

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher



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Highlight: Deputy PM promises \$1.5bn investment for new Darwin port ; Labor senator takes shot at Coalition's 'dodgy costings unit' ; Scott Morrison promises to create 1.3m new jobs in the next five years ; Anthony Albanese announces greater mental health support for regions ; nation records 38 more Covid deaths. Follow all the day's newsFactcheck: did the Coalition create 1.9 million jobs? Will it create 1.3 million more?AEC to probe One Nation links to Facebook page promoting candidates who oppose vaccine mandatesWhat key numbers should Australian politicians - and voters - know and care about?Australian election voters' guide: everything you need to knowInteractive seat explorer: familiarise yourself with the state of playRead Guardian [Australia](#)'s full federal election coverageGet our free news app ; get our morning email briefing

Body

block-time published-time 8.25am BST

"It has been legislated," deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce says.

Um, no it hasn't, Sarah Martin and Daniel Hurst point out:

Related: [Barnaby Joyce wrongly claims \\$1.5bn funding for second Darwin port has already been legislated](#)

block-time published-time 8.23am BST

Labor's Senate leader, Penny Wong, has responded to news of the ministerial trip to Solomon Islands :

This is happening on Mr Morrison's watch - the warnings have been there for months, the draft agreement public for weeks - but he has failed to front up and explain how [Australia](#) is responding. We need to work with the Pacific family and allies to build a region where sovereignty is respected - and where [Australia](#) is the partner of choice.

block-time published-time 8.16am BST

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Morrison government sending minister to Solomon Islands over China concerns

It's official. The Morrison government is sending a minister to Solomon Islands to raise concerns about the deepening security cooperation between the country and China.

The minister for international development and the Pacific, Zed Seselja, said he would travel to the capital, Honiara, from today until tomorrow "to further strengthen **Australia**'s relationship with Solomon Islands".

He said **Australia** had "stood strongly as a partner and a friend of Solomon Islands" for many years, and his discussions would include the proposed Solomon Islands-China security agreement. He said:

The visit follows recent dialogue and visits between the Solomon Islands Government and Australian officials. Direct engagement has been ongoing, including discussions between foreign minister [Marise] Payne and Solomon Islands foreign minister [Jeremiah] Manele, as well as my own discussions with Pacific family partners in Brisbane over the weekend ahead of the Our Ocean Conference in Palau.

Solomon Islands is a valued member of our Pacific family. We respect the right of Solomon Islands to make sovereign decisions about its national security.

We look forward to ongoing engagement with Solomon Islands, and with our Pacific family members, on these very important issues. Our view remains that the Pacific family will continue to meet the security needs of our region.

Australia will always support our Pacific family, reflected in our 'Pacific step up'. This includes our enhanced cooperation on Covid-19 resilience and economic recovery, health, infrastructure, climate resilience, security and other shared challenges.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.24am BST

block-time published-time 8.10am BST

The Victorian government is considering scrapping the mask mandate for primary school kids.

According to AAP, the "hopeful suggestion" was made "as long as there isn't a surge of cases over the Easter holidays".

The Victorian government also announced cruise ship enthusiasts will need to be double vaccinated before they take to the seas.

block-time published-time 7.56am BST

The Bob Squad! Some more AAP pics, this time from Labor leader Anthony Albanese 's visit to Father Bob Maguire 's Foundation:

Australian opposition leader Anthony Albanese and Father Bob Maguire take a look at chocolate Easter eggs during a visit to Father Bob Maguire Foundation. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP Labor candidate for the seat of Higgins Michelle Ananda-Rajah, Australian opposition leader Anthony Albanese, Father Bob Maguire and Labor MP for the seat of Macnamara Josh Burns pose for photographs during a visit to Father Bob Maguire Foundation. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

block-time published-time 7.47am BST

Pacific minister Zed Seselja off to try to soothe some [simmering tensions](#).

enltr [#breaking](#) Minister for the Pacific [@ZedSeselja](#) will soon arrive in Solomon Islands to discuss **Australia**'s concerns about the soon-to-be-signed Chinese security deal - [@abcnews](#) can reveal Labor has been briefed and supports the trip that's taking place during caretaker period

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- Andrew Greene (@AndrewBGreene) [April 12, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 7.45am BST

Shannie and Falcon at your service (thanks to AAP).

Prime minister Scott Morrison takes a selfie with Falcon the golden retriever during a visit to Assistance Dogs [Australia](#). Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP Prime minister Scott Morrison shakes hands with Shannie the golden retriever during a visit to Assistance Dogs [Australia](#). Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

block-time published-time 7.31am BST

Coalition costing of Labor policies 'simply not true': Katy Gallagher

Labor senator Katy Gallagher is up on the ABC now, having a crack at the Coalition's "dodgy costings unit". The Coalition helpfully did a back-of-the-envelope job on Labor's policies and decided they came to a whopping \$302bn over a decade. Gallagher says it is "simply not true":

It is laughable. They have this dodgy costings unit... they are whipping up policies that we haven't announced, costing them over ten years and not showing any details of that, other than providing some comments to a newspaper. It is just ridiculous. It is not true and I am saying that in the strongest possible way.

I am the finance shadow, I see every policy we do. I see every cost. I know exactly how much Labor is spending on policies. It is modest, it is affordable and the policies are important for future of the country. I can't sit here and accept that some dodgy costings unit run by [prime minister] Scott Morrison and his staff is going to be taken as anything more than an absolute lie.

Labor will release its costings in "the usual way" during the campaign, she says.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.49am BST

block-time published-time 7.26am BST

Jennett asks Ruston about the reported \$500,000 payout to the Liberal MP Alan Tudge 's former staffer, Rachelle Miller. Ruston deftly continues the government's tactic of commenting without commenting:

There are two points there. One is that the report and review undertaken by Ms [Vivienne] Tom found there was no breach of the ministerial standards by Mr Tudge. That is an important point.

The other side is that the expectation around any independent process and the confidentiality and respecting the people that are involved, I have no more information about the details of this case than anybody else does and everybody would expect that there should be no interference or even any information or knowledge sharing in the political arm of the party when we are talking about an individual workplace situation.

Josh Butler took a look at the situation yesterday:

Related: [Alan Tudge: Government won't comment on \\$500,000 payout to former staffer Rachelle Miller](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.28am BST

block-time published-time 7.23am BST

Coalition campaign spokeswoman Anne Ruston (who is also a senator and the current minister for women's safety) is on the ABC.

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She says telehealth will be "permanent and universal", including for psychiatric and mental health appointments. Labor has announced it will spend \$31m on regional mental health. You can see the details from Labor leader Anthony Albanese below.

Ruston says there has been "no cut" (there are some semantics here to parse, I reckon).

The ABC's Greg Jennett asks her about that 1.3m jobs pledge that [Paul Karp has taken a look at](#), calling it a "recompilation" of existing initiatives. Ruston says:

We will continue to make sure that we have the jobs for Australians, that they have access to the training so they can take up the jobs when they occur but also investing in those things that are going to create the jobs of the future, which are through things like infrastructure and defence .

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.28am BST

block-time published-time 7.16am BST

Here's the full story from Luke Henriques-Gomes about Labor refusing to commit to an increase in jobseeker:

Related: [Labor won't commit to an increase in jobseeker payment](#)

block-time published-time 7.04am BST

More than a million jobs, eh? Paul Karp checks the federal government's claims:

Related: [Factcheck: did the Coalition create 1.9 million jobs? Will it create 1.3 million more?](#)

block-time published-time 6.58am BST

He's got his eggs in a couple of baskets, there:

enltrJust happened: Albo gets Father Bob's Easter endorsement. [#auspol pic.twitter.com/tKerIP1MgR](#)

- Jonathan Lea (@JonathanLea10) [April 12, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 6.56am BST

Sky News just flashed on to WA Labor MPs including **Anne Aly** dancing and singing. It was Abba's Dancing Queen. That's all I have for now.

block-time published-time 6.51am BST

enltrWe got a handshake [pic.twitter.com/llmGC3qiYF](#)

- Michael Read (@michael_read_) [April 12, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 6.40am BST

While Albanese is touring Bob Maguire 's foundation, prime minister Scott Morrison is at Assistance Dogs **Australia**, an organisation that trains dogs to help people with disabilities.

block-time published-time 6.36am BST

Labor leader Anthony Albanese is visiting the Father Bob Maguire Foundation. He's with the local Mcnamara MP Josh Burns and Labor's candidate for Higgins, Michelle Ananda-Rajah.

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Bob Maguire, of course, is a legend in the community for his work with the homeless, the poor and the vulnerable.

enltrAnthony Albanese is with Josh Burns and Father Bob Maguire in Melbourne
[@FinancialReview pic.twitter.com/81tgMjPDzp](https://www.financialreview.com.au/pic.twitter.com/81tgMjPDzp)

- Tom McIlroy (@TomMcIlroy) [April 12, 2022](#)

Mcnamara is a "fairly safe" Labor seat in Melbourne, bordered by Higgins, which is a marginal Liberal seat.

Have I mentioned we've made a seat cheat sheet for you?

Related: [Australian election 2022: seat explorer](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.55am BST

block-time published-time 6.36am BST

The Australian Dental Association has responded to efforts by prime minister Scott Morrison to deflect his own (low) popularity by likening his job to being a dentist.

"You go to the dentist, [it] doesn't matter whether you like him or not - like her or not - but you want to know that they're good at their job," [Morrison said](#) at a Parramatta media conference today.

Eithne Irving, deputy chief executive of the association, told Guardian [Australia](#) dentists had "a sense of humour" and were not put off by the analogy. However, she noted the irony of the sector being held up as a comparison:

[It] must be the first time the prime minister has used the word 'dentist' in an election campaign or at any time during his incumbency because he and the Coalition along with successive governments have completely ignored the need, and the ADA's pleas, to address the needs of older Australians in aged care.

The association isn't so chuffed with Labor either, noting that - so far - there is no pledge to Bill Shorten's [2019 election pledge](#) to spend big on dental care. Irving said:

Neither the Coalition nor the Labor party have made any encouraging noises about addressing the appalling oral health and neglect in aged care homes.

[T]he royal aged care commission heard horrific stories of people going days if not weeks without their teeth or dentures being cleaned - putting them on a fast track to declining health and possible death - or of dentures being left in mouths for many months at a time, oral cancers being missed, and lacerated tongues and mouths from broken teeth noone has spotted.

According to the ADA, the cost of setting up a dental benefits scheme for older Australians in residential aged care would be about \$10m a year - a pittance, if correct.

"One in four Australians over the age of 75 has untreated tooth decay and almost 70% have gum disease," Irving said, adding a line of her own that she hopes will get traction:

It's time to 'Stop the Rot'.

Perhaps next time Morrison (or Barnaby Joyce or Katie Allen, or another MP) tries that dental analogy, perhaps one of the travelling journalists might have a nibble on that issue, so to speak.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.41am BST

block-time published-time 6.33am BST

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Ah, dogs. Prime minister Scott Morrison 's first stop that isn't manufacturing!

Liberal MP Melissa McIntosh is the sitting member in Lindsay.

enltrOur first trip to a Liberal-held marginal seat, and our first stop that isn't a manufacturing business! The PM is now in Lindsay to visit an assistance dog training school. We've been warned that only ONE dog can be touched. Meet Shannie, the dog of the hour [@FinancialReview pic.twitter.com/qptNIALDGj](#)

- Michael Read (@michael_read_) [April 12, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 6.16am BST

Liberal MP Stuart Robert is now getting tested on the JobSeeker rate on Sky News. He asks host Keiran Gilbert to repeat the question... then says about \$640 a fortnight for a single (which is right).

I can't help but imagine all the MPs and candidates across the country going cross-eyed last night learning lists of numbers.

enltr. [@stuartrobertmp](#) currently attacking [@AlboMP](#) for not knowing the unemployment rate. Last month he got the jobs data wrong and when given the opportunity to correct himself doubled-down. [#auspol #auseco https://t.co/oVrYxOO3OJ](#)

- Ronald Mizen (@ronmjm) [April 12, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.38am BST

block-time published-time 6.11am BST

Labor leader Anthony Albanese is having a PIC-FAC at 3.30pm. The political parties put them in caps like that - we prefer "pic fac", if we have to use such jargon.

It's short for "picture facility", which means "picture opportunity", which means it really would make more sense for it to be a "pic opp".

There's usually no chance for questions. Sometimes journalists can eavesdrop on the staged conversations. Anyway, I'll keep an eye on it when it happens.

block-time published-time 6.05am BST

Well, hello! Yes, it's (only) the second day of the formal campaign. Thanks as always to Amy Remeikis who is honestly picking up the lion's share of work here, letting me cruise with you through the afternoon.

Thanks to Labor leader Anthony Albanese, I now have to resist saying "Hey! Ho! Let's Go!" every time I'm on here. So consider that the last time you'll hear me Ramoneing about it.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.10am BST

block-time published-time 5.59am BST

Labor's campaign has landed in Melbourne. We should hear more about where the Liberal party is headed very soon. Tory Shepherd will guide you through the afternoon on the blog.

Make sure you check back on the site to see what the rest of the team has been up to. I'll be back early tomorrow morning.

Take care of yourselves out there.

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block-time updated-time Updated at 6.02am BST

block-time published-time 5.38am BST

The Antipoverty Centre has been working hard to try and raise awareness about what life is like for those living on, near or below the poverty line in [Australia](#) and what can be done to fix it

Spokesperson Kristin O'Connell had a response to Scott Morrison's [re-announcement of the 1.3m new jobs over five years pledge](#) (there is no new policy to go with the announcement, it is all underpinned by already announced economic policies), and to Andrew Leigh's comments to the Australian Council of Social Services event where he said [Labor had no plans to raise the jobseeker rate](#).

O'Connell:

These announcements today are a devastating blow. They show that we face yet another election where unemployed people will be used as a political football, with no consideration for our lives.

