



Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

The Guardian (London)

May 21, 2023 Sunday 10:30 PM GMT

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

theguardian

Section: **AUSTRALIA** NEWS; Version:19

Length: 17972 words

Byline: Emily Wind (now) and Amy Remeikis (earlier)

Highlight: Follow the day's news liveWatch: Stella Assange: 'This is the closest we've ever been to securing Julian's release'Get our morning and afternoon news emails, free app or daily news podcast

Body

block-time published-time 8.27am BST

The Bureau of Meteorology has published its weather outlook for the week ahead, with temperatures fairly seasonal across the country – within a degree or two of the average May maximum temperatures.

The cold temperatures are mostly being felt through the overnight and early morning weather, however a cold weather system may be on its way on Thursday:

enltrWeather Update: Weekly weather update. Find out what to expect across the country over the coming days. Video Current 1:00pm AEST, Monday 22 May 2023. Latest: <https://t.co/4W35o8iFmh> or the BOM Weather app. <pic.twitter.com/9Ghi7ka9n1>

— Bureau of Meteorology, **Australia** (@BOM_au) [May 22, 2023](#)

block-time published-time 8.18am BST

Liberal MP Bridget Archer rebukes Dutton's claims on Indigenous voice

Liberal MP Bridget Archer has delivered a barely veiled rebuke of her own party's opposition to the Indigenous voice, directly rubbing out claims that the consultation body would divide the country by race – an argument made by her party leader, Peter Dutton, just hours before.

Archer, speaking on the constitutional alteration bill, read out contributions from Indigenous members of her community in Tasmania. She told the chamber "we need the national voice to help the state transition to a treaty

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

and truth telling process as quickly as possible", that "the voice will be needed at a state and national level", and that "something needs to change".

Archer said:

We cannot continue to do the things we have always done. The communities want more than constitutional recognition. They call for positive solutions that will improve the lives of our people.

The Liberal MP, who has said on several occasions that she has weighed up her continuing association with the conservative party, then took time to address criticisms of the voice. Archer has committed to campaigning strongly for the voice, and has so far been the most publicly vocal supporter of the change in the Liberal party.

She said:

No, the voice won't have veto power or act as a third chamber... To claim otherwise is a deliberate and harmful misrepresentation of the facts, and I'm disappointed to have seen this wilfully perpetuated by some.

Nor does the argument that this referendum is dividing the country by race make sense.

Hours earlier, Dutton had claimed the voice would leave the country "divided in spirit, and in law" and "permanently divide us by race".

Dutton claimed:

The voice will re-racialise our nation.

Archer also made a point of noting her opposition to reintroducing the cashless debit card. Dutton's speech said "a government I lead will reinstate the cashless debit card in communities who seek to have it".

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.21am BST

block-time published-time 8.09am BST

MPs asked about PwC

On the ABC's Afternoon Briefing, Labor MP Kate Thwaites is asked for her thoughts on consultancy firm PwC and whether they should "have the book thrown at them". She says:

There are a number of inquiries and committee processes going through that ... and it is clear that something has gone very wrong. My main take-out is we need to invest in the public service ...

Liberal MP Russell Broadbent also weighs in:

Governments contract in good faith to organisations like PwC. They have let down [their] side completely in this case. They are doing the very best to put the best spin on what is a disgraceful exposure of what has happened here.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.13am BST

block-time published-time 7.51am BST

Coleman on Stan Grant

Coleman is asked about Stan Grant 's departure from Q&A and whether he believes ABC management has responded appropriately:

The first point is racism is abhorrent, evil and disgusting and no Australian should ever be expected to tolerate racism.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

In relation to the issues of Stan Grant ... that's something for the ABC management to address.

... it's something [where] they need to step up and say how they've treated Stan, he's obviously not happy with the treatment ... If Stan has been subject to racism – as he said he has been – that is appalling.

Coleman ended his answer with:

... that doesn't mean that people shouldn't be allowed to have frank and open debate about issues about ABC coverage, including the coverage of the coronation, where there were many people who had very strong concerns about the way that coverage was presented and that's entirely appropriate for people to raise those concerns. That's a very different matter though if people are being racist to Stan Grant.

Leader of the opposition Peter Dutton and shadow minister for communications David Coleman. Photograph: Nikki Short/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.56am BST

block-time published-time 7.44am BST

Coleman asked about push for age verification for adult websites

As the shadow communications minister, David Coleman was also asked about the push for age verification for adult websites. He acknowledged the issue is "very complicated" when it comes to privacy and would like to see the eSafety commissioner's report on the matter made public.

He said:

There's something important the government can do here though, and that's adopt a principle that social media companies should act in the best interests of children.

We had that in legislation in late 2021 and draft changes to the online privacy act. What that would mean is, if a social media company facilitated the provision of content to a child which is not in their best interest - and some of the content is in that category - they've been in breach. So we would very much encourage the government to take up that legislation.

My colleague Josh Taylor reported on this last week, in case you missed it:

Related: [Age verification for adult websites may involve Australian government digital ID](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.51am BST

block-time published-time 7.37am BST

Liberal frontbencher David Coleman asked if he will campaign for no vote on voice

Coleman has told the ABC his position on the voice is the same as the Coalition's stance and that he doesn't support the proposal put forward by the government.

When asked if he will be voting for the actual bill, he said he would "leave those more detailed questions to others as we go through the process".

He was also asked if he would be actively campaigning for a no vote:

I'll be putting that position in line with the Coalition's position, and this is an issue on which we want to have a sensible and calm and measured debate ...

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.42am BST

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

block-time published-time 7.29am BST

A massive thanks to Amy for taking us through the morning! I'll be with you for the remainder of the evening.

block-time published-time 7.27am BST

My colleague Emily Wind is going to take you through the evening, but I will be back with Politics Live bright and early tomorrow morning for the second day of estimates hearings (the first day is always a little departmental and dry) and the ongoing debate over the referendum legislation.

A very big thank you to those who joined us today and I hope to see you tomorrow. Hope you are warm and get a moment to think about nothing – until then though, take care of you. Ax

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.28am BST

block-time published-time 7.18am BST

Greens' Barbara Pocock on consultants and conflict of interest

Pocock wants the use of all consultants looked at, telling the ABC:

If you look at the history of these consultants, they are multinational consultants, the biggest entities in the world.

There is clear evidence of a similar practice in the UK in 2013, where four of the big consultants were reviewed for exactly the same kind of insider trading.

It is a concern that there is a public national example that occurred a few years before exactly the same practice, in principle, here in our own country.

I think we need an international review analysis of the practice, but it is not just that kind of conflict of interest that we need to be confident that we are pursuing. We have large consultants who are setting parameters for a government program while at the same time advising private clients on how to make that program work to their advantage. Perception and actual conflict of interest ... is what we want to track down.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.26am BST

block-time published-time 7.16am BST

Greens senator says PwC affair 'squarely in remit' of new national anti-corruption commission

As reported earlier, the Greens senator Barbara Pocock wants the new national anti-corruption commission to look into the PwC affair.

Related: [*'Disgraceful breach of trust': how PwC, one of the world's biggest accountancy firms, became mired in a tax scandal*](#)

It doesn't look like Senate estimates has changed her mind. Pocock told the ABC:

I think it is a systemic problem we need to pursue and really chase down the kinds of conflicts that are very evidently acted on and it's appropriate, squarely in the remit of the Nacc.

It should be top of their work agenda. We've got recent, very reliable reports of \$21 billion of public funds going to consultants and contractors, so we need to be confident the corruption is not endemic in this industry. We need to go hard after this particular example in PwC.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.19am BST

block-time published-time 7.06am BST

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

Another defence project added to troubled program list

The minister for defence industry, Pat Conroy, announced today that the "Satellite Ground Station – East and Wideband SATCOM Network Management System" had been designated as a project of concern. The statement says:

While infrastructure for the project has been delivered, including three large ground antennae, it is facing ongoing schedule delays due to other technical challenges.

The project is designed to transform and improve new and existing Defence wideband ground stations and deployed systems across **Australia** to meet the increasing need for greater satellite communications capacity.

Conroy said the listing "demonstrates the Albanese government's commitment to remediating underperforming projects, in order to deliver the capabilities urgently needed by the Australian Defence Force". He said the government would work closely with Northrop Grumman **Australia** "to get this project back on track".

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.14am BST

block-time published-time 7.06am BST

Court decision could pave way for compensation for NT traditional owners

AAP has an update on a federal court case, the outcome of which could see traditional owners in the NT receive compensation:

A decision by a full bench of the federal court has potentially paved the way for compensation for traditional owners in the Northern Territory.

In 2019, the late Yunupingu, of behalf of the Gumatj clan, made an application for native title for land in the Gove Peninsula, in north-eastern Arnhem Land.

At the same time he lodged a compensation application, for the alleged effects on native title of certain executive and legislative acts from 1911-1978.

Yunupingu died in April and the ceremonies honouring his life are continuing this week, following a public memorial last Thursday.

The commonwealth argued for a number of reasons that the compensation case was misconceived in law, but the court rejected all of those arguments, meaning the case can proceed.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.10am BST

block-time published-time 6.56am BST

Meanwhile, in Labor-led South **Australia**

enltrThe anti-protest Bill in SA passed the Lower House so quickly that a copy of the Bill hadn't even been uploaded to the Parliament's website. A good and caring government does not legislate in this way. The Premier should walk back his support for the Libs' Bill. [#ProtectProtest https://t.co/WhVR4w2lvt](https://t.co/WhVR4w2lvt)

— David Mejia-Canales (@davidHRLC) [May 22, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.59am BST

block-time published-time 6.40am BST

ABC journalists at the Parliament House bureau are also making a stand

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange
 enltrEnough is enough. [#IStandWithStan](#) [#WeRejectRacism](#) pic.twitter.com/C8X7IA738Y

— Dana Morse (@DanaMorse_) [May 22, 2023](#)

This is happening in ABC newsrooms all over the country.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.47am BST

block-time published-time 6.36am BST

There are more questions to the speaker about overdue answers to questions and Milton Dick says he will get right on that.

He tables a couple of reports and then it looks like we are getting back to the referendum legislation debate.

Josh Burns is up next speaking on that.

block-time published-time 6.34am BST

And question time ends.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.40am BST

block-time published-time 6.33am BST

Labor asked about migration numbers

Liberal MP Michael Sukkar asks Julie Collins:

New dwelling construction is at its lowest level for 10 years, builders are collapsing and housing is dropping on the government's watch, yet the government's own budget papers say 5 million will come to **Australia** over the next five years. When will the minister finally admit Labor has no plan to house its big **Australia**?

