparent investigation and they must be held accountable.

He continues:

I had a discussion with the [Israeli] Prime Minister Netanyahu yesterday morning where he accepted the responsibility on behalf of the Israeli government for this tragedy, but we need to know exactly how this occurred.

Netanyahu has said it was a case of "misidentification". Albanese says that while Israel claims it is protecting the lives of innocent people, but:

[T]his [incident] stands in stark contrast, as well as of course, the many incidents affecting not just people who've come from overseas to provide aid but of course Palestinians themselves.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.36pm BST

block-time published-time 9.17pm BST

Albanese calls for 'full, transparent and clear explanation' for Israeli killing of aid workers

The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, is speaking on ABC RN about the death of international aid workers killed in Gaza, including Australian Zomi Frankcom. He says:

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

We need a full, transparent and clear explanation for how this occurred. People would have seen the footage of the vehicle that was in this struck by an Israeli missile that clearly is identified as being from the World Central Kitchen.

These vehicles were going about carrying the best of humanity, people who'd come from all over the world to help Palestinians who are suffering from extraordinary deprivation in Gaza, and for them to lose their life in these circumstances is outrageous and completely unacceptable.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.19pm BST

block-time published-time 9.09pm BST

Thanks so much to Martin Farrer for kicking us off this morning. I'm Stephanie Convery and I'll be with you for the better part of today's news blog. Hope you're all caffeinated and breakfasted, as it is promising to be a busy one.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.10pm BST

block-time published-time 8.58pm BST

Thunderstorms, heavy rain and possible flash flooding for eastern [Australia](#)

Two weather systems are colliding to bring thunderstorms, heavy rain and possible flash flooding across eastern [Australia](#), AAP reports .

The troughs are passing over each other causing the wild weather in Queensland's south and northern NSW, the Bureau of Meteorology says. Rainfall totals up to 200mm are forecast across both states in coming days.

In Queensland, residents are being told to prepare for flash flooding. The Darling Downs, Granite Belt and Maranoa in Queensland's southwest are forecast to get thunderstorm activity on Thursday with widespread rainfall totals between 20mm and 50mm.

Isolated falls that increase the risk of flooding could be up to 100mm in towns from Charleville to Goondiwindi and over to the Gold Coast.

A flood watch has been issued for dozens of catchments across the state's south-west including the Paroo River, Wallam and Mungallala Creeks and Moonie River. The bureau said floodwaters could rise on Thursday night.

For residents near the Moonie and Condamine rivers, it marks just a few months since river levels rose, flooding homes in a January emergency.

The weather system will move south into northern NSW developing into a low pressure system, bringing widespread rain of 30mm to 50mm and up to 100mm in some areas.

The bureau's Miriam Bradbury warned the weather system will bring severe storms with heavy rain, strong winds and high sea swells.

The New England and Northern Rivers regions are anticipating the first wave of wild weather before the system tracks further south to the Hunter, Sydney, Blue Mountains and Illawarra on Friday.

NSW State Emergency Services are preparing for the worst with residents urged to get ready for the storms.

A flood watch is in place for the Mid North Coast, Sydney region, South Coast and parts of the north west. Major flooding is possible on the Hawkesbury Nepean River from Friday.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 9.03pm BST

block-time published-time 8.53pm BST

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

Relatives of British Gaza victims echo 'disappointment' of Zomi Frankcom's family

The description by Zomi Frankcom's family of Israel's response to her death as "disappointing" has been [echoed by families of three British volunteers](#) killed in the same incident in Gaza on Monday.

James Kirby, a 47-year-old former Army sniper, and John Chapman, 57, worked in the charity's security team and died alongside fellow British military veteran James Henderson, 33.

Adam McGuire, a relative of Kirby, said he was "one of those characters who, once you met him, was hard to forget".

But he said the family was "disappointed" by Benjamin Netanyahu's response on Tuesday, adding: "We hope from James's side and possibly the other six that this is the turning point. We hope we can get a ceasefire and humanitarian aid can get into Gaza."

As in [Australia](#), the incident has increased pressure on the UK government to take a tougher stance on Israel's use of force in Gaza. [Ministers in Rishi Sunak's government are under pressure from their own MPs](#) and peers to stop arming Israel.

There's also an [increasing pushback against UK support for Israel](#) with a poll finding that arms exports to the country should be stopped.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.55pm BST

block-time published-time 8.53pm BST

Welcome

Good morning and welcome to our live news blog. I'm Martin Farrer and I'll be running through of the top stories you need to know about this morning before my colleague logs on to take you through the day.

The family of Zomi Frankcom, the Australian aid worker killed by Israeli airstrikes in Gaza, have backed calls for a war crimes investigation into the incident. Two Australian experts in international law have said there are grounds for a war crimes investigation into her death in the bombing alongside six other aid workers.

[Speaking to the Nine newspapers](#), family members said they would support the calls for an investigation. "It should never have happened," said Frankcom's brother Mal and other family members.

They said that the response by the Israeli government so far had been "disappointing" and added: "The lives of humanitarian workers should always be protected." It comes as the families of three British aid workers killed alongside Frankcom [paid tribute to their loved ones as "heroes"](#). Stand by for more reaction to this.

Anthony Albanese will give the strongest signal yet that the government will extend energy price relief when he uses a speech in Sydney today to declare that small businesses and families will be ["front and centre"](#) in the May budget. In an address to the Council of Small Business Organisations of [Australia](#), the prime minister will say that the cost of living measure has "helped people under pressure – and it helped fight inflation", signalling the support of up to \$650 to 1m small businesses and 5m families will probably be rolled out in the May budget.

Albanese will also speak about the need to encourage uptake of rooftop solar, and take aim at the opposition leader, Peter Dutton, for trying to enlist small business into his "politics of negativity and conflict". More coming up.

Today was supposed to be the day we learned the verdict in the Bruce Lehrmann defamation saga. Instead, a little-known former Seven producer will give testimony in the federal court that could potentially change the outcome. We have a deep dive into what we know about the claims of Taylor Auerbach, [who will be the star witness](#) in the federal court in Sydney today when Channel Ten [re-opens its defence](#) of Lehrmann's defamation action.

Anne Aly criticises Simon Birmingham for repeating Netanyahu's 'dismissive' response to aid worker's death – as it happened

Load-Date: April 4, 2024

End of Document