The narrative that everything is great is frankly bullshit. Nearly 1 million are suffering on unemployment payments that are just half the poverty line. And 20% of those are employed in jobs so bad they can't escape poverty.

The Liberal and Labor parties have repeatedly ignored and failed those of us who live on Centrelink payments, sticking to outdated statistics like the unemployment rate that do not reflect reality. They exploit stories of poverty when it's convenient to pretend they care, then discard us and move on.

O'Connell said both parties were ignoring that "more people rely on unemployment payments to live than before the pandemic, when the unemployment rate was 5.1%".

The Antipoverty Centre has calculated that the amount of people relying on jobkeeper has increased by 41% over the course of the pandemic. Photograph: Dan Peled/AAP

She also said there was no point in talking about jobs without also raising whether or not they were suitable jobs:

Unemployed workers are not economic units to be plugged into holes. The majority of the 870,000 people on JobSeeker - the most common working age welfare payment - are either disabled, experiencing age discrimination, already employed, or a combination of these. Every one of those people deserves to have enough money to afford the basics like food, electricity and healthcare.

While they are crowing about jobs and growth, or pretending that some vague promise of social housing years from now will help put food in our stomachs, there are 23 people who've been on an unemployment payment for more than 12 months for each entry level job.

We again urge politicians to grow a spine and commit to increasing all social security payments to the Henderson poverty line, which is currently \$88 a day. It should be their first and highest priority to make sure everyone has enough to live.

The Antipoverty Centre has calculated that there are about 23 people who have been on an unemployment payment for more than 12 months for each entry level job advertised in February 2022 (this does not account for competition from other applicants who are not on a payment or are short-term unemployed) using data from the National Skills Commission and DSS.

It has compared Department of Social Services data to show that the number of people who rely on jobseeker (formerly Newstart) has increased by 41% to 786,139 people (83.84% of all people on jobseeker) compared to 557,395 before the pandemic. Using DSS data and reports from the Department of Education, Skills and Employment, the Centre has found that of about 1 million people with "mutual" obligations who are forced to use employment services (jobactive and Disability Employment Services), 477,000 are disabled.

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block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.50am BST

block-time published-time 5.25am BST

My colleague Christopher Knaus has a story for you:

enltrLNP senator Matt Canavan billed taxpayers thousands of dollars to fly with his family for a three-night trip to Brisbane, during which he headlined Xmas drinks for a controversial conservative group that planned to donate him part of the night's proceeds <https://t.co/OOMRFvg1t3>

- Christopher Knaus (@knausc) [April 12, 2022](#)

Or you can click through below as well:

Related: [Matt Canavan billed taxpayers for trip with family to Brisbane, where he spoke at CPAC dinner](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.28am BST

block-time published-time 5.13am BST

You may have seen Guardian [Australia's](#) Luke Henriques-Gomes post a little earlier, reporting Labor's Andrew Leigh [would not commit to raising the Jobseeker rate](#).

The Greens leader Adam Bandt has responded:

Labor has agreed with the Liberals that people should live in poverty. Labor siding with the Liberals is heartbreaking.

Labor and the Liberals have agreed that a poverty payment of less than \$50 a day is enough for people who lose their jobs, single parents with kids, people with serious illnesses and disabled people.

There should be no poverty in a wealthy country. The Greens will keep fighting to raise every income support payment above the poverty line to \$88 a day.

Australian Greens leader Adam Bandt addressing the media yesterday on day one of the 2022 election campaign. Photograph: Russell Freeman/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.21am BST

block-time published-time 4.47am BST

The Labor campaign is hitting the skies - it will be in Melbourne next, after one and a half days in Tasmania.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.55am BST

block-time published-time 4.43am BST

Guardian [Australia's](#) Sarah Martin earlier today reported on [Andrew Leigh's announcement](#) today committing to cleaning up fundraising laws.

That promise has already won support from the charity Save the Children. Its acting CEO, Mat Tinkler, said cutting that sort of red tape would free up charity and advocacy groups to do their actual intended jobs:

The less time we need to spend on burdensome regulation and unnecessary red tape, the more time we can focus on children and their needs in [Australia](#) and the region.

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Save the Children has long supported the need for fundraising law reform.

Fragmented state and territory fundraising laws limit the ability of charities to raise much needed funds in times of crisis, like a global pandemic, bushfires or floods.

Today's commitment will provide greater certainty for Australian charities and help us ensure that money reaches those who need it, when they need it. We encourage and would welcome a similar commitment from all those contesting the election.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.47am BST

block-time published-time 4.38am BST

National Covid summary

Here are the latest coronavirus numbers from around **Australia** today, as the country records at least 38 deaths from Covid-19:

ACT

Deaths: 0Cases: 923In hospital: 61 (with 2 people in ICU)

NSW

Deaths: 11Cases: 15,334In hospital: 1,584 (with 70 people in ICU)

Northern Territory

Deaths: 0Cases: 512In hospital: 29 (with 1 person in ICU)

Queensland

Deaths: 6Cases: 7,882In hospital: 572 (with 16 people in ICU)

South **Australia**

Deaths: 6Cases: 4,401In hospital: 232 (with 12 people in ICU)

Tasmania

Deaths: 0Cases: 2,050In hospital: 55 (with 3 people in ICU)

Victoria

Deaths: 12Cases: 10,293In hospital: 376 (with 19 people in ICU)

Western **Australia**

Deaths: 3Cases: 6,349In hospital: 236 (with 7 people in ICU)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.33am BST

block-time published-time 4.28am BST

Queensland and South **Australia** each report six new Covid deaths and WA reports three

We have some more Covid numbers from around the country.

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While we may now be "living with Covid", the virus is still having a massive impact on lives.

enltrToday we have recorded 7,882 new COVID-19 cases. Sadly, we have reported 6 deaths in the past 24 hours. Full details?? <https://t.co/2vvTmlzliI> [pic.twitter.com/R9gghjnLP6](https://t.co/R9gghjnLP6)

- Queensland Health (@qldhealth) [April 12, 2022](#)

enltrSouth Australian COVID-19 update 12/04/22. For more information, go to <https://t.co/XkVcAmeZ6V> or contact the South **Australia** COVID-19 Information Line on 1800 253 787. [pic.twitter.com/5zsztBKeFa](https://t.co/5zsztBKeFa)

- SA Health (@SAHealth) [April 12, 2022](#)

enltrThis is our WA COVID-19 update for Tuesday, 12 April 2022. For official information on COVID-19 in WA, visit <https://t.co/zTYXZD1B7R> <https://t.co/4Mw6ziOIXI> [pic.twitter.com/sAeL45WKEz](https://t.co/sAeL45WKEz)

- Mark McGowan (@MarkMcGowanMP) [April 12, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.39am BST

block-time published-time 4.16am BST

Here is Liberal MP Katie Allen [on 4 April using the dentist as an analogy](#) in response to questions on Scott Morrison's unpopularity:

If I'm in a dental chair I don't care if I like the dentist - the only thing I care about is how well they can operate that drill! And I hope Australians take that same approach when they head into the ballot box. I might be biased but the Coalition is an experienced team that will deliver a stronger future.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.21am BST

block-time published-time 4.12am BST

Turns out figures can be tricky.

enltrBREAKING TRANSCRIPTS: Morrison's office has (indirectly) acknowledged the twelve zeroes issue. They have added to the transcript the clarifying (in a trillion) <https://t.co/YQGhlcsqLr> [pic.twitter.com/p0nYxrfyar](https://t.co/p0nYxrfyar)

- Daniel Hurst (@danielhurstbne) [April 12, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.14am BST

block-time published-time 4.01am BST

The conservative Christian lobby group Family Voice are cranky with Simon Birmingham for not jumping in support of Scott Morrison's comments supporting "brave" Liberal women who want to ban trans women from playing women's sport.

On [Tuesday 12 April finance minister Simon Birmingham](#) undermined the prime minister's strong stand on the issue - aimed at winning back conservative voters who are disillusioned by the Government's failure to deliver on religious freedom - saying any proposed laws to stop men from playing women's sports should be scrutinised by the Parliament.

... Mr Birmingham needs to come to grips with reality and stop appeasing the trans minority lobby. Who do we believe Mr Morrison - you or your finance minister?

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block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.08am BST

block-time published-time 3.35am BST

Barnaby Joyce announces \$1.5bn new Darwin port and gas hub

Here is what the Nationals will be talking about in the Northern Territory today (via AAP).

A new port in Darwin is expected to boost jobs and help industry export more gas and critical minerals.

Campaigning in the Northern Territory on Tuesday, deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce said the \$1.5bn investment at Middle Arm would make it a world-leading industrial hub for gas processing and high-value minerals processing and refinement.

"Our investment will deliver this, supporting port infrastructure, including a wharf and offloading facility, and dredging of the shipping channel," he said.

Darwin's existing port was controversially leased to Chinese company Landbridge for 99 years by the NT government in 2015.

Joyce said **Australia** must become stronger and more resilient in the face of geopolitical tensions.

"This is part of our plan to become as strong as possible as quickly as possible," he said in a statement.

The plan includes \$440m to build new logistics hubs at Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek and \$300m for low-emissions LNG and clean hydrogen production at Middle Arm, together with associated carbon capture and storage infrastructure.

As well there is \$200m to further develop the Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct, delivering a rail spur and new road network and \$110mn to continue to upgrade and further seal the Tanami Road.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.45am BST

block-time published-time 3.25am BST

The wombat trail continues.

enltrDeputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce press conference with Deputy Leader David Littleproud, Darwin 12:00pm ACST [#ausvotes](#)

- Political Alert (@political_alert) [April 12, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.29am BST

block-time published-time 3.19am BST

Business conditions and confidence improve, NAB survey says

Along with the ANZ's [consumer sentiment survey](#) , NAB has chimed in with the release of their monthly business survey.

Generally the mood is buoyant, with Omicron disruptions apparently a fast fading memory (even if Covid deaths this year are already more than in 2020 and 2021, and still rising).

Business conditions, for instance, rose 9 points last month to be +18, the largest one-month jump since June 2020.

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enltr [@NAB](#) 's latest survey of business confidence and conditions both showed rises, with conditions in March posting the biggest monthly jump since June 2020. [#auspol](#) [#AusVotes2022](#) [pic.twitter.com/qVd0cml1UP](#)

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [April 12, 2022](#)

In trend terms, confidence remained strong "across all industries", NAB said. By sector, confidence rose sharply (or is that, "accelerated") in transport (up 16pts), construction (15pts), and for recreation & personal services (up 11pts).

Among the states, confidence was "strong across the board" and rose the most in Tasmania (up 21pts), SA (up 14pts) and WA (up 13pts), "while the other states were largely steady".

NAB says the retail sector has helped to boost business confidence. Photograph: Dan Himbrechts/AAP

"The retail sector drove much of the improvement in conditions," says NAB's chief economist Alan Oster. "That indicates household consumption continues to grow strongly with consumers undeterred by rising inflation, at least so far.

But there is a cloud gathering - the pressure on costs and prices. Purchase costs, for instance, rose a record 4.2% in March, eclipsing the 3.2% rise seen in January. The three-month average of 3.4% was also the highest on record.

Notably, labour costs are rising but not at the gradient of purchase costs.

enltrBut NAB's survey also showed cost and price growth measures rising to record levels last month. Purchase cost growth, for instance, reached 4.2% in quarterly terms, while labour cost growth - presumably a proxy for wages - rose 2.7%. [#AusVotes2022](#) [#auspol](#) [pic.twitter.com/PtyrzNbNgr](#)

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [April 12, 2022](#)

Since profitability seems to be holding up, that points to companies merrily being able to lift their prices accordingly.

"Importantly, it appears businesses have had little trouble passing on higher costs to consumers with prices - including retail prices - also rising at record rates," Oster said, adding that the bank expects "very strong inflation in Q1 and likely Q2" when official numbers are released. For the March quarter, the official CPI figures will drop on [April 27](#), potentially an awkward number for the government. The June quarter data, though, won't land until three months later, or well into the new term of the government.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.40am BST

block-time published-time 3.12am BST

The largest (and growing) part of **Australia**'s welfare spend is on the pension, which dwarfs the amount spent on unemployment benefits.

But given Scott Morrison's line today about balancing budgets by "getting people off welfare and into jobs where they pay taxes" it is worth noting that there are people who are receiving social security payments while also working. Under employed people (those with jobs who want more hours/work) can also receive unemployment payments. It is not a binary proposition for many people.

And again, there are MORE people receiving unemployment payments now than before the pandemic.

[Here](#) is how the Australian newspaper reported it when the issue was noticed in September last year:

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

The commonwealth is spending \$250m more on unemployment benefits each fortnight than before the pandemic, an increase of 60 per cent as the labour market snapback fails to shift hundreds of thousands of Australians off welfare payments.

Experts warned that the stubbornly high rate of welfare dependency in the wake of last year's recession was evidence the labour market recovery had not been as strong as the official figures suggested.

At the end of August, there remained 1.08 million JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipients, according to Department of Social Services figures. That was 552,000 fewer than the May 2020 peak, but still 273,000 more than before last year's Covid recession, despite the number of unemployed falling by 129,000 over the same time period.

An analysis by The Australian shows there are now about 75 per cent more people on the dole than there are officially recognised as unemployed in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' labour force survey. Over the two years leading into the pandemic, that figure averaged only 12 per cent - pointing to a labour market dislocation that is yet to resolve itself.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.17am BST

block-time published-time 3.00am BST

Labor has not committed to an additional increase to the jobseeker payment and has dropped plans for a review into the rate, the shadow assistant treasurer Andrew Leigh says.

Asked by the Australian Council of Social Service chief executive Cassandra Goldie to clarify Labor's position on the jobseeker payment at an event on Tuesday, Leigh said:

We haven't committed to an additional increase. I'm aware that an increase took place. So it was a modest increase put in place. Certainly living on jobseeker is a challenge. And that's one of the reasons we need to make sure we're thinking about rent assistance and the adequacy of social housing. It's that whole package... making sure we have appropriate supports around people who are most vulnerable.