Collins goes through how migration numbers are still lower than what the opposition had forecast when it was in government, the fact that there is an accelerated bump because of the closed borders during the pandemic, that the nation's housing ministers have met four times since the Albanese government came to government, but hadn't met for years under the opposition, and finishes with the housing future fund which the opposition is opposing.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.44am BST

block-time published-time 6.29am BST

Cricket **Australia** endorses Indigenous voice to parliament

Cricket **Australia** has become the latest national sports body to endorse the Indigenous voice to parliament, following the likes of the NRL, Rugby **Australia** and the AFL in publicly indicating its support for the yes vote in the referendum.

In a statement on Monday afternoon, Cricket **Australia** chair Mike Baird said the board is "proud of cricket's powerful and unique history with First Nations people" and that it supports the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian constitution through the voice.

We encourage respectful and inclusive conversations across cricket to support our staff, players, volunteers and officials' ongoing journey of education on First Nations histories and cultures and the proposal to formalise a lasting and appropriate voice for First Nations people through the referendum," Baird said.

For its part, the Cricket **Australia** board supports the establishment of the voice. In doing so, we acknowledge and respect that everyone is entitled to reach their own decision come the referendum.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

Last week [RA and the AFL joined the NRL](#) in explicitly supporting the yes vote, while Football [Australia](#) and Tennis [Australia](#) have expressed their support for the Uluru Statement from the heart, of which the voice is the first component.

The Australian Olympic Committee and Commonwealth Games [Australia](#) have also announced they would be advocating for the yes campaign, leaving just Netball [Australia](#) of the major sporting bodies yet to formalise a position.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.40am BST

block-time published-time 6.26am BST

Chalmers quizzed on Queensland passenger movement charge

Andrew Wilcox, the LNP MP for Dawson, who is still the second Google entry on "who is the MP for Dawson" so might need to get his media mentions up, asks Jim Chalmers:

Tourism accounts for billions of dollars of economic activity across Queensland, including my electorate of Dawson. Labor are slugging Queenslanders with a new tourism tax by increasing the passage of movement charge from \$60 to \$70. Why do Australians always pay more when Labor breaks its promises?

Chalmers:

The honourable member is right to say that the passenger movement charge is going from \$60 to \$70, it has not been indexed since I think 2017 so I replaced the indexation of the charge.

What he didn't say in the question, what the house might be interested in, is that this payment is for people leaving [Australia](#).

I have more faith in the tourism industry of Queensland than the honourable member does if he thinks an extra \$10 to leave Queensland is going to deter people from coming to Queensland in the first place.

They are not sitting around in London, they are not sitting around in London or Brussels thinking 'I really wanted hit the Sunshine Coast but that \$10 on the way out is going to prevent me'.

They are not sitting around the capitals of Europe or North America or throughout the region saying 'I really want to go to Cairns and drop a few thousand dollars in one of the most beautiful places on Earth but I won't do that because of the extra \$10 that reflects the indexation from 2017'.

These are the depths to which those opposite will plummet.

To try and pretend that the budget that we handed down a couple of weeks ago was something other than a demonstration of the responsible economic management that has been a hallmark of our first 12 months in office – and was so conspicuously absent from the rest of the decade that those opposite – a wasted decade defined by rorts and waste and economic mismanagement and deficits as far as the eye can see and \$1 trillion of debt with almost nothing to show for it.

We make the right decisions for the right reasons, you saw that in the budget and I believe in the tourism industry of Queensland. I say that as a proud Queenslanders and a proud Australian. People continue to come to Queensland because it is amazing. People continue to come to [Australia](#) because it is amazing and \$10 to leave [Australia](#) again won't deter them.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.32am BST

block-time published-time 6.20am BST

Albanese on Julian Assange: 'This issue does need to be resolved'

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

Independent MP Andrew Wilkie asks Anthony Albanese:

You would be aware that Stella Assange is in Parliament House and in fact is in the gallery right now. Why are you not meeting with Stella today? Will you meet with Stella tomorrow and why won't you do more to see Julian Assange reunited with Stella and their young sons Gabriel and Max?

Anthony Albanese:

I thank the member for his question. And indeed, who I meet with is determined by priorities that my office has. A priority for us is not doing something that is a demonstration, it is doing something that produces an outcome. And that is my focus, not grandstanding.

If I thought that that would help, then yes they would be the case, as the member for Clark has. I have made it very clear to the US administration and also to the UK administration of the Australian government's view and I appreciate the fact that that is now a bipartisan view, after those comments that enough is enough. When it comes to the ongoing incarceration of Julian Assange, that nothing is served with the ongoing incarceration of Julian Assange.

What I have done is to act in the most effective way possible.

If having a demonstration produced an outcome, then there would be an argument.

But what I have done is act diplomatically in order to maximise the opportunity that is there, breaking through an issue which has gone on for far too long. I appreciate the member's sincerity on this issue along with a range of other measures from across the parliament who have raised this issue.

As an Australian prime minister, I have made representations, I will continue to do so, but this issue is not a simple one and I do not make any ... my motivation here is not to make a judgment, people will have different judgments about the actions of Julian Assange and can still reach that conclusion of enough is enough.

But it is certainly my view that this issue does need to be resolved and I will continue to advocate as I continue to advocate for Australians around the world, that is the role the Australian government has, that is the role we will continue to have, and I'm very pleased this is now a bipartisan issue and I acknowledge that.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.19am BST

block-time published-time 6.16am BST

Tony Burke takes a dixer on the "strongest jobs growth" and talks about the increase to wages, to which Paul Karp hears LNP MP Rick Wilson yell out "real wages?" repeatedly, which is interesting given there was no real wages growth for about 10 years under the Coalition.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.24am BST

block-time published-time 6.10am BST

PM says he will speak with minister and assistant treasurer about inquiry proposal

Anthony Albanese gives an actual answer to the question.

I thank the member for his question and I indeed have visited the electorate with him, witnessing firsthand the devastating impact of the flooding that occurred, also witnessing at the same time the extraordinary resilience of communities that he represents, in common that must be said with the member for the Riverina and the member for Page. Whenever you visit an area that has been devastated, I have been struck by a couple of things.

One is the extraordinary work of the professional support, including public servants but also the volunteers through organisations like the SES and the work that they do.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

I know as well that the issue of insurance has been a very big one for a long period of time – getting communities back on their feet is vitally important, insurance plays a big part of that.

The government is spending \$25.3 million over five years to help reduce the cost of insurance in disaster prone communities. This includes the establishment of hazard insurance partnership with the insurance sector to address insurance issues driven by natural hazards.

The package will identify where the most pressing insurance issues are and how to best address them and support better targeted mitigation and resilience strategies.

(he goes on to talk about resilience funding and levies and then finishes with)

Can I say this on behalf of the government but I think on behalf of every member here; we expect insurance companies to meet their obligations under the insurance code of practice, including the requirements to manage disputes and the payment of claims and act in an open, fair, honest and transparent way with their customers.

I will speak with the relevant minister, the assistant treasurer as well about your proposal for a parliamentary inquiry.

I respect the way that you have put it forward as an appropriate way of raising that issue and I say that with you, the government stands ready as with every member in this chamber to provide support for communities at the time of need.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.23am BST

block-time published-time 6.08am BST

PM asked about response of insurance companies to recent natural disasters

Former Nationals MP turned independent Andrew Gee asks Anthony Albanese:

In the central west of New South Wales, communities like Eugowra and others were devastated by the storms and floods of last year. The stories of heartbreak and tragedy have been made worse by the shocking and coldhearted treatment of many local residents by some insurance companies. The anger in our communities is white hot and I don't think we are alone. Will your government support a parliamentary inquiry into the response of insurance companies to recent natural disasters in Australia?

Look at that – an actual question on behalf of constituents. It's almost like you have to step outside the two-party system in order to ask questions that matter to the people who vote you into parliament to represent them.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.16am BST

block-time published-time 6.06am BST

Albanese on inflation

Back to Anthony Albanese's actual answer to that question on core inflation being higher in Australia than the US, the UK and the EU:

I am getting to the question. Which is that I too would be angry if I had presided over a 2.1% increase, the largest quarterly increase in the March 2020 two quarters.

That was the highest, the highest inflation this century, was on their watch. In their response after they... After that quarter, in March was to... massively increase spending in the vain hope they would be re-elected in the May 2022 budget.

That is just a fact.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

And it is a fact that on that budget, on that budget day they, of course, had a whole lot of spending but no savings.

And it is also a fact that we produced two budgets that have produced \$40 billion of savings, it is also a fact that we overwhelmingly returned the increase in revenue to the bottom line, to take pressure off inflation.

That is why Philip Lowe, the governor of the Reserve Bank, has said on the 2 May, "Inflation in **Australia** has passed its peak". That is why all the ratings agencies have said it is not likely to contribute to inflationary pressures in the economy. Westpac's Bill Evans said they do not expect them to put upward pressure on interest rates.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.14am BST

block-time published-time 6.04am BST

More ABC staff stand with Stan Grant

There are also ABC staff protests in Melbourne

qmeltr [#ABC](#) [#Melbourne](#) [#StandwithStan](#) [#Werejectracism](#) pic.twitter.com/uU14pzuVBN

— Norman Hermant (@NormanHermant) [May 22, 2023](#)

And in regional newsrooms around the country

enltrABC Southern Queensland [@withMEAA](#) members stand with Stan Grant. The vile racism that has been thrown at him and other Indigenous staff members recently is not okay. We must do better, as the media and as a society. [#standwithstan](#) [#werejectracism](#) pic.twitter.com/oPAOpoyNmO

— Tobi Loftus (@tobiloftus) [May 22, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.10am BST

block-time published-time 6.02am BST

Reflections on members ...

Back to the very grown-up and important happenings of question time featuring very serious and important people – Anthony Albanese responds to Peter Dutton with:

When he is finished, Mr Speaker.

He is very angry and frustrated and I suspect he is angry because he

The member knows...

LNP MP Luke Howarth, who seems to see his job as standing up and making points of order about reflections on members, does just that:

It is standing order 90, we have had one minute from the prime minister and all of that time he has been reflecting on the leader of the opposition, and everyone else on this side, standing order 90.

But no one knows the standing orders as well as Tony Burke who almost seems bored with having to shut down another of Howarth's "won't anyone think of the reflections of the members' laments":

Practice is quite specific about the sorts of things that constitute reflections on members – pointing out the leader of the opposition is angry is not covered by that standing order.

It is important to note that Anthony Albanese has not actually had a chance to answer the question yet.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.05am BST

block-time published-time 5.57am BST

ABC journalists stand in solidarity with Stan Grant against 'awful blight' of racism

Breaking into question time for a moment as there is a walk out at the ABC:

Journalists are gathering at the ABC studios in Sydney in solidarity with Stan Grant.

enltrJournalists are gathering at the ABC studios in Sydney in solidarity with Stan Grant.
pic.twitter.com/oxL0iE4KC0

— Natasha May (@natasha__may) [May 22, 2023](#)

Grant said on Friday he was standing down as host of Q+A after receiving "grotesque racist abuse" that escalated after he spoke on the ABC about the impact of colonialism ahead of the coronation of King Charles.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous ABC journalists are holding signs in solidarity, as well as media from other outlets including NITV.

Suzanne Dredge, the head of Indigenous News at the ABC, said:

We want this to be a turning point for the ABC, for First Nations journalists, the media as a whole and for the Australian community.

We need to call out racism and do more to address this awful blight on all of us. The impact it has on First Nations communities across the country is devastating. We know First Nations and Diverse journalists are targeted more than anyone else on social media.

enltrChants of "We stand with Stan" at ABC studios in Sydney pic.twitter.com/Nnx8Mi9vdR

— Natasha May (@natasha__may) [May 22, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.12am BST

block-time published-time 5.56am BST

Dutton has a point of order:

There are millions of Australians hurting at the moment because of decisions of this government. Instead of the hubris can you answer the question please, core inflation is higher than those other countries!

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.01am BST

block-time published-time 5.55am BST

'Smile a bit more'

After **Anne Aly** takes a dixer, we move on to the Liberal MP Melissa McIntosh who asks pretty much the same question as Tony Pasin (identical questions aren't allowed under the standing orders):

Can the prime minister confirm **Australia** has a core inflation rate higher than the US, UK, and the euro area?

There is a to and fro about whether the question is the same, but Milton Dick is trying to say he will allow it, but first has to get through the faux-indignation of the opposition that he may not have allowed the question.

Peter Dutton:

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

This is a very tight question, it hasn't been fully answered, the prime minister has not answered that question. And he should be, frankly, given some indication now that he needs to answer that question which he has refused to do so far.

Dick is not loving today and asks the prime minister to answer the question.

Albanese:

He [Dutton] had the weekend off, he could have relaxed and chilled out and come here on Monday and been a little happier. Because that is what his [focus] groups are telling him, he has to be happier.

Smile a bit more, remember when he ran for the leadership he was going to smile some more. That was his core promise, Mr Speaker.

Have some thought for the poor old shadow treasurer. All these economic questions and he can't get one.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.57am BST

block-time published-time 5.51am BST

Economies compared

The short version of Jim Chalmers' answer to Angus Taylor is "this is a budget for middle Australians" but the answer isn't the point – it is the question and the opportunity to stoke more division.

The chamber moves on with Liberal MP Tony Pasin asking Anthony Albanese :

Can the prime minister confirm **Australia** has a core inflation rate higher than the US, the UK, and the euro area?

Albanese:

I am asked about **Australia**'s economic performance, in comparison to other countries. Is that not the question? It is quite good because I was with Prime Minister Sunak yesterday. Of the Conservative party, he was saying to me how well **Australia** is going.

With our better inflation figures. With our better performance when it comes to jobs growth, with our better performance when it comes to, of course, our budget surplus as well. And indeed, if you look at the G7 countries and how we are going, our GDP growth of 2.7% ...

Paul Fletcher rises to say that wasn't the question, but it is all theatre at this point.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.55am BST

block-time published-time 5.45am BST

On relevance ...

Jim Chalmers responds to Angus Taylor :

Now I've heard everything. The party of deliberate wage stagnation and wage suppression has the nerve to come in here and talk about middle **Australia** after everything they did.

Taylor is back on his feet with a point of order on relevance, despite not even 30 seconds going by.

Relevance. The question was about the budget, middle **Australia** was in the talking points, not the question.

Yes. Talking about talking points that you included in your question at the behest of the opposition tactics team is certain to win the hearts and minds of "middle **Australia**" but anyway.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

Taylor is told that he doesn't get to choose which part of the question the treasurer answers, talking points or not.

Chalmers:

What would he know about relevance? I was asked about middle **Australia** and I'm talking about a budget which delivers for middle **Australia**.

Paul Fletcher is on his feet (we may have clocked over to 30 seconds in this answer by now, but only just).

Fletcher:

The treasurer is a serial offender, breaching standing orders about offensive words and reflections on members. He just sneeringly said what would the shadow treasurer know about relevance. He ought to withdraw it.

Tony Burke seems to be enjoying himself though:

The point of order he has taken is to claim a word that they used about 27 times every Question Time is un-parliamentary. That's what he has just said. I know that they are angry ... but in terms of a point of order, if the word relevance is now going to be un-parliamentary, there's no words left.

(Happy with that, Albanese can be heard saying). Milton Dick verbally rolls his eyes and tells the treasurer to get on with it.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.49am BST

block-time published-time 5.39am BST

Angus Taylor on 'middle **Australia**'

Taylor has a question for Jim Chalmers (which is like Christmas for Chalmers) and he must be planning on putting the question on his social media because he is VERY serious in his delivery.

Taylor:

Middle **Australia** is hurting. The treasurer had one job in the budget, to reduce pressure on inflation not increase it. The treasurer failed. Why has the treasurer brought down a big-spending budget which makes life harder for middle **Australia**?

(There is a big push from the Coalition to create as much division as possible – you have seen it with the voice, and now the budget with a focus on “middle **Australia**”, the idea being if you can create division, you can create some space to claw back some relevance. So that has been the focus of the response to the budget – compounding the Coalition's anti-voice position, by trying to divide by class. It is an old trick, but one the Coalition hopes will gain some traction given how much people are suffering financially.)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.46am BST

block-time published-time 5.32am BST

Jim Chalmers takes the next dixer which was literally a press release – that the Albanese government has seen more job growth in its first year than any other government start in recorded history.

block-time published-time 5.30am BST

Home affairs made 4,000 requests to social media companies to pull pandemic misinformation or disinformation

Dipping out of question time for a moment, the home affairs department has made more than 4,000 requests to social media companies to take down pandemic misinformation and disinformation.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

The department picked up those social media posts during its normal process of scanning for extreme violence and terror-related content.

It used the platforms' own criteria to pick which posts were in breach, but had still been published.

Almost 10,000 referrals were made for terrorism and violent extremism.

(Liberal senator Alex Antic and One Nation senator Malcolm Roberts are crying censorship because they themselves have had posts taken down.)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.39am BST

block-time published-time 5.29am BST

Bob Katter is a gemini.

Knew it. (I am also a gemini)

"78 years young," he says when given the call on his birthday.

I am not sure what the question is about – something about the voice?

Linda Burney wishes him a happy birthday before moving on to answering the question, which is a heroic effort, given that it appeared to be a series of statements, with some form of inflection at the end.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.32am BST

block-time published-time 5.27am BST

Anthony Albanese responds:

I thank the deputy leader for her question and the government of which she was of a part – all about introducing new taxes for new revenue measures. They introduced changes to the Hecs threshold, increased application [fees] for partner visas, increased depreciation for computers, increased charges for these applications, introduced a non-salary sacrifice, changes to managed investment trusts, changes to optional banking unit regimes, changes to fifo workers, [changes in taxes] for working holidaymakers, changes for the calculation of work-related car expenses, and foreign investment fees for real estate and farmers ... they increased ... passport fees, tobacco tax, they applied the GST on low-value goods.

Ley is annoyed and expresses it with a point of order – Albanese is asked to get back on track with the actual question and says:

You could drive a truck through that question*.

This is the mob that wanted a tax on every single time you went to the doctor... when I went through the budget, my attention was drawn towards a quite extraordinary comment by the deputy Liberal leader. And she said this about the RBA minutes, she said this – 'it sounds to me as if they are sounding alarm bells on this Budget'. There is only one problem with that – the meeting was the week before the Budget!

Before the Budget!

So, the RBA Governor apparently is Nostradamus, Nostradamus!

It says everything about their catastrophic nonsense, where they carry on, everything is a catastrophe, everything is a disaster, everything is going to go wrong on their watch.

They have nothing constructive to add, nothing constructive to add. The only person [who] was more pleased about that comment by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was the bloke sitting there [Peter Dutton].

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

* Paul Karp tells me that the Coalition was yelling "truckie tax" at this point, if you were worried about the standard of debate in the house during question time.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.31am BST

block-time published-time 5.22am BST

Sussan Ley brings up '\$275' cut to electricity bill promise as 'broken'

We are back to the normal order of things with Liberal deputy leader, Sussan Ley, taking the second opposition question.

Ley asks:

One year ago, the prime minister promised a \$275 cut to electricity bills but power prices have increased. One year ago he promised cheaper mortgages but since then interest rates have risen 10 times. One year ago he promised no new taxes but he is already at the resources sector with a gas tax, the agricultural sector with a farm tax and Australian truckies with a truck tax. Why do Australians always pay more when Labor breaks its promises?

Once again, the \$275 cut was for 2025, but honestly it is just screaming into the abyss at this stage.

The RBA controls interest rates.

And the rest of it – sigh.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.33am BST

block-time published-time 5.17am BST

Oh no – the first dixer is on the Quad and the G7 meetings.

Which were also a press release.

block-time published-time 5.16am BST

Right on time – the LNP social media accounts release this:

enltrLabor's first year in Government has only brought broken promises and bad decisions.
pic.twitter.com/QJ7OGKWsUr

— LNP - Liberal National Party (@LNPQLD) [May 22, 2023](#)

Anyways, there is a byelection coming in July.

block-time published-time 5.15am BST

Question time begins

Arthur Johnson, a veteran of World War II, is in the gallery – he turns 100 next year, and receives a special shout-out from the speaker, Milton Dick, and a round of applause from the chamber.

And then ... it is in to question time, where, after a condolence motion and moment to honour a veteran, the tone is immediately lowered.

Peter Dutton opens with:

It is only been a year under an Albanese government and middle **Australia** is hurting, the typical Australian family, [is] at least \$25,000 worse off as the cost of living worsens. This is despite personal promises from the prime

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

minister before the election of cheaper power, cheaper mortgages and [that] Australians would be better off. Why do Australians always pay more when Labor breaks its promises?