Asked about the possibility of an independent review into the rate, which former leader Bill Shorten had promised in 2019 while hinting at an increase to the payment, Leigh said:

We don't have a plan for an independent review at this stage. Certainly the focus that we have has been around our social housing commitment... which would see 30,000 additional social affordable homes put into the market there.

The watering down of Labor's policy on jobseeker for this year's election was criticised by Goldie, who noted there was "broad consensus across the community sector about the need to fix the adequacy of income support".

The Morrison government temporarily doubled the jobseeker rate during the pandemic, before returning it to the base rate. In February last year, it increased this base rate [by \\$50 a fortnight](#). The current rate is now \$642.70 a fortnight, or about \$46 a day, which is well below the poverty line.

[Responding to the government's increase at the time](#), Labor's social services spokeswoman, Linda Burney, said Labor would "finalise all of our policies before the next election" and would look to address poverty at "every budget".

The Coalition declined to appear at the Acoos event on Tuesday.

Acoos has called for an increase to jobseeker of \$70 a day and a 50% increase of rental assistance.

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

The Greens said last week they wanted all welfare payments to be lifted to meet the most generous poverty line measure, the Henderson line, which stands at \$88 a day. It estimated this would cost \$88bn over the forward estimates.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.06am BST

block-time published-time 2.52am BST

I guess we all make mistakes, huh?

enltrlf we're really going to go down this incredibly specific line of attack - her last name is Finlay, not "Findlay" as you tweeted [@stoker aj](#) ?? We all make mistakes ?? pic.twitter.com/4Z1zo48a98

- Jamie Travers (@JamieTravers) [April 12, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 2.51am BST

Victorian Liberal MP Katie Allen used the dentist analogy Scott Morrison trotted off and Murph picked up on in her morning wrap last week when she was asked about Morrison's unpopularity problem.

So someone has created this line thinking it is the perfect comparison.

Personally, when at the dentist, I just wish it was included on Medicare, because it is prohibitively expensive for a lot of people and the wait list for those who are eligible for subsidised dental work can mean it can be years before issues are addressed.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.00am BST

block-time published-time 2.47am BST

The view from Katharine Murphy

Election campaigns aren't conversations. For the sake of all our sanities, I wish they were. But they aren't. They are message wars.

They are message wars because the people who decide election outcomes in **Australia** aren't watching closely. To land your point, you need to be short and sharp. You need to be short and sharp because at the end of six weeks, someone wins the message war and someone loses.

Anthony Albanese lost the message war of the first 24 hours on the hustings. The problem wasn't that he fluffed the specific unemployment rate figure. As John Howard said yesterday: "Who cares."

The problem for Labor politically was Albanese appeared not to know about a central, real world talking point in the economy.

Naturally, Scott Morrison is already weaponising that point against his opponent. This morning in Parramatta, Morrison said if you don't understand the nuts and bolts then you don't have an economic plan, because you are out of your depth. That's the extrapolation that's dangerous for Labor. That's the extrapolation that puts a pep in Morrison's step.

Looping back to my opening observation about the message war, Albanese this morning also let the questioning about yesterday's mistake run and run.

Perhaps the sharper riposte might have been: Morrison makes plenty of mistakes, have you ever seen him apologise or take responsibility? When that happens, please come back to me and we'll talk about this some more - all day if you like. Pack a lunch. We'll really get into it.

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

Morrison invoked a dentistry analogy this morning, but there's a big hole in it. Photograph: Kelly Redinger/Design Pics Inc

As for Morrison, the prime minister was asked this morning about his own lack of popularity. Morrison invoked an analogy about a dentist. No one likes going to the dentist. But they want to go to the dentist that's good at their job. This is a running riff on the devil you know, which is the core of the prime minister's pitch.

There's a substantive problem with this analogy, though. We've spoken to voters in marginal seats over the past few weeks. Voters negative about the prime minister are negative because they don't think he's good at his job. It's a good line. But it's like a donut. There's a big hole in the middle.

enltrMorrison on whether he's the problem in that press conference. "It's not a popularity test. You go to the dentist, it doesn't matter if you like him or not. You want to know they're good at their job".

- Katharine Murphy (@murpharoo) [April 12, 2022](#)

enltrRhetorically, this is a cut-through message. Substantively, though, there's a problem. The voters we've spoken to in marginal seats are angry with Morrison because they don't think he's good at his job. That's the issue. It's a judgment on his record. [#auspol](#)

- Katharine Murphy (@murpharoo) [April 12, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.59am BST

block-time published-time 2.42am BST

Gillon McLachlan announces he's stepping down as AFL boss

He is not going until the end of the season - but Gil McLachlan says it is time for him to move on to other things.

He is a bit emotional.

I'm leaving now because it feels right - right for the AFL, right for me, right for my family.

AFL chief executive Gillon McLachlan with his wife Laura and children after announcing he will step down from his role at the end of the season. Photograph: Michael Willson/AFL Photos/Getty Images

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.48am BST

block-time published-time 2.40am BST

Returning to Scott Morrison 's presser briefly to close off the foreign affairs issues that were raised:

One of the questions he was asked was whether, if re-elected, he would pledge to "not allow" China to establish a military base in Solomon Islands.

Bear in mind that the Australian government's stated policy vision for the Indo-Pacific, for years, has focused on promoting a region "of independent, sovereign and resilient states". Read that as: every country, regardless of size, is able to make its own decisions free of coercion. So it can hardly dictate to countries in the region.

To date, Australian ministers have repeatedly acknowledged that Solomon Islands can make its own sovereign decisions but **Australia** has concerns about the prospective security agreement between it and China. A leaked draft from last month raised the possibility China could "make ship visits to carry out logistical replenishment in, and have stopover and transition in Solomon Islands", while Chinese forces could also be used "to protect the safety of Chinese personnel and major projects in Solomon Islands".

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

The prime minister of Solomon Islands, Manasseh Sogavare, has sought to allay concerns by saying his country has no intention of allowing a Chinese naval base. But Sogavare [has also said](#) it is "very insulting to be branded as unfit to manage our sovereign affairs".

At today's press conference, Morrison relied on those public assurances from Sogavare:

Well, you heard from the prime minister of the Solomon Islands that that is not something that they would allow to occur. He has made that very clear. And we're continuing to press on the issue of rotation, possible rotation of vessels or others that might seek to go to Solomon Islands. That's a serious issue that we'll continue to press.

Morrison added that he respected the Solomon Islands was a sovereign country:

They're not a state of [Australia](#). They're not under [Australia](#)'s control or direction. They are a sovereign country. And my approach to the Pacific, as the foreign minister will attest, has always been to respect the sovereignty of our neighbours.

There was a long time when [Australia](#) used to treat the Pacific as an extension of own our country. They didn't like it. They didn't like being treated like that and nor should they. And I have never treated my Pacific family like that. I have always been honest with them and up front with them and I'm in regular contact with them.

Morrison said that after the last election, the first place he travelled to was Solomon Islands, with his wife Jenny. Morrison also relied on Solomon Islands' public statements that [Australia](#) and New Zealand remain its security partners of choice.

Pacific island countries have repeatedly urged the Australian government to take the region's call for serious action on the climate crisis seriously.

The Labor leader, Anthony Albanese, was asked about the same issue. Albanese said [Australia](#) needed to "step up" not just rhetorically but in reality:

What I wouldn't have done is sit back and do nothing.

Read more on this issue in last week's analysis:

Related: [Australia anxious to show it didn't 'drop the ball' on Pacific after China and Solomon Islands deal](#)

block-time updated-time Updated at 3.25am BST

block-time published-time 2.39am BST

There are more questions on the gaffe from yesterday. He repeats the same answer. It was a mistake.

My thoughts from time to time, if you haven't made a mistake in time to time and be distracted by other issues, we had dealt with as you know, you were there. We dealt with the young Frankie and I had the issue of children's health, hearing and all those issues in my head.

I'm not making excuses for it. But it shouldn't have happened. I get asked questions all the time. About the economy. And I got asked on the same day, about what the inflation rate was, what the wage rate was, I got asked a number of things and I got all of those questions right. (that was in the Sky interview)

block-time published-time 2.37am BST

Q: The Australian Human Rights Commission is at risk of being downgraded because of recent legal appointments. It is asking the commission rectify the appointments by providing more transparency process. Lorraine Finlay is a commissioner will you keep her in that role and will you consider limiting political appointments in your body?

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

Albanese:

At the risk of creating a headline, I don't know who Ms Finlay is. (she has been the human rights commissioner since November last year and is a former WA Liberal candidate)

...I will look at that. This government, what I do know is one of the reasons for the delay in the calling of the election was so that they could make dozens of appointments, day after day after day.

Is there any former Liberal MP or Liberal Mayor or counsellor who has not been appointed to the AAT commission or the fair work commission?

It is just an outrage. I think they can be good political appointments. And I will name one, Barry O'Farrell, was a good appointment stop he has a sincere interest in India, developed in his time as premier of New South Wales. I look forward to, if we are successful, working with him as India's important country as a member of the quad. For **Australia**. It is a good appointment. I supported Mattias Cormann for the Secretary General of the OECD.

We spoke to people that we have connections with to support in **Australia** in that role.

That contrast with what our opponents have done historically.

...This government had just appointed mates to so many jobs that it has undermined the standing of organisations

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.33am BST

block-time published-time 2.31am BST

Q: Scott Morrison yesterday voiced support for a ban on transgender people competing in female sports and said that the education curriculum risks being sold out to agenda. What is your position on these comments?

Anthony Albanese:

On the first. He seems to be unaware that it is already covered by the Sex Discrimination Act already.

The second one was... he needs to talk to the New South Wales education minister... the Liberal party appears worried about that.

This prime minister needs to do his day job. His day job is about things that he is responsible for, not look for ways to divide **Australia**. One of the things I want to do, because education is important and the basics of education are important. Teaching people the fullness of our history and teaching people to read and write, mathematics.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.35am BST

block-time published-time 2.29am BST

Q: You made economic management and cost of living key election issues. Considering yesterday's mistake, as you say, that you couldn't name economic figures, can you understand the criticism that you may have lost all credibility on these issues now? And back on to John Howard, do you agree it was not a big deal, yesterday's incident?

Anthony Albanese:

I agree it was a mistake. And I owned up to it. It is up to others to judge those things. I will get on with things, but I agree that most people in public life have made errors when it comes to figures at various times, including the prime minister in recent times.

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

It will happen. It will not be the only time during this campaign that someone gets a figure wrong... just pay attention and you will see that. But the key is what policies we have going forward, whether it is having impact on cost of living.

Our plan for childcare will have an impact on cost of living. It is fully costed out though, we have released it. It is not the same policy that is in the platform, it is the policy that I have announced.

It is a policy where no family will be worse off, and most families will be better off... Every economist knows that every dollar in a childcare is at least \$2 to the economy, because it boosts workforce participation and boosts participation.

We have looked at measures that make a permanent difference to cost of living, whether it is our power Australia plan that will reduce household power prices by \$275.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.46am BST

block-time published-time 2.26am BST

Anthony Albanese then has to explain that Labor's platform adopted at national conference is not the same as Labor's policies that they are taking to the election.

The platform are aspirations Labor members would like to see Labor adopt as policies, but there is no onus to turn them into policies. The Liberal party does it too - branches send through their aspirations, state and federal conferences vote on it as part of the platform, and then it is up to the parliamentary party to decide whether or not they are adopted as policies.

Platforms are not *binding* binding for either major party.

Labor's platform is a little more complicated - it commits the party to a direction, and provides the frame members have decided the party needs to take. That frame shapes the policy - but there is no time line and it doesn't commit the parliamentary party to doing everything at once.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.07am BST

block-time published-time 2.22am BST

That line of questioning continues.

Anthony Albanese:

The prime ministers said that the four plus three equals eight and then came up with a convoluted explanation as to why that was the case. When you make a mistake, with a number, and I was concentrating on something else, it shouldn't have happened, I did - you own up to it and move on. There are no consequences for real people as a result for what I said.

This was not going missing... there was a mistake. I wish it hadn't had occurred. I am usually very good with numbers.

And on another question on the same issue:

I can't be trusted? This is a government that has \$1 trillion of debt. As the government that today have employment projections, on appointment projections before the last election, they said that we would be debt free by 2030.

This is a government that had made 55, 55 projections on wages and on 52 of them they have been wrong - 52 out of 55 they have been wrong.

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

This is a government that don't have a plan for the economy. Of course that is why from this government what you are seeing is two things. On the economy you are seeing support, one, that disappears as soon as people have passed the vote. And secondly you are seeing these personal attacks on Labor.

I found it quite extraordinary that on the day after the budget, a budget that was brought forward from May to March, so that they could outline the campaign for the next three years, they were talking about us. In the first speech on the Wednesday after the Tuesday night, they were talking about us. Josh Frydenberg went to the National Press Club address on that day and said that the budget was all about the election. He got that right.

What we need is a plan for the economy. Labor has a plan for the economy for cheaper energy, to power high-value manufacturing, to train Australians for those jobs through the free Tafe and other avenues.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.31am BST

block-time published-time 2.18am BST

'Shake it off': Albanese says he will own his mistakes

Q: Yesterday was a demoralising day for your campaign. See the newspaper treatment of it this morning. You can see that you have less chance of winning the election today rather than two days ago?

Anthony Albanese:

Yesterday I made a mistake and guess what? I fessed up to it, and you probably made a mistake from time to time, Andrew. There are other people that have made mistakes [about] numbers, even today. John Howard had, I think, pretty clear comment about what he thought about it.

My approach is, I fessed up, took responsibility, that is what I will do. From time to time, if ever I make a mistake, I will own it and I will accept responsibility.

But as I quoted the Ramones on day one of the campaign, here is a Taylor Swift comment for you. My theory is:

'Shake it off.'