Albanese responds with a version of a press release on the Labor government's achievements in the first year – which he will repeat in just a moment with the first dixer.

Bet.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.25am BST

block-time published-time 5.08am BST

In-person voting back for Australians overseas during voice referendum, AEC says

If you are living overseas and want to vote in the upcoming voice referendum, you will have as many in-person options as you did before the pandemic closed borders and polling places.

The AEC has announced that "in-person voting services for Australians overseas at the time of the 2023 referendum will return to pre-pandemic levels".

From the statement, Australian electoral commissioner, Tom Rogers, said:

... the return to pre-pandemic overseas voting services will be enabled again by the long-running partnerships between the AEC, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Austrade.

The reduction [made] to in-person polling places during the pandemic was unavoidable for a range of operational and COVID-19-restriction-related reasons in many overseas locations.

I'm pleased to say the environment as it stands will mean the number of overseas voting centres open in cities across the world for the referendum will return to pre COVID-19 levels.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.15am BST

block-time published-time 5.02am BST

Labor MP Meryl Swanson is getting a national audience for her 90-second statement, with the ABC switching over to QT a little earlier than usual.

Question time will be delayed for condolence motions – Tony Staley, a former Liberal minister in the Fraser government, died earlier this month.

Anthony Albanese and Peter Dutton will deliver speeches in his memory.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.06am BST

block-time published-time 5.00am BST

The 90-second statements are underway in the house, which is effectively an airing of the grievances for the opposition.

LNP MP Ted O'Brien is still trying to link an increase in power prices and groceries to the Labor government.

Good times.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.06am BST

block-time published-time 4.44am BST

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

Solicitor-general's advice on voice is that it will 'enhance Australia's system of government'

In the House, Linda Burney pointed out that critics of the voice referendum were seemingly putting aside the legal advice of the solicitor-general, who backed the amendment as legally sound.

The solicitor-general's advice was that the voice "would enhance" Australia's system of government and "rectify a distortion" in the existing system.

And yet this is not enough for those hellbent on dashing the hopes of a people.

Not enough for those hellbent on stoking division. Not enough for those trying to play politics on an issue that should be above partisan politics.

The government believes we have the right amendment.

Burney encouraged all politicians to back the referendum.

Let's get this done together.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.51am BST

block-time published-time 4.41am BST

There is now less than 20 minutes until the first question time of the sitting. Prepare yourself now.

block-time published-time 4.34am BST

Linda Burney pushes back on Peter Dutton's 'disinformation, misinformation and scare campaigns'

Indigenous Australians minister, Linda Burney, has blasted Peter Dutton for spreading "misinformation and scare campaigns" about the Indigenous voice.

Burney spoke on the constitutional alteration right after Dutton, who made claims about the voice being a "reckless roll of the dice", invoking George Orwell's Animal Farm and alleging the body would divide Australia.

We have just heard in one speech every bit of disinformation, misinformation and scare campaigns that exist in this debate.

She said constitutional recognition was overdue for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, noting gaps in education, life expectancy and justice outcomes.

It isn't good enough. Something has to change, for the better.

She said the voice would help deliver better advice to the government for better policy and outcomes.

Burney gave a special shoutout to senator Pat Dodson, the special envoy on reconciliation, who is away from parliament at the moment dealing with health issues: "we're all thinking of you".

She also noted that the government was committed to regional and local voices, noting there would be a process to "plug" the national body into those smaller local bodies.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.56am BST

block-time published-time 4.27am BST

Independent MP Andrew Wilkie is one of the MPs attending the event at the Press Club.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

enltrStrong words from [@Stella_Assange](#) at [@PressClubAust](#) about the fight to bring her husband home. It's way beyond time Julian Assange was reunited with Stella and their young sons, Gabriel and Max. [#FreeAssangeNOW](#) [#auspol](#) [#politas](#) [pic.twitter.com/yyUhPbhnHX](#)

— Andrew Wilkie MP (@WilkieMP) [May 22, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.40am BST

block-time published-time 4.21am BST

Dutton warns 'The voice will re-racialise the country'

Back in the house again for a moment and Peter Dutton's speech against the voice is hitting all the major threads that the No campaign has been circulating, claiming the proposed Indigenous consultation body is "a symptom of the madness of identity politics" and alleging it would go against the spirit of the national anthem.

It will have an Orwellian effect where all Australians are equal but some Australians are more equal than others.

If the voice is embedded in our constitution, there will be little to rejoice for when we sing the second line of our national anthem 'for we are one and free'. Instead of being one, we will be divided in spirit and in law.

The voice will re-racialise the country.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.42am BST

block-time published-time 4.19am BST

Assange's WikiLeaks US document release was 'right for the time', Stella Assange says

If Stella Assange could go back in time and advise Julian not to use the documents related to the US actions in the Iraq and Afghan wars, would she?

Assange:

I think we need to recognise that we are in a much worse situation in terms of press freedom, the public's right to know, citizens right, than we were in 2010 when WikiLeaks published about the Iraqi and Afghan wars and the publications that Julian is now being prosecuted for.

Those publications, that moment in time, represented probably press freedom at its strongest, internet freedom at its strongest.

And since then we have seen a series of legislative moves across the Five Eyes and elsewhere as well to stop that kind of thing in different ways and also to limit citizens freedoms in different areas.

I think the publication – it was right for the time and Julian was not prosecuted, he was not indicted until 2017.

So, we're in a much worse position now than we used to be and that is why it is so important to reverse course because it is not just Julian, the implications of this case mean that we are diverging from this protection that used to exist and unless we are just going deeper and deeper into a far removed [place] from where we used to be, from press freedom at its strongest, from our citizens freedom at their strongest and at the same time, it is not just our freedoms that are being limited – it is that the state has become enormously more powerful through surveillance tools and so on.

Our rights as citizens, our rights as the public, we need to defend those because that's all we have and then of course the ability to speak the truth, to publish the truth is central to that.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

Stella Assange: Our rights as citizens, our rights as the public, we need to defend those. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.55am BST

block-time published-time 4.14am BST

PM&C deputy secretary questioned over using PwC for future government consulting contracts

The department of prime minister and cabinet is giving evidence at Senate estimates, revealing they project they will spend \$2m on consultants this financial year, down from \$2.3m last year.

The Greens' Barbara Pocock is asking about whether the department have any contracts with PwC (no) and whether it has considered banning it after [the scandal of its use of confidential information to advise clients on tax avoidance](#).

David Williamson, a deputy secretary, said:

We haven't imposed a ban on PwC. However, one of the criteria for procurement is ethical behaviour, and certainly we'd bring that to bear when considering PwC and anyone else...

We certainly take processes regarding procurement and integrity very seriously. At a whole of government level, the treasury is doing further work.

They are mainly dead-batting questions - any further questions about consequences for PwC will be best addressed to treasury.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.42am BST

block-time published-time 4.09am BST

Stella Assange: 'This is the closest we have ever been to securing Julian's release'

Stella Assange is asked about quiet diplomacy and whether that is enough and says:

Australia is the United States most important ally, that is clear. Maybe this was not the case 10 years ago.

It is important to recognise that **Australia** plays an important role and can secure Julian's release.

Julian's life is in the hands of the Australian government. It is not my place to tell this government how to do it, but it must be done.

Julian has to be released.

I place hope in Anthony Albanese's will to make it happen. I have to. This is the closest we have ever been to securing Julian's release. I want to encourage and do everything in my power to help that happen.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.25am BST

block-time published-time 4.06am BST

Is it enough that the prime minister now has a public position that "enough is enough" when it comes to Julian Assange's case?

Stella Assange:

I am just Julian Assange's wife, I cannot tell this government how to conduct its diplomacy. Obviously, is not just public statements but what is happening behind the scenes that needs to occur to secure his release.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

... If there is political will, a solution will be found, it is up to the principals to find that solution.

Jennifer Robinson:

We are pleased that the Australian government has come out with that position but we need action and what that action looks like is making sure that it is being raised with the United States government at every level and with all relevant client agencies involved in this case to make clear that this case is a problem of the Australian government [that] needs to be resolved.

We continue to have our own outreach for the Department of Justice and have called for the case to be dropped, we continue to call for the case to be dropped for the reasons I've explained – the first amendment consequences and the fact that this violates the Biden Administration's own policy against prosecuting members of the media and that this prosecution needs to be put on [hold] and so the Government can support us and continue to support us and we need to make sure that they continue to make a top clinical priority in the US-Australian relationship.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.26am BST

block-time published-time 4.02am BST

Dutton tells House that voice referendum is regressive, not progressive – 'a reckless roll of the dice'

Back in the house for a moment and opposition leader Peter Dutton claims the Indigenous voice would leave **Australia** "fundamentally altered, not for the better", calling it a "reckless roll of the dice".

Opening the debate on the constitutional alteration bill in the House of Representatives, Dutton claimed the voice would "take our country backwards not forwards".

The voice is regressive, not progressive. It should be clear to Australians by now, the prime minister is dividing us, not uniting us.

Dutton was critical that the government had not held a new constitutional convention on the voice, and resurfaced previous criticisms that the government would not put out specific details of the voice's operations before the referendum.

(The government says the referendum is about the principle of the voice existing, that people will be voting on whether the voice would be set up at all, not about the specific details of the body - which will be able to be changed by future parliaments)

Instead we had a 4.5 day committee, a kangaroo court led by a government that never wanted to entertain changes to its bill.

The approach is a reckless roll of the dice.

Earlier before Dutton's address, Labor MP Peta Murphy rubbished complaints that the proposal had been rushed, claiming the voice had gone through a longer consultation period than any other constitutional change, noting the concept had gone back to 2010, and been through numerous processes inside and outside parliament (including several committees, reports and inquiries).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.42am BST

block-time published-time 4.01am BST

Human rights lawyer Jennifer Robinson tells Press Club Assange's case 'cuts across political divides'

Jennifer Robinson, a human rights lawyer who is part of the legal team for Julian Assange, said the change in government in **Australia** has given some hope because of the public position of Anthony Albanese that "enough is enough", but that a shift in attitude in Washington is also having an impact:

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

The first thing to say is we're very pleased that the Australian government, our prime minister and the ambassador have made very clear the position that enough is enough and this case has to be brought to an end and it is important we continue to keep the pressure on our governments to continue to make this case a political priority.

It is getting in the way of the US-Australia relationship, which is an important one, but if we can resolve this case, that's all the better for our relationship.