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.29am BST

block-time published-time 2.15am BST

Albanese says people struggling amid 'massive rise in insecure work'

Anthony Albanese focuses on the mental health announcement today, rather than making motherhood statements.

We get to the questions:

Q: Is Labor exaggerating the casualisation of the workforce? Analysis of data by the University of Melbourne says it is actually about 5% below the peak which is a 2003. Can you explain your comments on this change in the workforce? (This is what Scott Morrison was referencing in his press conference).

Albanese:

We're not exaggerating the level of insecure work. It is a range of areas where this is happening. Casualisation one of them. Contracting out with led by companies.

Also the gig economy, which doesn't classify people as employees - it classifies them as contractors rather than employees. What we are seeing around Australia is a massive rise in insecure work. There are more people having to work two, three, four jobs to get by.

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I would say to the government who are dismissive of this that they need to get out more and talk to people on the ground about how they are really struggling.

Anthony Albanese says the government is 'dismissive' of the level of insecure work. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.47am BST

block-time published-time 2.06am BST

Anthony Albanese holds press conference

The Labor leader Anthony Albanese is up now, talking about Labor's commitment to restore Medicare for telehealth mental health appointments for those living in rural and regional areas.

It should never have been removed. It should have been a permanent level of support. Because we should regard people's access to mental healthcare as no different from if someone breaks in arm - they expect to get treated by a doctor.

Psychiatric services, dealing with people's mental health, whether they be young people, people in the workforce, older Australians, that is an epidemic.

We need to make sure that you have access to services wherever you live. Telehealth can be so important. That is why today's announcement is critical.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.11am BST

block-time published-time 2.03am BST

Victoria to host the 2026 Commonwealth Games

Victoria will host the 2026 Commonwealth Games, the state's premier Daniel Andrews has announced.

The opening ceremony will be held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, though the games will largely be based in regional Victoria, with Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Gippsland to each host their own athlete's village and sport program. Shepparton will also hold sporting and cultural events.

The government will invest in community infrastructure, including housing and world-class sports facilities ahead of the event.

Andrews says the games will contribute more than \$3b to Victoria's economy, creating more than 600 full-time jobs before the games, 3,900 jobs during and a further 3,000 jobs after it ends.

It's a great honour to have Victoria chosen as the host venue for the 2026 Commonwealth Games - we can't wait to welcome the world to all of our state.

The Commonwealth Games in regional Victoria is great for jobs, hospitality and our economy.

Victoria will host the 2026 Commonwealth Games, with the opening ceremony to be held at the MCG. Photograph: Dylan Burns/AFL Photos/Getty Images

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.14am BST

block-time published-time 2.02am BST

This press conference is expected to hear AFL boss Gillon McLachlan will be stepping down at the end of the season.

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enlrGillon McLachlan will face the media with commission chairman Richard Goyder at 11.30am AEST. Watch LIVE on <https://t.co/9cwzVCNGsq> or via the AFL Live App. <https://t.co/5AEbJ4QRnS>

- AFL.com.au (@AFLcomau) [April 12, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 1.58am BST

'It won't be easy under Albanese': Morrison

And Scott Morrison has his new campaign slogan:

This election is a choice. And you know, for the last three years, he's had plenty to say about me, he's had plenty to say from the back seat. He's had plenty to say on the Monday morning after the game on the weekend.

But when you have to actually step up and put your hands on the wheel, it's a lot easier. It's a lot easier sitting in that back seat. And it's a lot easier sitting there on a Monday morning passing judgement.

Sledging me, making criticisms of me, seeking to attack me over these last three years, that's not a substitute for having an economic plan.

It's not a substitute for knowing the things you need to know about what's going on in the Australian economy. It's not a substitute for the strength you need to stand up to the many challenges going on in this country.

It's not a substitute. He talks about being - he raised as one of his great credentials, as being the acting prime minister in this country. I don't think he got through a total of 48 hours in that job. If he thinks filling in for 48 hours is preparation for this job, he's got no idea. This is a tough job.

And it won't be easy under Albanese.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.01am BST

block-time published-time 1.53am BST

Here is the other speech Scott Morrison wanted to deliver (on a question on Russian sanctions):

The sanctions are a badge of honour for **Australia** standing up for freedom. I have copped a lot of criticism not just from Russia but from countries in our own region.

I'm happy to wear that as a badge of honour for standing up for Australians. Australians know I'm not a pushover. Australians know I stand up for what I believe in. You can follow a clear... thread of the things that I have stood up for. Over my entire political life, whether it's on the economy, whether it's on the borders, whether it's on national security, on social services policy. I have always been very consistent. I'm being exactly who I have always been going to this election. I'm not pretending to be anyone else.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.03am BST

block-time published-time 1.52am BST

On Sydney house prices, Scott Morrison says:

I know how hard it is to buy a home here. I lived my whole life in this city. I love being in the centre of this city today. I know what drives it. But it's - it can be tough. And it can be really hard to buy a home.

That's also why in addition to the support we give on tax relief and income support, to help people deal with cost of living pressures like rents, we also help those who want to get in and buy their first home - 300,000 Australians we

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

have helped into owning their own home through the home guarantee program and ask - and the homebuilder program.

A week out from the last election, I announced that policy. I said it would get Australians into homes and despite the fact that we have seen strong increases in house prices, we have enabled Australians to get into homes by reducing their deposit from 20% down to 5%, and even further down to 2% for single parents.

Now, I have met those parents who bought their homes. They're here in western Sydney. They're up on the central coast of New South Wales, they're over there in Western Australia and up in the suburbs of Brisbane, and I've seen the look on their kids, for the first time in their life, they've got a place they can call home.

They're not getting kicked out in six months, seeing their schooling disrupted. That has changed their lives. The other thing that changes lives in this country, getting a job. You get a young person into their job and their risk of spending a lifetime in welfare - I learned this as social services minister, I have been around a while - you get them into a job in their early 20s, their chances of spending a life time on welfare goes like that. It's why it's so important to our economic plan.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.59am BST

block-time published-time 1.48am BST

We get a couple more answers about CHOICE before Scott Morrison gets into a bit of an argy bargy with a reporter (I think it is Jonathan Kearsley from Nine) about Morrison's personal unpopularity.

Q: You talk consistently about how Australians know you over the last three years. They don't appear to like you. At the last campaign, you campaigned on your own. Today you have campaigned here with foreign minister Marise Payne and the treasurer Josh Frydenberg. Is it a sign your popularity is on the nose, you are damaged goods across Australia?

Morrison:

It's not a popularity test. You go to the dentist*, it doesn't matter if you like him or not. You want to know they're good at their job. This is about whether people are good at managing the economy and have a strong economic plan. I have a great team. I'm happy to showcase my team every single day.

There's a choice not just between me and Anthony Albanese, there's a choice between Josh Frydenberg and his opponent. There's a choice between Peter Dutton and his opponent. There's a choice between Marise Payne and Penny Wong. You had your question, thanks for your ongoing contribution.

My point is, we've got a strong team. It's a strong economic team, it's a strong national security team, and that's the team that has brought Australia through one of the most challenging periods that this country has seen since the second world war. As we come out of that, and we have set ourselves up for success, you can't risk it on an inexperienced and unproven team that doesn't have a plan for the economy and you know doesn't know how to manage money.

* This dental analogy has been coming up a bit with Coalition MPs.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.55am BST

block-time published-time 1.45am BST

Morrison says Albanese's unemployment rate mistake 'staggering'

Here is the speech Scott Morrison called this press conference to give, making reference to Anthony Albanese yesterday being unable to name the national unemployment rate or the official cash rate:

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I agree with John Howard in that, you know, leaders will not get every single figure right. That's not really the issue here. The issue is there's something Anthony Albanese should be apologising for, it should be that he doesn't have an economic plan. That's the real problem with Labor.

That they don't have an economic plan that can underwrite the things they will talk about at this election. They don't have the economic experience. They are not proven and tested.

Last time they were in government unemployment was higher, interest rates were higher, electricity prices were higher.

And what we know from the Labor party today and the information that has been released by the finance minister and the treasurer... they can't stop spending. They don't know what their promises cost.

But the other thing it says about yesterday, sure, he didn't know the number, but he didn't miss it by that much. He missed it by that much. And what matters about that is he thought unemployment had a five in front of it. Not even a four in front of it.

And it's going to a number with a three in front of it. And what that tells me is his working assumptions about our economy and what Australians are achieving in our economy he doesn't know and he doesn't understand. Australians have worked hard to ensure there's now 375,000 more Australians in work today than there was before the pandemic.

He hasn't seen that. He hasn't recognised that. He hasn't acknowledged that. In fact, it was the Labor shadow treasurer who said the real test of our budgets is what happens to unemployment.

Well, it's gone to 4%. And he's not acknowledging that. And he hasn't noticed it. Despite the fact, as the treasurer made fairly clear in the parliament, that's exactly where it went.

But it's not just on this issue. His assumption that unemployment had a five in front of it, that's what I found more staggering. If he said 4.3 or 3.8 or something like that, it was a memory slip.

What this showed was he had no idea what has happened with Australia's economy recovery. He's also wrong on another thing - he's been going around at the unions' behest, talking about rising rates of casualisation in the workforce. His fundamental understanding of the economy is wrong.

He doesn't know what's happening in the economy. Casualisation, as has been set out in the Financial Review today, shows it's been trending down.

And it's been about the same level for about 20 years. So you're going to hear a lot of claims made by Anthony Albanese in this election, another one he makes is about Medicare.

You know, Medicare bulk billing rates have lifted from 82% when we came to government, they're now at 89%. Here in Parramatta they're 98% Medicare bulk billing. Medicare has never been stronger than under this government. When you go to 2016, and they tried to say that if a Coalition government was in charge of Medicare, all would be lost, Medicare has never been stronger than under a Liberal Nationals government.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.57am BST

block-time published-time 1.43am BST

On to the questions to the PM:

Q: There's a high proportion of religious people in this electorate [Parramatta]. You promised before the last election that religious discrimination bill. It never happened because you couldn't get the support of your own MPs on the floor of the House of Representatives. So will you revive that legislation if you win? What's the time frame

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

and will it be the same legislation, the same package that did not pass the House and the Senate in the second-last week of parliament?

Scott Morrison:

Well, as promised, I put that legislation into the parliament, and I was hopeful it would have bipartisan support. But it didn't. The Labor party used it as a trojan horse to seek to make other changes on other acts. I found that very disappointing.

That bill would have passed had the Labor party supported it*. And the Labor party didn't support it. My views about protecting people against religious discrimination are well known and my credibility on those issues are not challenged or under question. And I hold those views just as strongly today as I always have, throughout my entire life. Unfortunately, those strong views have not shared by my political opponents.

* The bill didn't pass because it didn't have the support within the Liberal party. And the changes to the Sexual Discrimination Act with amendments to protect trans students.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.47am BST

block-time published-time 1.40am BST

On the labour force, there are more people working multiple jobs than ever before.

If you have three jobs, you are still only counted as being employed once, so there are more jobs in the economy than people employed.

For every entry level job being advertised, there are 23 people who have been on an unemployment payment for more than 12 months and they are competing with people who have been unemployed for a few months and with people who want to switch jobs.

Experts don't know why there are now more people on unemployment benefits than before the pandemic hit.

enltrThe number of JobSeeker recipients fell again in March, but there are still many more than before the pandemic. It's a bit of a conundrum. [#ausbiz](#) [#auspol](#) pic.twitter.com/87zsC5Cbew

- Patrick Commins (@ComminsP) [April 6, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 1.36am BST

Scott Morrison continues:

The key way we've been able to do that is we've been able to get people off welfare and we've been able to get them into work*.

You know how to balance a budget? You get people off welfare where they're receiving benefits and you turn them into workers, where they pay taxes.

And under our government, only paying as much as is necessary and ensuring they can keep as much of what they earn as they possibly can. That's what keeps our economy strong.

Now, through all of that, I have had a strong partner in this economic partnership that has been delivering this strong economy. And it is a team that I lead. And Marise is here and has done an outstanding job, having just returned from the Nato foreign ministers' meeting, ensuring that **Australia** is well positioned to be dealing with the global international security issues. I lead a very strong team. But I'm particularly proud of my economic team.

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And I'm very proud of my good mate, and treasurer, who has now delivered his fourth budget, and he knows exactly what he's doing when it comes to managing a strong economy.

*Department of social services data shows there are more people receiving unemployment payments (jobseeker and youth allowance) now than before the pandemic hit.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.42am BST

block-time published-time 1.30am BST

You may have noticed there were a lot of numbers in that spiel. That is absolutely deliberate.

block-time published-time 1.30am BST

Morrison pledges 1.3m new jobs over five years

Scott Morrison pledges a target of 1.3m new jobs over five years :

Together with the treasurer, we have formed an economic partnership that has ensured that, at this election, we can present a very clear choice. And this election is a choice.

It's a choice between the responsible, economic and financial management that has enabled **Australia** to be coming through this pandemic stronger than most of the advanced economies in the world.

[Lists industries] They've all worked incredibly hard to take us through this pandemic. And that just fills me with confidence about what's ahead for us in the economy. We've worked hard to get to the point where we can really take advantage of the economic opportunities that this country now has, the best since the post-war era. And we're well positioned to take advantage of that with our economic plan.

And that's why today, we can commit to a 1.3m jobs target pledge over the next five years. You know, over the course of this pandemic, we've not only ensured that we have 375,000 more jobs than at the start of the pandemic, but through important measures like jobkeeper, which the treasurer and I, night after night, together with the finance minister at the time, ensured working with officials that we got that right. And that could be the right intervention at the right time.

We knew when to start it. We knew when to stop it. And all the other measures we put in place have set **Australia** up to save 700,000 jobs. And so businesses like this and so many around the country can be looking forward with confidence.

You know, **Australia** is the 13th-largest economy in the world. It is a \$2.1 trillion economy.

The budget is some \$625bn in expenditure. The health budget alone is some \$105bn. The social security budget is over \$220bn. Our defence budget, including the capital works that we're doing to rebuild our defence forces, almost \$49b. And then Medicare - over \$30bn.