The feeling is there is a significant concern on the Hill about the first amendment ramifications of this case, over and above the fact that he is an Australian citizen, so the interest in DC is quite different than it is to us here in Australia – it's about the first amendment and what it means for the news media there, rather than being an Australian citizen.

We have seen a group of Democratic members of Congress asking for the case to be dropped, which I think is a sign of the growing concern there in the United States [for] the same reasons but the political support crosses the aisle, so we have supporters from the Republican side, Democrat side – this is a case that cuts across those political divides and unifies people across the divide around what is a fundamental question about first Amendment democracy, but there is more work to be done there.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.13am BST

block-time published-time 3.55am BST

[continued from previous post]

Pearson, one of the architects of the voice, accused Dutton of a "Judas betrayal" after the Liberals opposed the voice. Pearson also came under fire last week after describing former human rights commissioner Mick Gooda as a "bedwetter" for proposing amendments to the bill.

Related: [Peter Dutton's decision to oppose Indigenous voice is a 'Judas betrayal' of Australia, Noel Pearson says](#)

Wolahan went on to say that there would be people in the community who went against the campaigning calls of "their corporate employer, their professional associations, their sporting codes, or the views of their friends, family and their political party". He said being a "contrarian" was "the true measure of character and courage".

Wolahan singled out Liberal colleagues Julian Leeser and Bridget Archer, backers of the voice, as people of character. However, he also raised concerns about legal risk in the voice amendment, hinting at the kind of issues Leeser has raised in calling for the "executive government" provision to be dropped from the proposal.

As we reported last week, it is unlikely the government will be entertaining amendments to the proposal at this stage, but a renewed push to change the contentious executive government section will give some MPs extra food for thought.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.05am BST

block-time published-time 3.54am BST

Liberal MP Keith Wolahan calls out alleged 'odious slur' on Peter Dutton during voice debate

Liberal MP Keith Wolahan has accused Indigenous leader Noel Pearson of making an "odious slur" against opposition leader, Peter Dutton, during the debate around the Indigenous voice.

Wolahan, making a statement on the report of the parliamentary committee that probed the voice amendment, told the House that he was concerned about some of the public commentary around the referendum. The Liberal MP, deputy chair of the committee, joined his party colleagues in writing a dissenting report to the majority finding (that the bill be passed unamended), instead calling for changes to the bill.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

Related: [Report on Indigenous voice to parliament recommends no change to original wording](#)

Wolahan thanked contributors to the inquiry who had raised their concerns about the amendment.

They were not afflicted by subconscious racism, or bed wetting, or the odious slur 'Judas betrayal'. They are our fellow Australians, many of whom have worked tirelessly for years for the cause of reconciliation.

We are better than this. If such attacks on motive and personality are normalised, we will be a more divided nation, no matter the result.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.43am BST

block-time published-time 3.51am BST

Assange is being used 'as a deterrent to bully journalists into submission'

Stella Assange:

If sovereignty is to mean anything, if jurisdiction is a proper legal and political reality, the case of Julian, the case against Julian, cannot be understood as anything other than an absurdity. A stupefying decision of egregious overreach.

The case is the worst and most enduring legacy of the Trump administration. It is not just outlandish, but extremely pernicious. Julian is being used as a deterrent to bully journalists into submission. The case against him sends the message that each of you in this room are fair game.

It is a show of contempt for democratic accountability and of the rights of victims of government wrongdoing.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.00am BST

block-time published-time 3.49am BST

Stella Assange said if Julian is extradited, he will never again see freedom.

She speaks about how it is time for him to be allowed home to **Australia**:

If Julian is extradited, he'll be buried in deepest, darkest quality of the US prison system. Isolated forever.

That is what is done to defendants in so-called national security cases, even before trial. [A] 175-year sentence is a living death sentence. A prospect so desperate that the English court found that it would drive him to take his own life rather than live forever in hell.

We must do everything we can to ensure that Julian never, ever sets foot on US prison. Extradition in this case is a matter of life and death.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.56am BST

block-time published-time 3.44am BST

Stella Assange addresses Press Club – 'Julian needs his freedom urgently'

Lawyer and human rights advocate Stella Assange and human rights lawyer Jennifer Robinson are addressing the National Press Club today.

Assange is on her first trip to **Australia** – she and Julian Assange married in March 2022 in the Belmarsh high-security prison in south-east London and have two children. They first met in 2011 over the work of Wikileaks.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

Assange has been campaigning for the Australian journalist's release and is calling on the Albanese government to act.

Related: [Stella Moris on her secret family with Julian Assange: 'He's unlike anyone I have ever met'](#)

Assange:

My visit here was originally prompted by the official visit of President Biden and the Quad summit. After it was cancelled, I decide to come anyway. I did not want to lose the opportunity to speak to you because we are now in the endgame. Julian needs his freedom urgently and **Australia** plays a crucial role in securing his release.

I recognise many faces in the room today – you have played a crucial role in the fight for the freedom of my husband.

I [would] like to take this opportunity to thank the Australian parliamentary friends of Julian Assange who have created a political environment of which support for him has gone beyond party political affiliation.

The show of unity has made it possible for leadership to take a position.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.53am BST

block-time published-time 3.34am BST

(continued from previous post)

Wallace said the opposition believed that the only members that should sit on the committee “should be parties of government” (that means the Coalition and Labor). He said that had been the convention since the committee was established, with only one exception (when independent Andrew Wilkie was on the committee during the Gillard minority government; there is speculation he could be in line to come back).

Before Wallace's speech, the Labor chair of the committee, Peter Khalil, told parliament the planned changes would increase the committee's overall membership by two as part of a push for “increased flexibility”.

Khalil said the fact the Coalition wrote a dissenting report was “disappointing” but added:

The changes that are proposed... do not change the appointment process or the key requirement that the government of the day have a majority on the committee.

For more on this issue, see our story from last week:

Related: [Labor accuses Coalition of playing politics over changes to secretive intelligence committee](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.45am BST

block-time published-time 3.34am BST

Coalition voices concerns about possible crossbench intelligence committee appointment

The Coalition is reprising its concerns that the federal government could be [planning to appoint at least one crossbench member](#) to the parliament's powerful intelligence committee.

Andrew Wallace, the former speaker who is now deputy chair of the parliamentary joint committee on intelligence and security, has told the House of Representatives:

Politics goes in cycles and those opposite should always remember that.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

Wallace said the opposition was "greatly concerned" that proposed changes to the law to add another two members to the committee was "as a result of some deal done between the government and the crossbench" and that the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, intends to appoint at least one member of the crossbench.

(continued in next post)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.43am BST

block-time published-time 3.31am BST

(Continued from previous post)

Shoebridge said the commonwealth was refusing to tender the affidavits to court.

"So we're left with this situation," he said:

You're not telling the court and you're not telling parliament - who are you going to tell about why you didn't give a single defendant a copy of the Corner report despite having it in the department's hands for two years?

Shoebridge peppered Pezzullo with questions about these comments from supreme court justice Elizabeth Hollingworth, who told a directions hearing she still had not seen a "satisfactory explanation for the non-disclosure of the Corner report":

There is still quite a deafening silence from people high up in home affairs about what happened.

The government does not want this explored in court. That's pretty clearly the position ... [what] happened in relation to the Corner report is a disgrace. The government solicitor quite properly concedes it should always have been disclosed. Blind Freddy, looking at the legislation, would have said it should have been disclosed.

A previous judge of this court, three court of appeal judges, who all heard arguments about the validity of this, did so without this disclosure being made. Why is the commonwealth playing ducks and drakes as a model litigant? It's put these affidavits in, presumably to try to placate the court, but not wanting to tender them, because heaven help us that we actually have a court hearing about why we didn't disclose this clearly disclosable document.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.40am BST

block-time published-time 3.31am BST

Corner report questions home affairs terror attack modelling tool's 'validity and reliability'

Lawyers and defendants were never told about the [*serious doubts cast on a tool*](#) used to predict the chances of an individual committing a terror attack, senate estimates has heard.

Dr Emily Corner assessed the VERA-2R modelling tool, and found the "lack of evidence" underpinning it had "serious implications for [its] validity and reliability".

Greens senator David Shoebridge accused the department of home affairs of keeping the Corner report secret for two years.

Department head, Mike Pezzullo, said different academics would come to different conclusions and that the department had gone on to commission a new report from the Australian Institute of Criminology.

"It's clear to me that all psychological or psycho-analytical models are going to have limitations in terms of the predictive quality but decision makers [in the context of deciding whether to issue continuing detention orders where there is a risk of future offending] have to be able to rely upon something," he said.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

He refused to answer further questions on the basis that two relevant cases are still before the courts, while a department official said the attorney general's department was now responsible for the matter.

(continued in next post)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.37am BST

block-time published-time 3.16am BST

Peter Dutton, Linda Burney and Bridget McKenzie first speakers in House debate on Indigenous voice referendum bill

The debate on the constitutional amendment for the Indigenous voice referendum is about to begin in the House of Representatives. We're expecting this debate to consume a lot of this week, with something like 70 speakers already listed (of the 151 members) to make a contribution.

Leader of the house and arts minister, Tony Burke, took some time this morning to point out some special conventions of this debate, saying all members who want to speak on it will be given the opportunity (this doesn't always happen due to time constraints in the parliamentary program or sometimes the government just wanting to zoom a bill through the parliament). He also said that on the third reading, a division will be automatically called, even if no MP actually asks for a vote or if there is a clear majority in favour.

Burke said this was due to a constitutional alteration requiring an absolute majority in the parliament to proceed, unlike other bills. He said MPs will be given as much notice as possible of this division, where people's names are formally recorded as having voted a certain way – not like some divisions that are called at short notice where MPs have to sprint from all corners of the building to get inside the chamber before the bells stop ringing.

Burke said the third reading division will be held next week, with this week likely to be all about the speeches only.

Peter Dutton, Linda Burney and Bridget McKenzie will be the first speakers on the bill, according to a speakers' list we've seen.

Some further interesting contributions will come later from Julian Leeser, the former shadow Indigenous Australians minister who quit the opposition front bench to advocate for the voice; Bridget Archer, the lone Liberal MP so far promising to campaign strongly for the voice; and ministers including Bill Shorten, Ed Husic and **Anne Aly**.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.28am BST

block-time published-time 3.05am BST

Labor MP Matt Burnell may need to re-watch the 90s classic Speed.