These are the big things that **Australia** has to deliver through a strong economy. And we, as a government, have been able to guarantee those essential services because we've been able to continue to strengthen the budget even in those most difficult times.

Scott Morrison during a visit to Rheem **Australia** in Parramatta in Sydney this morning. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.44am BST

block-time published-time 1.27am BST

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

Scott Morrison holds press conference

The prime minister Scott Morrison goes first with his press conference.

He has Josh Frydenberg and Marise Payne with him (and he makes a point of saying Payne is the minister for women).

He is in Parramatta and also has with him candidate Maria Kovacic, who seems to be being moved by someone to ensure she is in the shot behind Morrison and smiling.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.29am BST

block-time published-time 1.24am BST

Almost a fortnight on from the budget, there are more signs of a bounce in consumer confidence. The ANZ-Roy Morgan gauge of sentiment has risen for a second week in a row, although the bump is only half of last week's, and the gauge remains pretty negative.

enltr [@ANZ_Research](#) 's weekly consumer confidence gauge shows a rise for a second week in a row. Lower petrol prices are one factor. (with Roy Morgan). [#ausvotes](#) [#auspol](#) [pic.twitter.com/VtPo1vV6bn](#)

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [April 11, 2022](#)

Among the states, confidence rose in NSW by 6.1%, snapping four weeks of decline. Confidence also rose in WA (10.4%), while it dropped in Victoria (-1.3%), Queensland (-0.2%) and SA (-10.7%), ANZ says. A drop in global oil prices, along with the halving of the fuel excise, has nudged petrol prices well below the \$2 a litre mark. (They were [averaging \\$1.68](#) in NSW this morning.) "With the terminal gate prices of petrol declining further last week, retail prices are likely to be even lower in the coming weeks," ANZ's head of Australian economics David Plank says.

Still, inflationary expectations remain unchanged at about 6%, even with those lower fuel prices. (The CPI last year was 3.5%.)

enltrHowever, [@ANZ_Research](#) and Roy Morgan also finds inflationary expectations remain high (so lower petrol prices haven't dented them. Treasury estimated the halving of the fuel excise would chip 0.1 percentage points off the inflation rate.) [#ausvotes](#) [#auspol](#) [pic.twitter.com/8858c95jui](#)

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [April 11, 2022](#)

Plank, though, predicts some of those inflationary expectations to ease in coming weeks, particularly if fuel prices continue to sink.

Still, investors remain pointed the other way.

According to the ASX gauge that tracks where that pesky Reserve Bank cash rate target is headed, the central bank will be politically polite and not raise interest rates at its May 3 meeting, but then a steady climb is predicted to follow:

enltrThose inflationary expectations aren't yet nudging investors to bet on a May RBA rate rise from the record low 0.1%. However, they are predicting (probably over-egging it) a rapid run-up in rates from June onwards. [#ausvotes](#) [#auspol](#) [pic.twitter.com/8pMbJy0jDR](#)

- Peter Hannam (@p_hannam) [April 11, 2022](#)

Meanwhile, here's a short summary of some of the numbers politicians and voters should keep handy:

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

Related: [What key numbers should Australian politicians - and voters - know and care about?](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.32am BST

block-time published-time 1.14am BST

Also a bit more on Labor's policy this morning about restoring telehealth psychiatric consultations, which has become a big issue for people in regional and rural [Australia](#).

Albanese will be standing up in Tasmania a little later this morning to talk about the policy change.

The policy relates to a government decision to remove a 50% loading for some rural psychiatric services, meaning some types of consultations providers were no longer able to bulk bill.

Tory Shepherd has written about this issue [here](#).

Labor has said it will restore the loading if elected, which it expects will support 450,000 consultations over four years. The policy will cost \$31.3m over the forward estimates.

"Scott Morrison's cuts to regional mental health consultations during a pandemic which has seen people struggling with mental health issues are unconscionable," Albanese said.

"Labor will restore these vital mental health services, making them affordable and accessible to people wherever they live."

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.20am BST

block-time published-time 1.12am BST

AFL boss Gillon McLachlan to step down

For a large part of the country, this will be the only news that matters today.

enltrAll-staff meeting called for the AFL at 11am. Gillon McLachlan will announce he's standing down as CEO [@7NewsMelbourne](#)

- Mitch Cleary (@cleary_mitch) [April 12, 2022](#) AFL chief executive Gillon McLachlan will reportedly step down from the role after eight years. Photograph: Michael Willson/AFL Photos/Getty Images

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.41am BST

block-time published-time 1.02am BST

Yesterday we received alerts quite early about the leaders' main press conferences being held - we are still waiting to hear when today's will be.

There can be a bit of a game of chicken the campaigns play with each other on press conferences - who goes first can be both a power move and a gamble.

The advantage of holding your press conference after your opponent is you can respond to and attempt to reframe what they just said. Get in early and you can create questions for your opponent to answer.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.05am BST

block-time published-time 12.55am BST

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

The Law Council of **Australia** has called for major reform to **Australia**'s political integrity system, including the establishment of a strong federal anti-corruption commission able to conduct public hearings.

In a document outlining the key issues for the nation's legal sector ahead of the election, the Law Council warned the pandemic had shown the ability of governments to use far-reaching and unchecked powers. It also warned of "regular expansions of highly intrusive national security and law enforcement powers".

In this context, it has never been more critical that a federal government commits to taking decisive action to continuously strengthen our systems of integrity and independent oversight, including through the development of a Commonwealth Integrity Commission. A Commonwealth Integrity Commission should be aimed at addressing serious and systemic corrupt conduct, be empowered to hold public hearings where a closed hearing would be unfair to the person or contrary to the public interest, be heavily focused on education and corruption prevention, and should have consistent processes, powers and requirements when dealing with law enforcement and other public sector corruption.

The law council also listed an overhaul of the family law system, the establishment of an independent judicial appointments and complaints body, and greater resourcing for legal assistance services and the federal courts among its election priorities.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.02am BST

block-time published-time 12.47am BST

A small but important policy announcement today from Labor, with the party's shadow assistant treasury minister, Andrew Leigh, announcing an Albanese government will fix fundraising laws.

The issue has been canvassed in two parliamentary inquiries, with the royal commission into national natural disaster arrangements finding the need for harmonised fundraising laws across the country to make it easier for charities to fundraise, which in turn would help communities to better prepare and recover. Leigh said the changes would save Australian charities "millions of dollars every year" and allow more money to flow to people in need.

Charities are the first line of support for the most vulnerable in our communities. The sector's staff and volunteers have helped millions of Australians rebuild their lives after floods and fires, and have kept communities together in the face of falling volunteer numbers and a decline in donations.

But their work is being hampered by unnecessary reporting requirements from a pre-internet age, with excessive paperwork costing the sector more than \$1m every month.

He said that charities who want to raise money online through a national campaign need to file paperwork in every state and territory, except the Northern Territory, meaning seven sets of forms that can take weeks to get in order.

Leigh [highlighted the issue recently](#) when Peter Dutton launched an online fundraiser for the Queensland floods, questioning whether the campaign was in breach of Queensland laws requiring a sanction for one-off fundraising appeals.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.50am BST

block-time published-time 12.46am BST

Graham Readfearn has an update on the student climate activists who took the government to court:

Teenage climate crisis campaigner Anjali Sharma has revealed the torrent of sexist and racist abuse she has received while fronting a legal case against the Morrison government's approval of a New South Wales coal project.

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

Sharma, 17, from Melbourne, was one of eight young people who, with the support of octogenarian nun Sister Brigid Arthur, tried unsuccessfully to block the Whitehaven [Coal](#) Vickery mine expansion.

Lawyers for the group will announce on Tuesday that they will not appeal [last month's federal court judgment](#), which overturned a finding that the federal environment minister, Sussan Ley, had a duty of care to protect younger people from the climate crisis when considering fossil fuel developments.

Related: [Teen climate activist subjected to sexist and racist abuse amid federal court climate case](#)

block-time published-time 12.36am BST

The prime minister, Scott Morrison, will announce a new health minister this weekend, with a [report](#) in the SMH today suggesting South Australian senator Anne Ruston may get the gig.

Ruston is currently minister for Social Services and Women's Safety and manager of government business in the Senate.

She has been elevated as campaign spokesperson at this election, becoming a much more prominent member of Morrison's front bench. Morrison has indicated the successor to Greg Hunt will be named this weekend, fuelling speculation about his replacement.

Government MPs have been kept in the dark about who will take over from Hunt, with others suggesting two of the prime minister's closest allies - Ben Morton or Stuart Robert - could also be in line for promotion.

The former health minister, Sussan Ley, is also considered a safe pair of hands for the role after [she resigned from the portfolio in 2016](#) under Malcolm Turnbull as a result of an inquiry into her use of travel entitlements.

Minister for families Anne Ruston may be in line to replace Greg Hunt as health minister. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.04am BST

block-time published-time 12.25am BST

Thank you to the Tasmanian locals who are sharing their local knowledge with us - apparently where Anthony Albanese held his press conference yesterday is better known as a popular poke stop on Pokemon Go (yes, people are still playing it).

The more you know...

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.29am BST

block-time published-time 12.20am BST

Kristina Keneally tests positive for Covid

This will be happening quite a bit during the campaign.

enltrThis morning I woke up feeling rotten and tested positive for Covid. I'll be isolating at home in Liverpool for the next 7 days & following [@NSWHealth](#) rules. A big thank you to the ALP Fowler volunteers for campaigning without me at train stations this morning - very grateful ??

- Kristina Keneally (@KKeneally) [April 11, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.23am BST

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

block-time published-time 12.14am BST

In what is obviously the biggest announcement of the election so far, Twitter has brought back the democracy sausage emoji.

enltrThe smell of [#DemocracySausage](#) is in the air. From today, our special Australian election emoji returns. Tweet using any of the following hashtags ?????? pic.twitter.com/GsKFPr9qJ

- Twitter [Australia](#) (@TwitterAU)

[April 11, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 12.01am BST

NSW reports 11 Covid deaths, 15,334 cases; Victoria records 12 deaths and 10,293 cases

NSW Health has reported:

enltrCOVID-19 update - Tuesday 12 April 2022 In the 24-hour reporting period to 4pm yesterday: - 96.1% of people aged 16+ have had one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine - 94.6% of people aged 16+ have had two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine pic.twitter.com/BlaTiliSY5

- NSW Health (@NSWHealth) [April 11, 2022](#)

As has Victorian Health:

enltrWe thank everyone who got vaccinated and tested yesterday. Our thoughts are with those in hospital, and the families of people who have lost their lives. More data soon: [#COVID19Vic #COVID19VicData pic.twitter.com/q8tRAjtAAc](https://t.co/OCCFTAtS1P)

- VicGovDH (@VicGovDH)

[April 11, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.05am BST

block-time published-time 11.58pm BST

I am not sure if people realise just how difficult it is accessing mental health care when you live outside a city (it's hard enough in a city) or how expensive it is.

enltrLabor will bring back bulk-billed Telehealth psychiatry consultations for rural and regional Australians, reversing the Morrison Government's cuts.

- Anthony Albanese (@AlboMP) [April 11, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 11.55pm BST

Dipping out of politics for a moment for something which seems to have the whole country obsessed - airport chaos.

enltrMelbourne Airport this morning... delays and cancellations, people forced to sleep here overnight with baggage issues today due to sheer volume. Staff doing their best to help families, kids having meltdowns all morning... [@TheTodayShow pic.twitter.com/qFlevnoSU](https://TheTodayShow.pic.twitter.com/qFlevnoSU)

- Izabella Staskowski (@IzaStaskowski) [April 11, 2022](#)

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

If you are headed to either Sydney or Melbourne airport, it is recommended you get your paranoid dad to arrive at least two hours before your boarding time. Or, if you are my dad, arrive by 8am for a 5pm flight.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.57pm BST

block-time published-time 11.47pm BST

Scott Morrison rounds out his FiveAA interview with some opinions on hashtags (and more broadly, social media).

It's triggered by this question from David Penberthy :

How did politics get so horrible in this country?... You know, some of the things that have been trending hashtags about you over the last couple of years on Twitter just made me shake my head in disbelief. How has how has public life become so deeply unpleasant and how do we make it more pleasant?

Morrison - who in parliament recently labelled Labor deputy leader Richard Marles a "["Manchurian candidate" before withdrawing the insult](#)", and has previously labelled former Labor senator Sam Dastyari "Shanghai Sam" - replies that "we've got to disagree better than we have".

hiltrShanghai Sam needs to go [#auspol](#) <https://t.co/3KgGbeK8KP>

- Scott Morrison (@ScottMorrisonMP)

[September 6, 2016](#)

The prime minister raises concerns about social cohesion:

Well, I think you put your finger right on it when you're talking about hashtags, David. I mean, social media has been eroding the civility of our country, and not just our society, societies all around the world. And, David, you've reported on politics for years and years. You're telling me that people haven't been saying these things about politicians for the last 50 years. Of course they have, but what happens now is you whack a hashtag on it, put it out there into social media, and then people report it.

But I'm more concerned about young people who are getting shamed and bullied and harassed on social media. That's why our government has taken the strongest possible measures - other countries are following our lead - to hold social media companies accountable. So you can't have these these these cowards in their basements going around and trolling people.

At this point, it's worth pausing to remind readers that the Attorney General's Department has said the Coalition's much-vaunted anti-trolling bill is really about "only defamation" - has admitted the proposal was not intended to address broader issues of harm and abuse online.

[See that story here.](#)

Morrison continues:

We've got to disagree better than we have and social media I think has made that a very hard thing to do. And I really do think it's really undermining the cohesiveness of our society and that's why we have taken such a strong stance standing up to those big tech companies and holding them to account.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.59pm BST

block-time published-time 11.32pm BST

Scott Morrison has brushed off questions about a \$500,000 payout made to Alan Tudge 's former staffer Rachelle Miller.