Jack Traven did not lose his best friend for Annie Porter's driving to be disrespected like that. She was catching the bus because she lost her licence for speeding, Matt. The movie is called Speed for a reason. It couldn't drop below 50mph, but that bus absolutely motored to the airport. It jumped an incomplete bridge, Matt.

Honestly, kids today.

enltrl believe it was called "The Bus That Couldn't Slow Down" SA MP Matt Burnell with a bungled attempt of explaining the 1994 action classic Speed (it was only when the bus slowed down below 50 it would explode) pic.twitter.com/R6lXi8qGYX

— Andrew Brown (@AndrewBrownAU) [May 22, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.08am BST

block-time published-time 2.47am BST

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

Over in the house, where it is currently debating a motion put forward by LNP MP Bert van Manen (who we are told has his eye on the shadow assistant treasurer gig recently vacated by LNP colleague Stuart Robert) about the budget.

He wants no more broken promises.

Which is just meaningless political speak that locks all parties into repeating the mistakes of the past.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.52am BST

block-time published-time 2.24am BST

Fadden byelection set for 15 July

The second byelection of the year will be held ... on 15 July.

That might be a bit over six weeks away, but all parties contesting the Fadden byelection will need to get a wriggle on.

The LNP is already planning that.

Labor has not yet announced who will represent it.

Winning the Gold Coast seat from the opposition would be a HUGE ask, though – bigger even than Aston. The margin is over 10% and that area of the Gold Coast tends to skew conservative in all things – there are quite a few mega churches in the election boundary and the Gold Coast is hard as a general rule, plus there are lots of small businesses who aren't big fans of Labor at any level.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.28am BST

block-time published-time 2.04am BST

Scathing review of Sydney train network finds recent delays and outages likely to worsen

Dipping out of federal politics for a moment for this story:

The number of active defects across Sydney's train network has soared to almost 40,000, as a scathing review finds the performance of the transport system plagued by recent outages and delays is "likely to worsen".

Defects related to infrastructure such as tracks and electrical circuiting – but not the train fleet itself – have increased from about 23,000 in December 2018 to about 37,000 in April this year, and the surge has coincided with plunging on-time performance and spiralling service cancellations.

The fragility of Sydney's train network is largely the result of a network timetable introduced in November 2017 that attempted to maximise utilisation of the system but which was "far too tight to effectively maintain service" and give "adequate access for maintenance of rail infrastructure", an interim review of Sydney Trains has found.

The findings are scathing of the handling of the city's train system under the previous Coalition government, which found that while black swan events such as Covid, bushfires and floods – as well as protected industrial action and union strikes that peaked last year – affected performance, these factors could not totally explain the overall deterioration of the network since the timetable was introduced in 2017.

We will have more on that very soon.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.23am BST

block-time published-time 1.55am BST

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

3AW's Neil Mitchell lays out complaints against ABC to Zoe Daniel

Zoe Daniel was a foreign correspondent with the ABC before she was the independent MP for Goldstein, so Melbourne radio 3AW host Neil Mitchell uses more than 8 minutes of an interview with her laying out his complaints with the ABC, including that they don't use the name of his program if they quote from it.

It starts off about issues Stan Grant raised about racial abuse he said he had experienced and the lack of support from the ABC at large in the face of that abuse.

Related: [Q+A host Stan Grant standing down from ABC show after racist abuse](#)

Related: [Stan Grant faced 'unrelenting racism', fellow ABC panellists say, as scale of conservative coverage revealed](#)

Daniel, when she is allowed to get a word in, says:

I think on this particular issue in regard to the treatment of Stan and how this played out, there does need to be a really deep look at what happened and what went wrong and what that says about a broader culture in the organisation.

I understand that the managing director has already indicated that that that will happen.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.00am BST

block-time published-time 1.41am BST

Barry Humphries to receive state memorial in Sydney in December

There will be a state memorial for Barry Humphries at the Sydney Opera House on Friday 15 December 2023 after his family accepted the offer for the honour.

Anthony Albanese said it was the right thing to do:

Barry Humphries was a much-loved Australian and a huge loss to the arts community.

The federal government is working with the NSW Labor government for the event.

Humphries died in April aged 89.

The memorial will feature dignitaries, family, friends and fans of the late Humphries from across the country and around the world and more details can be found here nsw.gov.au/stateservices (later in the year, given it is still seven or so months away; bookmark it if you're interested).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.54am BST

block-time published-time 1.37am BST

'It's time to ban gambling ads': independent MP Zoe Daniel

Independent Goldstein MP Zoe Daniel is serious about wanting to ban gambling ads during broadcasts (streaming included) and says the government needs to get on board with what the community wants:

The Australian Communications and Media Authority has itself concluded that an effect of restricting gambling ads during live sport after rule changes came into effect in 2018-19 was simply an increase in gambling ads during non-sport programs – especially between 6pm and 10.30pm when children and teenagers are watching. Not only that, the total volume of gambling spots increased by no less than 50% in 2018-19 after the new regulations came into effect, compared with 2016-17 under the old rules. This is why I am introducing this bill, the Broadcasting Services

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

Act amendment (prohibition of gambling advertisements) bill 2023. It is a direct reflection of community sentiment and I thank all of those from within my community of Goldstein and from around the country who have contacted me in support of this Bill. I acknowledge the groundbreaking work done by Andrew Wilkie and Nick Xenophon as well as the continuing efforts by my fellow crossbenchers, especially Rebekha Sharkie and Kate Chaney. If not us who, if not now, when? It's time to ban gambling ads.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.45am BST

block-time published-time 1.34am BST

Financial rights advocate calls for legislating on BNPL schemes

[Continued from previous post]

Karen Cox, chief executive of the Financial Rights Legal Centre, is also urging the government to legislate the regulation of BNPL products rather than relying on an industry code of practice.

In our experience, complaints under the ... code don't lead to any real consequence or change in industry practice.

It is good to see that BNPL providers will be required to be licensed under the Credit Act, subject to the same dispute resolution options as providers of traditional credit, and subject to some form of responsible lending obligation. It is disappointing BNPL will not be treated the same as all other credit.

Great attention will be needed in the drafting of these obligations to make sure they address the harms we see every day. Small-amount, low-cost credit does not equal safe or sustainable lending.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.47am BST

block-time published-time 1.34am BST

Consumer groups welcome BNPL changes but fear reforms do not do enough to protect users

Consumer groups and financial counsellors have welcomed the government's plan to regulate buy now pay later products like Afterpay and Zip, but they are concerned it won't go far enough to protect vulnerable consumers.

The government has announced buy now, pay later (BNPL) products will be regulated as credit products, however won't apply all the consumer protections mandated for other credit products.

The group – including the Consumer Action Law Centre and Choice – are urging the government to include requirements for BNPL providers to check a loan is suitable, regardless of the amount.

The Consumer Action Law Centre CEO, Stephanie Tonkin, said:

Too many financial counselling clients have multiple BNPL accounts. The government's approach will only work if there is a requirement for BNPL providers to be part of the credit reporting system, to reduce the risk of over-commitment.

It is wrong to assume that just because a loan is for a small amount that it is somehow a lower risk. Small amounts can cause big problems.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.38am BST

block-time published-time 1.32am BST

Strong wages growth a solution, not a cause, for inflation: Chalmers

Jim Chalmers told Sky News that wages growth is not the reason we are seeing inflation (just a bit louder for some economists at the back):

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

When it comes to these cost-of-living pressures, decent wages growth is part of the solution, not part of the problem. We don't have too much inflation in our economy because people are getting paid too much.

In fact, for too long now, the best part of the decade, we've had wage stagnation from our predecessors' deliberate wage suppression. We take a different view; we want to see wages growing strongly again in a sustainable way, we want businesses to be productive as well because an important part of dealing with these cost-of-living pressures is making sure that people who work hard can provide for their loved ones.

And that's why we are so pleased and so proud to see the strongest wages growth for more than a decade, the strongest first 12 months in jobs growth for a new government on record, faster jobs growth than the major advanced economies – these are important opportunities and important reminders of what Australians have been able to achieve together under the first 12 months of our government.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.36am BST

block-time published-time 1.20am BST

BNPL changes would bring sector into line with other credit providers

So what is the government doing on buy now, pay later, exactly?

Stephen Jones says:

Under our plan, which was listed as option 2 in our consultation paper, buy now, pay later providers will be required to:

hold Australian credit licences; comply with responsible lending obligations; meet statutory dispute resolution and hardship requirements; comply with statutory product disclosure and other information obligations; abide by existing restrictions on unacceptable marketing; and meet a range of other minimum standards in relation to their conduct, and in relation to their products.

That would bring the BNPL sector into line with other credit providers and also means Asic will have enforcement powers.

The industry will still be consulted before anything is put in place though and the aim is not to burden players:

The responsible lending regime will be central to our approach. However, our legislation ensures that the obligations on BNPL providers are scalable and technologically neutral. We will make sure they are the right fit for the risk level of their products.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.32am BST

block-time published-time 1.15am BST

Home affairs department secretary says contracts with PwC being probed

The home affairs department has investigated six contracts it has with PricewaterhouseCoopers in the wake of revelations the consultancy giant [used secret government information](#) to help other clients minimise their tax.

In senate estimates this morning, under questioning from Greens senator Nick McKim, the department secretary Mike Pezzullo said he was applying a Russian proverb to the department's interactions with PwC: "Trust, but verify". He said:

Obviously, like everyone, I've been watching the revelations of what was done with tax sensitive information with concern. I won't speak for my fellow secretaries but I suspect all of us are doing the same thing.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

Just as a matter of due diligence, I've asked the chief operating officer to look at all the engagements that we've had.

Knowing everything I know, I've asked [deputy secretary Justine Saunders] to take much closer interest, to pay much closer attention and to verify everything that's been done, especially where there's a risk of monetary advantage – so market sensitive or tax sensitive or revenue sensitive information. Unless new information comes to light, or the government itself makes a broader decision, I don't think I can do anything more than I've done.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.29am BST

block-time published-time 1.06am BST

Buy now, pay later changes intended to make it safer, not harder, to use, says Stephen Jones

Stephen Jones is announcing the proposed changes to buy now, pay later schemes – but does that mean you won't be able to sign up?

He says no, it is just about regulating the industry:

We don't want to make it harder for people who are using buy now, pay later in the way it was intended, but we do want to ensure that we're lifting the bar to ensure that this form of consumer credit is regulated in a way that makes it safe and affordable to use, that we're lifting the bar right across the credit market.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.21am BST

block-time published-time 1.03am BST

House of Representatives sitting begins

The house sitting has begun, but don't expect to see the referendum legislation debate resume until around midday or so.

So far there are 70 speakers on the speaking list. So that is going to take all week. At least.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.20am BST

block-time published-time 1.02am BST

Australia 'can be a clean energy export superpower', says Plibersek

Tanya Plibersek's punishment of having to "debate" Barnaby Joyce each week on network television continues.

Asked about the pact the US president, Joe Biden, and Anthony Albanese signed in Japan over the weekend to develop new renewable technologies together, Plibersek said:

We've always built our wealth on energy exports, and we can be a clean energy export superpower as well. This means that we get a piece of the enormous action in the United States at the moment, the billions of dollars that they're pumping into renewable energy projects. It means that we can focus on green hydrogen here in **Australia**. We put \$2 billion in in the last budget. It means we can focus on our domestic battery manufacturing industry, the critical minerals that support a renewable energy transition. And, of course it helps us meet our climate change objectives as well.

The sooner that we get more renewable energy into our own domestic energy supplies, the sooner the world transitions to more renewable energy the better for the environment and the better for the Australian economy.

For some reason, Joyce who wants more coal fired power stations opened, was also asked about this and he said:

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

The boot is full of vacuum cleaners and I'm ready to sell, sell, sell! Look, first of all, it's not legally binding, but, you know, I understand why the United States want to be involved in critical minerals. I mean, it's an incredibly important industry. That's why we invested so much in such things as the Outback Way to connect new critical minerals precincts, the Darwin to Alice Springs railway line, which also assists in the movement of that. But you've got to ask the question: are the Labor party ever going to continue on with the construction of these?

Sigh.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.19am BST

block-time published-time 12.49am BST

NSW to lift stamp duty thresholds for first-home buyers and undo Perrottet reforms

For potential home buyers in NSW, Ben Smee has some news for you:

The [New South Wales](#) government has vowed to make changes to stamp duty thresholds to allow more first home buyers to access concessions.

The government says it will introduce legislation this week to increase thresholds for stamp duty concessions so that five out of six first home buyers pay a reduced rate or no stamp duty.

Changes to the first home buyers assistance scheme will mean properties worth up to \$800,000 will be exempt from stamp duty, lifting it from \$650,000. Concessions will apply to properties worth up to \$1m, up from \$800,000.

The government says that 84% of first home buyers will pay no stamp duty or a reduced rate under the reforms.

Related: [NSW to lift stamp duty thresholds for first-home buyers and undo Perrottet reforms](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.52am BST

block-time published-time 12.45am BST

And for those who have been unable to continue with their morning after learning Instagram was down – I have good news. It is back.

Guardian [Australia](#) will have fresh posts for you very soon – get a snippet of news along with your memes.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.51am BST

block-time published-time 12.39am BST

Julian Leaser to introduce bill on banning Nazi symbols

Looks like Liberal MP Julian Leaser will be introducing his private member's bill to ban Nazi symbols – the criminal code amendment (prohibition of nazi symbols) bill 2023 – this morning.

The government had said it was looking at options (a lot of it comes down to state codes).

As with all private members' bills, it will need the government's support to pass the house (or even come up for debate, given government controls the house business – which is why so many private members' bills start in the senate)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.45am BST

block-time published-time 12.28am BST

Greg Jericho: stage-three tax cuts do not address bracket creep for those earning under \$120,000

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

As our economics columnist [Greg Jericho has reported](#), the stage-three tax cuts don't actually do anything to address bracket creep for anyone earning under \$120,000:

The Parliamentary Budget Office research estimates that out to the start of the next decade someone on the median income of \$49,000 will see bracket creep raise their average tax rate by 5.9%pts while the Stage 3 tax cuts will only reduce their tax rate by 0.9%pts.

By contrast someone on \$120,000 will see bracket creep cause just a 3.3%pt rise in their average tax which will be completely cancelled out for them by the Stage 3 tax cut.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.32am BST

block-time published-time 12.26am BST

Chalmers justifies stage-three tax cuts, saying they return bracket creep to workers

Jim Chalmers did the media round this morning and that included the two major commercial networks.

There is nothing in the Nine questioning worth reporting. But stage-three tax cuts did come up in the Seven questioning – but not in a way that will please anyone who is looking for the government to scrap them.

Chalmers was asked about bracket creep and said:

Our tax take is less than what John Howard's tax take was as a percentage of the economy – that's just a fact over the forward estimates.

But your broader point – one of the reasons why the budget is recovering is because people are working more and they are earning more, and both of those things are good things. Now, as you know and your viewers probably understand, there are some tax cuts in the system coming in a little over a year away. They kick in at \$45,000 and part of the motivation for those tax cuts is to make sure that we can give back some of that bracket creep.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.31am BST

block-time published-time 12.15am BST

Progressive thinktank the **Australia** Institute is urging people in the public service to come forward if they see something they think needs outside attention:

enltrOur ad in the [@canberratimes](#) today as Senate [#Estimates](#) kicks off in Parliament. If you see something, say something [#Whistleblowers pic.twitter.com/O8ko4DQNU2](#)

— **Australia** Institute (@TheAusInstitute) [May 21, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.18am BST

block-time published-time 12.13am BST

Meanwhile, outside of politics, Instagram is down.

Twitter, alas, keeps us all chained.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.18am BST

block-time published-time 12.11am BST

PM to meet with India's Modi in **Australia** later this week

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

One of the leaders Anthony Albanese didn't have a bilateral with at the G7 in Japan this weekend was the Indian prime minister Narendra Modi – that is because the pair have planned bilateral meetings this week, in **Australia**.

Modi is visiting Papua New Guinea and is then on his way to Oz for a visit from 22 May to 24 May.

Modi was last in **Australia** in 2014. Albanese visited earlier this year and received a hero's welcome, with giant billboards and an awkward trip around a cricket stadium waving at the crowd.

Albanese:

I am honoured to host Prime Minister Modi for an official visit to **Australia**, after receiving an extremely warm welcome in India earlier this year.

Australia and India share a commitment to a stable, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific. Together we have an important role to play in supporting this vision.

As friends and partners, the relationship between our countries has never been closer. I look forward to celebrating **Australia**'s vibrant Indian community with Prime Minister Modi in Sydney.

Unlikely to be mentioned is the Modi regime's growing taste for censorship of its critics.

Related: [*Twitter accused of censorship in India as it blocks Modi critics*](#)

India's prime minister Narendra Modi after arriving at Port Moresby International airport in Papua New Guinea. Photograph: Andrew Kutan/AFP/Getty Images

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.25am BST

block-time published-time 12.04am BST

Stella Assange to address National Press Club

Stella Assange, the wife of imprisoned WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, is in **Australia** for the first time to attend a rally calling for his freedom.

Assange will address the National Press Club today ahead of the rally on Wednesday, to take place in Sydney's Hyde park. Her appearance was due to be timed with US president Joe Biden's now cancelled visit to **Australia**.

She will be speaking among Assange's family members, as well as Greens senator Peter Whish-Wilson and whistleblower David McBride.

Assange said the Australian people were "committed to Julian's freedom", pointing to recent comments by the opposition leader that brought the Coalition in line with Labor agreeing it was time for his release.

The unity we see in politics reflects that. It is important to show the Biden administration that Julian's freedom is not up for debate. It is essential to press freedom, it is essential to justice, and it is essential to its most important ally, **Australia**.

Australians are at the forefront of the global movement to free Julian. I will join the Australian people for the historic Quad rally on the 24th, to show the Biden administration that Julian's family and country stand firm, even in the president's absence, and we are backed by many millions who fight for truth and justice around the world.

Stella Assange is in **Australia** for the first time and will be addressing the National Press Club and attending a rally calling for Julian Assange's freedom. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.12am BST

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

block-time published-time 11.52pm BST

Australia's big supermarkets increased profit margins through pandemic and cost-of-living crisis, analysis reveals

Jonathan Barrett has looked at the profits of the big two supermarket chains and oh boy, does he have a story for you.

(But there is no way that company profits are increasing inflation, right?)

Australia's big supermarket chains persistently increased their margins on their food businesses throughout the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis, with critics arguing the pricing decisions are evidence of inflationary profiteering.

Guardian **Australia** analysis of Coles and [Woolworths](#) financial accounts over a five-year period show the dominant supermarkets were able to use the pandemic to not just sell more goods, but also increase the amount they profited from sales.

The highly lucrative period coincided with a devastating pandemic and subsequent cost-of-living crisis and contrasts with the slowing performance and subdued outlook for the supermarket giants shortly before the outbreak of Covid-19.

Related: [Australia's big supermarkets increased profit margins through pandemic and cost-of-living crisis, analysis reveals](#)

What does that mean?

Related: [Priced out: how Australians are being hit by the soaring cost of food](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.54pm BST

block-time published-time 11.39pm BST

Referendum bill debate to begin in earnest this week

The house sitting will begin at 10am today, with estimates hearings to start from 9am.

A lot of this week in the house will be taken up by the referendum legislation debate beginning in earnest. It doesn't look like the government will be making any changes to it, so what you see is what you get – and there are a lot of people who want to have their say on this bill.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.41pm BST

block-time published-time 11.26pm BST

Fadden LNP prepares to vote in preselection after Stuart Robert's resignation

Meanwhile, in case you missed it yesterday, the LNP is telling Fadden branch members to be ready to vote in a preselection as early as this coming Friday, with the party worried about being caught on the hop with a byelection announcement.

Stuart Robert wrote to the speaker to officially resign, and Milton Dick is considering byelection dates for the Gold Coast seat.

Nominations for preselection closed on Friday, but it is going to be a very quick turnaround. We understand five people have nominated, including Fadden branch chair, Fran Ward.

So far the fight is between Gold Coast city councillor Cameron Caldwell and doctor and disability advocate Dr Dinesh Palipana, although Ward, a long time LNP player, may upset the apple cart.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

Either way, we will find out very soon.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.38pm BST

block-time published-time 11.21pm BST

Greens announce comedian Mandy Nolan as Richmond candidate for 2025 election

We are only a year into the Albanese government, but it's never too early to be prepared, I suppose. The Greens have announced their candidate for Richmond at the next election – Mandy Nolan.

The comedian has announced she will challenge Labor's Justine Elliott for the northern NSW seat, with Nolan only needing a 1.8% swing to win the seat. The Greens plan on using the same strategy they deployed to great success in Brisbane to win – doorknocking. Often and early.