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

Well, I have no visibility on that at all. I can't confirm to you if a payment has even been made.

This leads to a robust exchange between Five AA's David Penberthy and Morrison. Morrison acknowledges that the discussion relates to taxpayers' money, but adds that such matters are "handled by the Department of Finance at arm's length from politicians, including the special minister of state".

Morrison points to the report, released 4 March, by former bureaucrat Vivienne Thom, finding there was insufficient evidence Tudge had breached the ministerial standards (Miller chose not to participate in the inquiry, arguing the government had ignored her concerns over its terms of reference). Miller had alleged Tudge had been emotionally, and on one occasion, physically abusive to her while they were in a relationship in 2017. Tudge denies the allegations.

Morrison adds:

And it's there for people to see that Alan Tudge can continue to serve - he has chosen for the sake of the health and family for a period of time to Stand aside from the ministry, but there's been no other education minister sworn in, no one went out to the governor general. We're very transparent.

Coalition campaign spokesperson, Anne Ruston, speaking on ABC's Radio National yesterday, declined to comment but said the payout was not related to the misconduct allegations raised by Miller but "a separate matter".

In February 2021 Miller [filed a workplace harassment lawsuit](#) seeking compensation for her treatment as a staffer, including allegedly being belittled in Tudge's office and deprived of further career progression once shuffled into the office of then employment minister Michaelia Cash. Cash strongly denied any adverse treatment on Ms Miller in her office.

More information in yesterday's story:

Related: [Alan Tudge: Government won't comment on \\$500,000 payout to former staffer Rachelle Miller](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.22am BST

block-time published-time 11.31pm BST

Penny Wong has also used the "it's a leadership test, not a memory test" line when asked about Anthony Albanese's mistake yesterday:

This is a long campaign. I think Australians are very focused on the things they're concerned about. I know there's a lot of focus from the Liberal party on this, but in my view, people are worried, people are concerned with their cost of living, the price of living is going up, but their wages aren't.

People are concerned about making sure that Medicare is stronger. Making sure the economy works for them and their families. Ultimately this campaign is not about gotcha moments. It's ultimately about what sort of future we want. Do we want to vote for the future, a better future, or do we want more of the same from Scott Morrison and his government?

Shadow foreign affairs minister Penny Wong. Photograph: Matt Turner/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.11am BST

block-time published-time 11.23pm BST

Scott Morrison has called in to Adelaide radio station FiveAA to speak with David Penberthy.

Penberthy wanted to know whether Morrison's standing contributed to the collapse in the Liberal party's vote in the recent South Australian state election.

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

Morrison answers a different question. He rolls out the normal lines about the choice at this federal election.

It's a federal election.

Penberthy says the Liberal brand "got absolutely smashed" and asks again whether the people of SA were letting off steam or there is residual anger that could be a problem in the SA electorates of Boothby and Sturt?

Morrison says the Labor premier made clear that election was fought on state issues.

He rattles off some of his frontbench members, including South Australian Anne Ruston who he says has been doing a terrific job - versus an "untested, unproven" team (you'll be hearing a lot of that through the campaign).

Asked how many of the new jobs he is promising today will be in SA, Morrison says:

It's a macro number that we do right across the economy.

He talks about a range of fields including manufacturing, defence industry, food and beverage production, infrastructure, cyber and technical jobs.

Penberthy: "No mention of subs?"

Morrison: "Of course we're building subs in South Australia ... our defence industry is massive in south Australia."

Flashback to last week:

Related: [Scott Morrison in damage control in South Australia over submarine comments](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.28pm BST

block-time published-time 11.22pm BST

Penny Wong is now chatting to the ABC, where she is asked about the New Zealand National party's criticism of Labor's aged care policy:

I think prime minister Ardern was appropriate when she said she wasn't going to engage in a domestic election in Australia. I would say this - this is a recommendation of the royal commission. This is a recommendation that arises out of the situation that we see older Australians facing. Neglect, people are being neglected.

Now, what we are saying is let's work to bring in more nurses to the sector... a lot of nurses leave the sector every year, or leave their employer. We need to train more Australians to get into this workforce, and yes, as is currently the place, migration will be part of the story but not all of the story.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.24pm BST

block-time published-time 11.16pm BST

Bill Shorten popped up on the Nine Network this morning, where he repeated the "it's a leadership test, not a memory test" line that Labor MPs have been using when asked about Anthony Albanese's stumble yesterday.

Shorten then moved on to the season:

Listen, it was a mistake which I know that Albo didn't want to make. He has come out and taken responsibility for it. But I also know that across 42 days there is going to be a lot of spills and adventures and good days and bad days. The last person who never made a mistake - we are celebrating Easter - was 2,000 years ago. Sure, you wouldn't want to have said it but we absolutely have got to get back on the bike and focus on getting our policies out to the people.

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.20pm BST

block-time published-time 11.07pm BST

For more on that, Katharine Murphy and Josh Butler have reported on some of the alarm which went through the moderate Liberal camp at the comments from their leader yesterday:

Liberal moderates have expressed concern that Scott Morrison has flagged committing during the election campaign to a ban on transgender women playing women's sport.

Campaigning in the marginal seat of Gilmore on Monday, the prime minister said he [shared the views of the Tasmanian Liberal senator Claire Chandler](#), who has advanced private member's legislation allowing sporting groups to exclude transgender people from single-sex sports. Morrison added he would have "more to say" on the issue.

The Liberal senator Andrew Bragg later said a change wasn't necessary because the Sex Discrimination Act already contained carve-outs for strength and stamina.

Related: [Liberal moderates concerned by Morrison raising trans women sport ban during election campaign](#)

enltrOn the trans controversy on [@RNBKbreakfast @Birmo](#) says any change to the law would need to go through proper process. As we reported this morning, moderates concerned about Morrison's signal yesterday. Finance minister making it clear there'll be no rush to change [#auspol](#)

- Katharine Murphy (@murpharoo) [April 11, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 11.04pm BST

Back to Simon Birmingham - he was asked, as a moderate Liberal - what he thought of Scott Morrison's foray into the "culture wars" after the prime minister yesterday supported "brave" Liberal women who were fighting to ban trans women from women's sport.

Birmingham:

These are sensitive issues and they should be handled sensitively. I understand certainly the concerns of women's sporting organisations for the safety and the fairness of the competitions that they run. Equally, it's important that nobody is unfairly discriminated against in terms of their rights to participate in aspects of society in sport. I trust that everyone that looks at this does so with the appropriate sensitivity for all of the rights.

block-time published-time 11.01pm BST

Labor is also facing criticism for its aged care nurse plan (a registered nurse in every aged care home, as recommended by the royal commission) from... New Zealand.

The NZ opposition think that the higher wages in [Australia](#) would worsen Aotearoa's own nursing shortage.

enltrNew Zealand's National opposition doesn't want their aged care nurses seeking higher wages in [Australia](#). So much for the free market and freedom of movement!

- Paul Karp (@Paul_Karp)

[April 11, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.02pm BST

block-time published-time 10.55pm BST

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

Where are the campaigns?

Scott Morrison is still in New South Wales - with western Sydney seats the target today.

Anthony Albanese is still in Tasmania.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.58pm BST

block-time published-time 10.51pm BST

The interview (after delving into Anthony Albanese's gaffe yesterday) then moves into the reported \$500,000 Finance department payment to Alan Tudge's former staffer, Rachelle Miller (as first reported by News Corp's Samantha Maiden).

The prime minister said he didn't know about it so the ABC asks the finance minister. Simon Birmingham also doesn't know about it.

There are limited things that I can say there, because those sorts of negotiations that occur between between a former employee in a termination settlement or the like that occurs are negotiated at arm's length from ministers...

Q: So you're not curious? It is taxpayer money.

Birmingham:

I am curious, often, in different things, but there are probity and privacy issues at play here...

Q: We're talking about a Cabinet minister and a former Liberal party staffer and taxpayer money.

Birmingham:

I understand, but in terms of the way those probity and privacy and confidentiality matters apply, I simply do not get briefed or brought into those deliberations or discussions...

Q: I suspect many people would say it was inappropriate for a politician or a minister to be the one negotiating those sort of employee settlement arrangements. But we're talking about a minister who is still in Cabinet, a former Liberal party staffer. Don't taxpayers have a right to know where there is a \$500,000 payment being made to someone?

Birmingham:

I can't confirm, because I don't get briefed, and don't know whether those assertions or figures are accurate or true. What does occur in relation to matters of employee settlement or termination are that they get negotiated by the relevant entities working through those issues and whether it's occurred in relation to one job that somebody held in the Parliament or a different job that somebody held in the Parliament - and in the case you're raising, there were multiple different employers and the terms of those termination arrangements, I just can't provide the details because they don't get shared with me by the department, given the privacy provisions put in place.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.57pm BST

block-time published-time 10.44pm BST

Simon Birmingham, who is once again taking on the Coalition spokesperson role, is being interviewed on ABC News Breakfast, where he attempts to explain how the 1.3m new jobs over the next five years is because of Coalition policies and not just population growth and how you can't just say that most of those jobs would occur no matter who was in government.

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

It all goes to the economic plan you apply. The 1.3m additional jobs that we're committing to drive and to grow across the Australian economy, building on the 1.7m jobs that have been created since our government was elected are all driven in part by our investments, our regard for investment in infrastructure, our support for small businesses, driving digital capacity in small businesses, our modern manufacturing strategy, targeting across the country to live the value-adding and manufacturing capabilities of Australian industry.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.47pm BST

block-time published-time 10.32pm BST

Good morning

Good morning and welcome to day two of the official campaign - just 39 to go. Yesterday was a bit of a doozy of an opener.

Scott Morrison had to "clarify" the record to make it clear that Alan Tudge was STILL a member of his cabinet. "Technically" was Morrison's answer.

Technically in that Tudge remains a member of the frontbench, who has chosen themselves to step aside and in the event the Coalition wins a fourth term, will be back on the frontbench. So not just technically, then.

That was despite Morrison's comments on 4 March that Tudge was not returning to the frontbench. It's all very difficult to keep track of.

And you can bet that Anthony Albanese would have spent at least part of last night being quizzed on the cost of a range of items, as well as the various rates which guide the Australian economy, after being unable to answer what the cash rate was or the unemployment rate yesterday.

But he had an unlikely supporter in all that - John Howard, who declared "who cares" while campaigning with Ken Wyatt in Western Australia. When asked what the unemployment rate was, he also couldn't answer the question and said he thought it might have a "3" in front of it (it's 4%).

enltrSo what, indeed. It's day 1 (or 2) Everyone calm the heck down. pic.twitter.com/sLOWj63SnM

- Greg Jericho (@Grogsgamut) [April 11, 2022](#)

Albanese very quickly fessed up to messing up and said that is what he would do if prime minister - admit his mistakes and then move to fix them. The Coalition already has its attack ads ready. What a day. (There wasn't any mention of the time Morrison accidentally [endorsing Beijing's position on Taiwan](#) not so long ago.)

So what is on the agenda for today?

It's jobs and the economy for the Coalition with Scott Morrison wanting to create 1.3m new jobs over the next five years, using existing measures - and it is pretty much just what happens with population growth. It's also an announcement which has been made a couple of times in the past - Morrison last made it in 2019.

The Liberal campaign is in Sydney - I'd expect it to head to Sydney's west today.

Anthony Albanese and Labor are still cleaning up after yesterday. Labor's announcement is on increasing access to mental health care. The Labor is still in Tasmania.

You have the entire Guardian brains trust at your disposal as we go through day two, as well as Katharine Murphy, Sarah Martin, Paul Karp, Daniel Hurst, Mike Bowers, Gabrielle Chan and Josh Butler focused on the election.

It's a four coffee day. Ready?

Australia politics live updates: Joyce announces \$1.5bn Darwin port facility; Coalition costing of Labor policies 'laughable', says Gallagher

Let's get into it.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.39pm BST

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"It has been legislated," deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce says. Um, no it hasn't, Sarah Martin and Daniel Hurst point out: Labor's Senate leader, Penny Wong, has responded to news of the ministerial trip to Solomon Islands: This is happening on Mr Morrison's watch - the warnings have been there for months, the draft agreement public for weeks - but he has failed to front up and explain how Australia is responding. We need to work with the Pacific family and allies to build a region where sovereignty is respected - and where Australia is the partner of choice. It's official. The Morrison government is sending a minister to Solomon Islands to raise concerns about the deepening security cooperation between the country and China. The minister for international development and the Pacific, Zed Seselja, said he would travel to the capital, Honiara, from today until tomorrow "to further strengthen Australia's relationship with Solomon Islands". He said Australia had "stood strongly as a partner and a friend of Solomon Islands" for many years, and his discussions would include the proposed Solomon Islands-China security agreement. He said: The visit follows recent dialogue and visits between the Solomon Islands Government and Australian officials. Direct engagement has been ongoing, including discussions between foreign minister [Marise] Payne and Solomon Islands foreign minister [Jeremiah] Manele, as well as my own discussions with Pacific family partners in Brisbane over the weekend ahead of the Our Ocean Conference in Palau. Solomon Islands is a valued member of our Pacific family. We respect the right of Solomon Islands to make sovereign decisions about its national security. We look forward to ongoing engagement with Solomon Islands, and with our Pacific family members, on these very important issues. Our view remains that the Pacific family will continue to meet the security needs of our region. Australia will always support our Pacific family, reflected in our 'Pacific step up'. This includes our enhanced cooperation on Covid-19 resilience and economic recovery, health, infrastructure, climate resilience, security and other shared challenges. The Victorian government is considering scrapping the mask mandate for primary school kids. According to AAP, the "hopeful suggestion" was made "as long as there isn't a surge of cases over the Easter holidays". The Victorian government also announced cruise ship enthusiasts will need to be double vaccinated before they take to the seas. The Bob Squad! Some more AAP pics, this time from Labor leader Anthony Albanese's visit to Father Bob Maguire's Foundation: Pacific minister Zed Seselja off to try to soothe some simmering tensions. Shannie and Falcon at your service (thanks to AAP). Labor senator Katy Gallagher is up on the ABC now, having a crack at the Coalition's "dodgy costings unit". The Coalition helpfully did a back-of-the-envelope job on Labor's policies and decided they came to a whopping \$302bn over a decade. Gallagher says it is "simply not true": It is laughable. They have this dodgy costings unit... they are whipping up policies that we haven't announced, costing them over ten years and not showing any details of that, other than providing some comments to a newspaper. It is just ridiculous. It is not true and I am saying that in the strongest possible way. I am the finance shadow, I see every policy we do. I see every cost. I know exactly how much Labor is spending on policies. It is modest, it is affordable and the policies are important for future of the country. I can't sit here and accept that some dodgy costings unit run by [prime minister] Scott Morrison and his staff is going to be taken as anything more than an absolute lie. Labor will release its costings in "the usual way" during the campaign, she says. Jennett asks Ruston about the reported \$500,000 payout to the Liberal MP Alan Tudge's former staffer, Rachelle Miller. Ruston deftly continues the government's tactic of commenting without commenting: There are two points there. One is that the report and review undertaken by Ms [Vivienne] Tom found there was no breach of the ministerial standards by Mr Tudge. That is an important point. The other side is that the expectation around any independent process and the confidentiality and respecting the people that are involved, I have no more information about the details of this case than anybody else does and everybody would expect that there should be no interference or even any information or knowledge sharing in the political arm of the party when we are talking about an individual workplace situation. Josh Butler took a look at the situation yesterday: Coalition campaign spokeswoman Anne Ruston (who is also a senator and the current minister for women's safety) is on the ABC. She says telehealth will be "permanent and universal", including for psychiatric and mental health appointments. Labor has announced it will spend \$31m on regional mental health. You can see the details from Labor leader Anthony Albanese below. Ruston says there

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has been "no cut" (there are some semantics here to parse, I reckon). The ABC's Greg Jennett asks her about that 1.3m jobs pledge that Paul Karp has taken a look at, calling it a "recompilation" of existing initiatives. Ruston says: We will continue to make sure that we have the jobs for Australians, that they have access to the training so they can take up the jobs when they occur but also investing in those things that are going to create the jobs of the future, which are through things like infrastructure and defence. Here's the full story from Luke Henriques-Gomes about Labor refusing to commit to an increase in jobseeker: More than a million jobs, eh? Paul Karp checks the federal government's claims: He's got his eggs in a couple of baskets, there: Sky News just flashed on to WA Labor MPs including [Anne Aly](#) dancing and singing. It was Abba's Dancing Queen. That's all I have for now. While Albanese is touring Bob Maguire's foundation, prime minister Scott Morrison is at Assistance Dogs [Australia](#), an organisation that trains dogs to help people with disabilities. Labor leader Anthony Albanese is visiting the Father Bob Maguire Foundation. He's with the local Mcnamara MP Josh Burns and Labor's candidate for Higgins, Michelle Ananda-Rajah. Bob Maguire, of course, is a legend in the community for his work with the homeless, the poor and the vulnerable. Mcnamara is a "fairly safe" Labor seat in Melbourne, bordered by Higgins, which is a marginal Liberal seat. Have I mentioned we've made a seat cheat sheet for you? The Australian Dental Association has responded to efforts by prime minister Scott Morrison to deflect his own (low) popularity by likening his job to being a dentist. "You go to the dentist, [it] doesn't matter whether you like him or not - like her or not - but you want to know that they're good at their job," Morrison said at a Parramatta media conference today. Eithne Irving, deputy chief executive of the association, told Guardian [Australia](#) dentists had "a sense of humour" and were not put off by the analogy. However, she noted the irony of the sector being held up as a comparison: [It] must be the first time the prime minister has used the word 'dentist' in an election campaign or at any time during his incumbency because he and the Coalition along with successive governments have completely ignored the need, and the ADA's pleas, to address the needs of older Australians in aged care. The association isn't so chuffed with Labor either, noting that - so far - there is no pledge to Bill Shorten's 2019 election pledge to spend big on dental care. Irving said: Neither the Coalition nor the Labor party have made any encouraging noises about addressing the appalling oral health and neglect in aged care homes. [T]he royal aged care commission heard horrific stories of people going days if not weeks without their teeth or dentures being cleaned - putting them on a fast track to declining health and possible death - or of dentures being left in mouths for many months at a time, oral cancers being missed, and lacerated tongues and mouths from broken teeth no one has spotted. According to the ADA, the cost of setting up a dental benefits scheme for older Australians in residential aged care would be about \$10m a year - a pittance, if correct. "One in four Australians over the age of 75 has untreated tooth decay and almost 70% have gum disease," Irving said, adding a line of her own that she hopes will get traction: It's time to 'Stop the Rot'. Perhaps next time Morrison (or Barnaby Joyce or Katie Allen, or another MP) tries that dental analogy, perhaps one of the travelling journalists might have a nibble on that issue, so to speak. Ah, dogs. Prime minister Scott Morrison's first stop that isn't manufacturing! Liberal MP Melissa McIntosh is the sitting member in Lindsay. Liberal MP Stuart Robert is now getting tested on the JobSeeker rate on Sky News. He asks host Keiran Gilbert to repeat the question... then says about \$640 a fortnight for a single (which is right). I can't help but imagine all the MPs and candidates across the country going cross-eyed last night learning lists of numbers. Labor leader Anthony Albanese is having a PIC-FAC at 3.30pm. The political parties put them in caps like that - we prefer "pic fac", if we have to use such jargon. It's short for "picture facility", which means "picture opportunity", which means it really would make more sense for it to be a "pic opp". There's usually no chance for questions. Sometimes journalists can eavesdrop on the staged conversations. Anyway, I'll keep an eye on it when it happens. Well, hello! Yes, it's (only) the second day of the formal campaign. Thanks as always to Amy Remeikis who is honestly picking up the lion's share of work here, letting me cruise with you through the afternoon. Thanks to Labor leader Anthony Albanese, I now have to resist saying "Hey! Ho! Let's Go!" every time I'm on here. So consider that the last time you'll hear me Ramoneing about it. Labor's campaign has landed in Melbourne. We should hear more about where the Liberal party is headed very soon. Tory Shepherd will guide you through the afternoon on the blog. Make sure you check back on the site to see what the rest of the team has been up to. I'll be back early tomorrow morning. Take care of yourselves out there. The Antipoverty Centre has been working hard to try and raise awareness about what life is like for those living on, near or below the poverty line in [Australia](#) and what can be done to fix it Spokesperson Kristin O'Connell had a response to Scott Morrison's re-announcement of the 1.3m new jobs over five years pledge (there is no new policy to go with the announcement, it is all underpinned by already announced economic policies), and to Andrew Leigh's comments to the Australian Council of Social Services event where he said Labor had no plans to raise the

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jobseeker rate. O'Connell: These announcements today are a devastating blow. They show that we face yet another election where unemployed people will be used as a political football, with no consideration for our lives. The narrative that everything is great is frankly bullshit. Nearly 1 million are suffering on unemployment payments that are just half the poverty line. And 20% of those are employed in jobs so bad they can't escape poverty. The Liberal and Labor parties have repeatedly ignored and failed those of us who live on Centrelink payments, sticking to outdated statistics like the unemployment rate that do not reflect reality. They exploit stories of poverty when it's convenient to pretend they care, then discard us and move on. O'Connell said both parties were ignoring that "more people rely on unemployment payments to live than before the pandemic, when the unemployment rate was 5.1%". She also said there was no point in talking about jobs without also raising whether or not they were suitable jobs: Unemployed workers are not economic units to be plugged into holes. The majority of the 870,000 people on JobSeeker - the most common working age welfare payment - are either disabled, experiencing age discrimination, already employed, or a combination of these. Every one of those people deserves to have enough money to afford the basics like food, electricity and healthcare. While they are crowing about jobs and growth, or pretending that some vague promise of social housing years from now will help put food in our stomachs, there are 23 people who've been on an unemployment payment for more than 12 months for each entry level job. We again urge politicians to grow a spine and commit to increasing all social security payments to the Henderson poverty line, which is currently \$88 a day. It should be their first and highest priority to make sure everyone has enough to live. The Antipoverty Centre has calculated that there are about 23 people who have been on an unemployment payment for more than 12 months for each entry level job advertised in February 2022 (this does not account for competition from other applicants who are not on a payment or are short-term unemployed) using data from the National Skills Commission and DSS. It has compared Department of Social Services data to show that the number of people who rely on jobseeker (formerly Newstart) has increased by 41% to 786,139 people (83.84% of all people on jobseeker) compared to 557,395 before the pandemic. Using DSS data and reports from the Department of Education, Skills and Employment, the Centre has found that of about 1 million people with "mutual" obligations who are forced to use employment services (jobactive and Disability Employment Services), 477,000 are disabled. My colleague Christopher Knaus has a story for you: Or you can click through below as well: You may have seen Guardian [Australia](#)'s Luke Henriques-Gomes post a little earlier, reporting Labor's Andrew Leigh would not commit to raising the Jobseeker rate. The Greens leader Adam Bandt has responded: Labor has agreed with the Liberals that people should live in poverty. Labor siding with the Liberals is heartbreaking. Labor and the Liberals have agreed that a poverty payment of less than \$50 a day is enough for people who lose their jobs, single parents with kids, people with serious illnesses and disabled people. There should be no poverty in a wealthy country. The Greens will keep fighting to raise every income support payment above the poverty line to \$88 a day. The Labor campaign is hitting the skies - it will be in Melbourne next, after one and a half days in Tasmania. Guardian [Australia](#)'s Sarah Martin earlier today reported on Andrew Leigh's announcement today committing to cleaning up fundraising laws. That promise has already won support from the charity Save the Children. Its acting CEO, Mat Tinkler, said cutting that sort of red tape would free up charity and advocacy groups to do their actual intended jobs: The less time we need to spend on burdensome regulation and unnecessary red tape, the more time we can focus on children and their needs in [Australia](#) and the region. Save the Children has long supported the need for fundraising law reform. Fragmented state and territory fundraising laws limit the ability of charities to raise much needed funds in times of crisis, like a global pandemic, bushfires or floods. Today's commitment will provide greater certainty for Australian charities and help us ensure that money reaches those who need it, when they need it. We encourage and would welcome a similar commitment from all those contesting the election. Here are the latest coronavirus numbers from around [Australia](#) today, as the country records at least 38 deaths from Covid-19: ACT Deaths: 0 Cases: 923 In hospital: 61 (with 2 people in ICU) NSW Deaths: 11 Cases: 15,334 In hospital: 1,584 (with 70 people in ICU) Northern Territory Deaths: 0 Cases: 512 In hospital: 29 (with 1 person in ICU) Queensland Deaths: 6 Cases: 7,882 In hospital: 572 (with 16 people in ICU) South [Australia](#) Deaths: 6 Cases: 4,401 In hospital: 232 (with 12 people in ICU) Tasmania Deaths: 0 Cases: 2,050 In hospital: 55 (with 3 people in ICU) Victoria Deaths: 12 Cases: 10,293 In hospital: 376 (with 19 people in ICU) Western [Australia](#) Deaths: 3 Cases: 6,349 In hospital: 236 (with 7 people in ICU) We have some more Covid numbers from around the country. While we may now be "living with Covid", the virus is still having a massive impact on lives. Here is Liberal MP Katie Allen on 4 April using the dentist as an analogy in response to questions on Scott Morrison's unpopularity: If I'm in a dental chair I don't care if I like the dentist - the only thing I care about is how well they can operate that drill! And I

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hope Australians take that same approach when they head into the ballot box. I might be biased but the Coalition is an experienced team that will deliver a stronger future. Turns out figures can be tricky. The conservative Christian lobby group Family Voice are cranky with Simon Birmingham for not jumping in support of Scott Morrison's comments supporting "brave" Liberal women who want to ban trans women from playing women's sport. On Tuesday 12 April finance minister Simon Birmingham undermined the prime minister's strong stand on the issue - aimed at winning back conservative voters who are disillusioned by the Government's failure to deliver on religious freedom - saying any proposed laws to stop men from playing women's sports should be scrutinised by the Parliament.... Mr Birmingham needs to come to grips with reality and stop appeasing the trans minority lobby. Who do we believe Mr Morrison - you or your finance minister? Here is what the Nationals will be talking about in the Northern Territory today (via AAP). A new port in Darwin is expected to boost jobs and help industry export more gas and critical minerals. Campaigning in the Northern Territory on Tuesday, deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce said the \$1.5bn investment at Middle Arm would make it a world-leading industrial hub for gas processing and high-value minerals processing and refinement. "Our investment will deliver this, supporting port infrastructure, including a wharf and offloading facility, and dredging of the shipping channel," he said. Darwin's existing port was controversially leased to Chinese company Landbridge for 99 years by the NT government in 2015. Joyce said Australia must become stronger and more resilient in the face of geopolitical tensions. "This is part of our plan to become as strong as possible as quickly as possible," he said in a statement. The plan includes \$440m to build new logistics hubs at Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek and \$300m for low-emissions LNG and clean hydrogen production at Middle Arm, together with associated carbon capture and storage infrastructure. As well there is \$200m to further develop the Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct, delivering a rail spur and new road network and \$110mn to continue to upgrade and further seal the Tanami Road. The wombat trail continues. Along with the ANZ's consumer sentiment survey, NAB has chimed in with the release of their monthly business survey. Generally the mood is buoyant, with Omicron disruptions apparently a fast fading memory (even if Covid deaths this year are already more than in 2020 and 2021, and still rising). Business conditions, for instance, rose 9 points last month to be +18, the largest one-month jump since June 2020. In trend terms, confidence remained strong "across all industries", NAB said. By sector, confidence rose sharply (or is that, "accelerated") in transport (up 16pts), construction (15pts), and for recreation & personal services (up 11pts). Among the states, confidence was "strong across the board" and rose the most in Tasmania (up 21pts), SA (up 14pts) and WA (up 13pts), "while the other states were largely steady". "The retail sector drove much of the improvement in conditions," says NAB's chief economist Alan Oster. "That indicates household consumption continues to grow strongly with consumers undeterred by rising inflation, at least so far. But there is a cloud gathering - the pressure on costs and prices. Purchase costs, for instance, rose a record 4.2% in March, eclipsing the 3.2% rise seen in January. The three-month average of 3.4% was also the highest on record. Notably, labour costs are rising but not at the gradient of purchase costs. Since profitability seems to be holding up, that points to companies merrily being able to lift their prices accordingly. "Importantly, it appears businesses have had little trouble passing on higher costs to consumers with prices - including retail prices - also rising at record rates," Oster said, adding that the bank expects "very strong inflation in Q1 and likely Q2" when official numbers are released. For the March quarter, the official CPI figures will drop on April 27, potentially an awkward number for the government. The June quarter data, though, won't land until three months later, or well into the new term of the government. The largest (and growing) part of Australia's welfare spend is on the pension, which dwarfs the amount spent on unemployment benefits. But given Scott Morrison's line today about balancing budgets by "getting people off welfare and into jobs where they pay taxes" it is worth noting that there are people who are receiving social security payments while also working. Under employed people (those with jobs who want more hours/work) can also receive unemployment payments. It is not a binary proposition for many people. And again, there are MORE people receiving unemployment payments now than before the pandemic. Here is how the Australian newspaper reported it when the issue was noticed in September last year: The commonwealth is spending \$250m more on unemployment benefits each fortnight than before the pandemic, an increase of 60 per cent as the labour market snapback fails to shift hundreds of thousands of Australians off welfare payments. Experts warned that the stubbornly high rate of welfare dependency in the wake of last year's recession was evidence the labour market recovery had not been as strong as the official figures suggested. At the end of August, there remained 1.08 million JobSeeker and Youth Allowance recipients, according to Department of Social Services figures. That was 552,000 fewer than the May 2020 peak, but still 273,000 more than before last year's Covid recession, despite the number of unemployed falling by 129,000 over the same time