Adam Bandt said Richmond was "ground zero for both the climate crisis and the housing crisis: people are still reeling from the floods and the rental market's cooked, with out-of-town investors gouging prices"; he said the electorate was primed to hear the Greens' message.

At the last election people were desperate to kick out the Liberals, but now they're realising Labor also wants new coal and gas, which makes the climate crisis worse, as well as billions in handouts for property moguls, which pushes up rents and house prices. Labor has no plan whatsoever to help renters and Labor's housing bill sees the crisis get worse.

Mandy's already got a team of volunteers ready to hit the streets and talk to Richmond residents about how the Greens are the only party fighting for renters and climate action.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.28pm BST

block-time published-time 11.02pm BST

Senate estimates today

Coming up in estimates today is:

The Finance and Public Administration Committee (which includes department of parliamentary services and prime minister and cabinet).The Legal and Constitutional Affairs committee, where it will be the Department of Home Affairs show.The Environment and Communications committee will hear from the climate change and energy department as well as environment and water. (So power prices will dominate this one).

And there is also rural and regional affairs, where it will be the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (so infrastructure cuts).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.11pm BST

block-time published-time 10.54pm BST

Government involvement in childcare workers' push for pay rise would be premature, Chalmers says

Jim Chalmers is also asked about the push from childcare workers to receive a pay rise (25%) in their sector, after missing out in the budget.

He says asking the government to get involved at this point is a bit premature.

It doesn't make a lot of sense to start writing checks for a process that isn't under way or hasn't concluded.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

... One of the motivations for multi-employer bargaining, which we put in place a few months ago, was because we are concerned that the big workforces in the care economy – workforces often dominated by women – have been underpaid, and multi-employer bargaining is designed to try and rectify that.

So there is a process for early childhood educators to go through. No doubt they and their union will go through that process and if there's any government response, which is necessary, obviously we'll contemplate that at the time.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.01pm BST

block-time published-time 10.51pm BST

Chalmers promises action on consultants' 'inexcusable' use of government secrets

The treasurer is also being grilled about the PwC scandal. If you need a catch-up on what happened, Henry Belot has you covered:

Related: [*'Disgraceful breach of trust': how PwC, one of the world's biggest accountancy firms, became mired in a tax scandal*](#)

But given the breach of trust, what is Jim Chalmers and the government doing?

I don't want to detail it now and I think you'll understand why because there are a range of issues at play here. But I will have more to say about how we crack down on this behaviour which is inexcusable, frankly, particularly when you consider that corporate **Australia**, for the right reasons, wants to be consulted on changes that impact them.

And I want to do that too – that's really one part of the character of this government, is consultation.

But in order to do that, you've got to be able to trust the process. That trust has broken down here. We need to fix it. We've taken some steps already and there'll be more steps as well.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.06pm BST

block-time published-time 10.47pm BST

Regulation needed for buy now, pay later sector, treasurer says

Over on ABC radio RN, the treasurer, Jim Chalmers, is talking about the coming changes to the buy now, pay later sector. Chalmers says the government isn't interested in shutting it down, but that it does need regulation:

Really this is about recognising that buy now, pay later has become really popular, something like 7 million accounts; it's got a legitimate role to play.

But there is the potential for harm and that harm falls disproportionately, so it's time to legislate and regulate.

[With] buy now pay later we've done a heap of consultation already, [and] there'll be more to come. But if you make it a regulated credit product under the Credit Act, we can better manage some of the risks that people are aware of and here'll be appropriate transition arrangements.

We want people who can afford to participate in buy now, pay later to be able to access it, but there needs to be the right rules and regulations around it

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.54pm BST

block-time published-time 10.43pm BST

Transforming whole transport system would also make communities more livable, says expert

[continued from previous post]

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

In total, Australians would need to take 3.5 times more trips on public transport, and triple the amount of trips they made by walking or cycling. Dr Jennifer Rayner, the Climate Council's head of advocacy, said that while there had been a lot of focus on increasing uptake of electric vehicles as a solution, the problem of reducing transport emissions required "a bigger rethink":

Enabling more Australians to choose public and active transport – like walking and bike riding – can drive down emissions while also delivering cleaner air, less congestion and make our communities much more livable. Luckily, we have the technology we need to deliver this right now. Governments need to step up and invest in reliable and accessible services and infrastructure – particularly in outer suburban and regional areas. This will make it easier for more people to choose public and active transport for more of their daily trips.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.51pm BST

block-time published-time 10.43pm BST

Triple public transport uptake and halve car use to ensure Australia's net zero success, report says

Australians need to halve the number of car trips they take and triple their use of public transport by 2030 if the country is to reach net zero emissions, new research has shown. A report by the Climate Council of Australia, released on Monday, argues that as transport contributes to 19% of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, the system needs to be fundamentally transformed to shift the behaviour of Australians away from car use and towards cycling, walking, and public transport. This would require state and territory governments to "dramatically increase" the investment in public transport from the "pitiful two percent of transport budgets, or less, that most governments spend today" to 50%, the report said. To achieve this would require expansion and electrification of the public transport system and the establishment of "well-connected infrastructure" for "active modes" of transport like walking and cycling.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.48pm BST

block-time published-time 10.41pm BST

Labor's Josh Burns pushing party to go further on EPBC Act changes to stop logging

Meanwhile, Labor MP Josh Burns wants the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act reforms his government has ordered to go further to stop logging.

That's interesting for a number of reasons: that Burns is publicly pushing his party to go further makes sense – his inner Melbourne seat is one of the ones targeted by the Greens and there is a lot of support for further action among his constituents.

But it also looks as if he wants to stop logging at Toolangi, a forest which is the subject of several petitions to save it from any further logging.

Burns says:

I sincerely hope to see the native forests that still exist preserved for conservation and recreation. It'll mean generations to come will have a sporting chance at seeing the endangered wildlife we are duty bound to protect.

I am proud to be working with Minister Plibersek on her proposed reforms to the EPBC Act, under which new environmental standards will be applied to state-level Regional Forest Agreements.'

I have visited the Toolangi State Forest, north of Healesville, several times, both with VicForests and with the environmental activists who have taken legal action to stop VicForest's plans to log parts of the forest. While parts of the State Forest contain eucalypt regrowth from the 1939 bushfires, it also contains breathtaking old-growth native trees, including the majestic Mountain Ash. The Mountain Ash is not only one of the world's tallest tree

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

species, but it is also contains the highest density of carbon in the world – storing about 1,867 tonnes of carbon per hectare, which is more than the Amazon forest in Brazil.'

Toolangi is also one of the few remaining refuges of the Leadbeater possum, a critically endangered species, as well as greater gliders and other rare and precious Victorian wildlife species.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.45pm BST

block-time published-time 10.31pm BST

Zoe Daniel to introduce private members' bill to crack down on gambling ads during sports broadcasts

After Peter Dutton used his budget reply speech to talk about the need to end gambling ads during sports broadcasts, Zoe Daniel celebrated because it meant she should have support for the private members' bill she had flagged to do the same thing.

Daniel, along with members of the crossbench, have been pushing for action on gambling advertisements during sports broadcasts – across all platforms – for some time. They have the evidence and the stories to back up their calls for a ban – and yet, despite the evidence of harm, there has been an increase in the ads.

Daniel says given [the prime minister is "annoyed" by the ads](#) and the opposition leader "has 'had enough'", it is time to do something. She will introduce her bill later today:

I'm here to tell them that the ordinary sports lovers who've been responding to me in droves are mad as hell and won't take it any more," Daniel will say.

That is why for some months now I have been preparing a private members' bill for an outright ban on gambling advertising on our screens; broadcast television, pay TV and their respective streaming services.

The PM has said the government wants to see the results of the committee inquiry into online gambling – Daniel says that doesn't cover the "blizzard of gambling ads seen by the tens of thousands of sports lovers, many of them impressionable teenagers, watching their favourite codes on free-to-air TV, pay TV and their streaming services".

We cannot wait – these seductive advertisements are an electronic epidemic normalising betting as integral to sport, grooming young minds, impairing mental health, encouraging gambling addiction and causing financial distress.

We can wait no longer.

Let's see how the major parties deal with that.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.37pm BST

block-time published-time 10.30pm BST

Good morning

Welcome to the first week of estimates, where the government's spending will be put under a microscope and Penny Wong's eyebrows get a work out – except now they are on the other side of the table.

There is no Senate sitting this week (or next) as the senators take up their chance to prod the government and departments about all sorts of things, which means no legislation will be passed for the next fortnight.

That leaves room for the house to get through some of its own business – namely the voice to parliament referendum legislation debate which will begin in earnest this week and will dominate the proceedings.

Australia politics live: Anthony Albanese says US and UK have been told 'enough is enough' on Julian Assange

Because it is a debate over the voice referendum, there is no set time – anyone who wants a say gets one, and there are A LOT of MPs lining up to have their say. So expect those speeches to take up most of the week.

Anthony Albanese arrived back in Canberra late last night after his G7/Quad visit to Japan and he will be straight back into domestic issues – the referendum legislation is important to him, plus there is the one-year anniversary of his government to acknowledge and then there is the housing bill to get across the line.

So far, there has been no budge on the housing bill, with the Greens laying out their demands for more and the government not overly enthused with picking any of them up. But given the state of the housing market and that people are sleeping on mattresses in sheds, cars and tents – working parents and their kids, pensioners, young people, singles, you name it – this is not an issue where the government has a lot of political capital. People just want it fixed.

Independent MP Zoe Daniel will also introduce her private members' bill later today to end gambling ads on broadcast TV and streaming – and she expects support from both sides of the chamber, given both leaders have spoken about the need to do something about gambling.

Independent member for Goldstein, Zoe Daniel. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

And the financial services minister, Stephen Jones, will officially announce the plans to regulate the buy now, pay later sector – that's things like Afterpay and Zip. He is giving a speech to the Responsible Lending and Borrowing Conference where he will announce the BNPL services will be treated as a credit product – which means providers will need to have a credit licence and minimum standards of conduct.

It's been a long time coming – BNPL schemes have seen a lot of people run into credit trouble – given there is not a lot you need to sign up beyond an email address – but Jones says they should be treated the same as credit cards.

So it's a big week and a pretty big day. You have Paul Karp, Josh Butler and Daniel Hurst in Canberra, with Mike Bowers keeping us all up to date. You have me, Amy Remeikis with you for most of the day.

It is at least a three-coffee morning.

Ready?

Load-Date: May 22, 2023