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period. An analysis by The Australian shows there are now about 75 per cent more people on the dole than there are officially recognised as unemployed in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' labour force survey. Over the two years leading into the pandemic, that figure averaged only 12 per cent - pointing to a labour market dislocation that is yet to resolve itself. Labor has not committed to an additional increase to the jobseeker payment and has dropped plans for a review into the rate, the shadow assistant treasurer Andrew Leigh says. Asked by the Australian Council of Social Service chief executive Cassandra Goldie to clarify Labor's position on the jobseeker payment at an event on Tuesday, Leigh said: We haven't committed to an additional increase. I'm aware that an increase took place. So it was a modest increase put in place. Certainly living on jobseeker is a challenge. And that's one of the reasons we need to make sure we're thinking about rent assistance and the adequacy of social housing. It's that whole package... making sure we have appropriate supports around people who are most vulnerable. Asked about the possibility of an independent review into the rate, which former leader Bill Shorten had promised in 2019 while hinting at an increase to the payment, Leigh said: We don't have a plan for an independent review at this stage. Certainly the focus that we have has been around our social housing commitment... which would see 30,000 additional social affordable homes put into the market there. The watering down of Labor's policy on jobseeker for this year's election was criticised by Goldie, who noted there was "broad consensus across the community sector about the need to fix the adequacy of income support". The Morrison government temporarily doubled the jobseeker rate during the pandemic, before returning it to the base rate. In February last year, it increased this base rate by \$50 a fortnight. The current rate is now \$642.70 a fortnight, or about \$46 a day, which is well below the poverty line. Responding to the government's increase at the time, Labor's social services spokeswoman, Linda Burney, said Labor would "finalise all of our policies before the next election" and would look to address poverty at "every budget". The Coalition declined to appear at the AcoSS event on Tuesday. AcoSS has called for an increase to jobseeker of \$70 a day and a 50% increase of rental assistance. The Greens said last week they wanted all welfare payments to be lifted to meet the most generous poverty line measure, the Henderson line, which stands at \$88 a day. It estimated this would cost \$88bn over the forward estimates. I guess we all make mistakes, huh? Victorian Liberal MP Katie Allen used the dentist analogy Scott Morrison trotted off and Murph picked up on in her morning wrap last week when she was asked about Morrison's unpopularity problem. So someone has created this line thinking it is the perfect comparison. Personally, when at the dentist, I just wish it was included on Medicare, because it is prohibitively expensive for a lot of people and the wait list for those who are eligible for subsidised dental work can mean it can be years before issues are addressed. Election campaigns aren't conversations. For the sake of all our sanities, I wish they were. But they aren't. They are message wars. They are message wars because the people who decide election outcomes in Australia aren't watching closely. To land your point, you need to be short and sharp. You need to be short and sharp because at the end of six weeks, someone wins the message war and someone loses. Anthony Albanese lost the message war of the first 24 hours on the hustings. The problem wasn't that he fluffed the specific unemployment rate figure. As John Howard said yesterday: "Who cares." The problem for Labor politically was Albanese appeared not to know about a central, real world talking point in the economy. Naturally, Scott Morrison is already weaponising that point against his opponent. This morning in Parramatta, Morrison said if you don't understand the nuts and bolts then you don't have an economic plan, because you are out of your depth. That's the extrapolation that's dangerous for Labor. That's the extrapolation that puts a pep in Morrison's step. Looping back to my opening observation about the message war, Albanese this morning also let the questioning about yesterday's mistake run and run. Perhaps the sharper riposte might have been: Morrison makes plenty of mistakes, have you ever seen him apologise or take responsibility? When that happens, please come back to me and we'll talk about this some more - all day if you like. Pack a lunch. We'll really get into it. As for Morrison, the prime minister was asked this morning about his own lack of popularity. Morrison invoked an analogy about a dentist. No one likes going to the dentist. But they want to go to the dentist that's good at their job. This is a running riff on the devil you know, which is the core of the prime minister's pitch. There's a substantive problem with this analogy, though. We've spoken to voters in marginal seats over the past few weeks. Voters negative about the prime minister are negative because they don't think he's good at his job. It's a good line. But it's like a donut. There's a big hole in the middle. He is not going until the end of the season - but Gil McLachlan says it is time for him to move on to other things. He is a bit emotional. I'm leaving now because it feels right - right for the AFL, right for me, right for my family. Returning to Scott Morrison's presser briefly to close off the foreign affairs issues that were raised: One of the questions he was asked was whether, if re-elected, he would pledge to "not allow" China to establish a military base in Solomon Islands. Bear in mind that the Australian

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government's stated policy vision for the Indo-Pacific, for years, has focused on promoting a region "of independent, sovereign and resilient states". Read that as: every country, regardless of size, is able to make its own decisions free of coercion. So it can hardly dictate to countries in the region. To date, Australian ministers have repeatedly acknowledged that Solomon Islands can make its own sovereign decisions but Australia has concerns about the prospective security agreement between it and China. A leaked draft from last month raised the possibility China could "make ship visits to carry out logistical replenishment in, and have stopover and transition in Solomon Islands", while Chinese forces could also be used "to protect the safety of Chinese personnel and major projects in Solomon Islands". The prime minister of Solomon Islands, Manasseh Sogavare, has sought to allay concerns by saying his country has no intention of allowing a Chinese naval base. But Sogavare has also said it is "very insulting to be branded as unfit to manage our sovereign affairs". At today's press conference, Morrison relied on those public assurances from Sogavare: Well, you heard from the prime minister of the Solomon Islands that that is not something that they would allow to occur. He has made that very clear. And we're continuing to press on the issue of rotation, possible rotation of vessels or others that might seek to go to Solomon Islands. That's a serious issue that we'll continue to press. Morrison added that he respected the Solomon Islands was a sovereign country: They're not a state of Australia. They're not under Australia's control or direction. They are a sovereign country. And my approach to the Pacific, as the foreign minister will attest, has always been to respect the sovereignty of our neighbours. There was a long time when Australia used to treat the Pacific as an extension of own our country. They didn't like it. They didn't like being treated like that and nor should they. And I have never treated my Pacific family like that. I have always been honest with them and up front with them and I'm in regular contact with them. Morrison said that after the last election, the first place he travelled to was Solomon Islands, with his wife Jenny. Morrison also relied on Solomon Islands' public statements that Australia and New Zealand remain its security partners of choice. Pacific island countries have repeatedly urged the Australian government to take the region's call for serious action on the climate crisis seriously. The Labor leader, Anthony Albanese, was asked about the same issue. Albanese said Australia needed to "step up" not just rhetorically but in reality: What I wouldn't have done is sit back and do nothing. Read more on this issue in last week's analysis: There are more questions on the gaffe from yesterday. He repeats the same answer. It was a mistake. My thoughts from time to time, if you haven't made a mistake in time to time and be distracted by other issues, we had dealt with as you know, you were there. We dealt with the young Frankie and I had the issue of children's health, hearing and all those issues in my head. I'm not making excuses for it. But it shouldn't have happened. I get asked questions all the time. About the economy. And I got asked on the same day, about what the inflation rate was, what the wage rate was, I got asked a number of things and I got all of those questions right. (that was in the Sky interview) Q: The Australian Human Rights Commission is at risk of being downgraded because of recent legal appointments. It is asking the commission rectify the appointments by providing more transparency process. Lorraine Finlay is a commissioner will you keep her in that role and will you consider limiting political appointments in your body? Albanese: At the risk of creating a headline, I don't know who Ms Finlay is. (she has been the human rights commissioner since November last year and is a former WA Liberal candidate)...I will look at that. This government, what I do know is one of the reasons for the delay in the calling of the election was so that they could make dozens of appointments, day after day after day. Is there any former Liberal MP or Liberal Mayor or counsellor who has not been appointed to the AAT commission or the fair work commission? It is just an outrage. I think they can be good political appointments. And I will name one, Barry O'Farrell, was a good appointment stop he has a sincere interest in India, developed in his time as premier of New South Wales. I look forward to, if we are successful, working with him as India's important country as a member of the quad. For Australia. It is a good appointment. I supported Mattias Cormann for the Secretary General of the OECD. We spoke to people that we have connections with to support in Australia in that role. That contrast with what our opponents have done historically....This government had just appointed mates to so many jobs that it has undermined the standing of organisations Q: Scott Morrison yesterday voiced support for a ban on transgender people competing in female sports and said that the education curriculum risks being sold out to agenda. What is your position on these comments? Anthony Albanese: On the first. He seems to be unaware that it is already covered by the Sex Discrimination Act already. The second one was... he needs to talk to the New South Wales education minister... the Liberal party appears worried about that. This prime minister needs to do his day job. His day job is about things that he is responsible for, not look for ways to divide Australia. One of the things I want to do, because education is important and the basics of education are important. Teaching people the fullness of our history and teaching people to read and write, mathematics. Q: You made

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economic management and cost of living key election issues. Considering yesterday's mistake, as you say, that you couldn't name economic figures, can you understand the criticism that you may have lost all credibility on these issues now? And back on to John Howard, do you agree it was not a big deal, yesterday's incident? Anthony Albanese: I agree it was a mistake. And I owned up to it. It is up to others to judge those things. I will get on with things, but I agree that most people in public life have made errors when it comes to figures at various times, including the prime minister in recent times. It will happen. It will not be the only time during this campaign that someone gets a figure wrong... just pay attention and you will see that. But the key is what policies we have going forward, whether it is having impact on cost of living. Our plan for childcare will have an impact on cost of living. It is fully costed out though, we have released it. It is not the same policy that is in the platform, it is the policy that I have announced. It is a policy where no family will be worse off, and most families will be better off... Every economist knows that every dollar in a childcare is at least \$2 to the economy, because it boosts workforce participation and boosts participation. We have looked at measures that make a permanent difference to cost of living, whether it is our power Australia plan that will reduce household power prices by \$275. Anthony Albanese then has to explain that Labor's platform adopted at national conference is not the same as Labor's policies that they are taking to the election. The platform are aspirations Labor members would like to see Labor adopt as policies, but there is no onus to turn them into policies. The Liberal party does it too - branches send through their aspirations, state and federal conferences vote on it as part of the platform, and then it is up to the parliamentary party to decide whether or not they are adopted as policies. Platforms are not *binding* binding for either major party. Labor's platform is a little more complicated - it commits the party to a direction, and provides the frame members have decided the party needs to take. That frame shapes the policy - but there is no time line and it doesn't commit the parliamentary party to doing everything at once. That line of questioning continues. Anthony Albanese: The prime ministers said that the four plus three equals eight and then came up with a convoluted explanation as to why that was the case. When you make a mistake, with a number, and I was concentrating on something else, it shouldn't have happened, I did - you own up to it and move on. There are no consequences for real people as a result for what I said. This was not going missing... there was a mistake. I wish it hadn't had occurred. I am usually very good with numbers. And on another question on the same issue: I can't be trusted? This is a government that has \$1 trillion of debt. As the government that today have employment projections, on appointment projections before the last election, they said that we would be debt free by 2030. This is a government that had made 55, 55 projections on wages and on 52 of them they have been wrong - 52 out of 55 they have been wrong. This is a government that don't have a plan for the economy. Of course that is why from this government what you are seeing is two things. On the economy you are seeing support, one, that disappears as soon as people have passed the vote. And secondly you are seeing these personal attacks on Labor. I found it quite extraordinary that on the day after the budget, a budget that was brought forward from May to March, so that they could outline the campaign for the next three years, they were talking about us. In the first speech on the Wednesday after the Tuesday night, they were talking about us. Josh Frydenberg went to the National Press Club address on that day and said that the budget was all about the election. He got that right. What we need is a plan for the economy. Labor has a plan for the economy for cheaper energy, to power high-value manufacturing, to train Australians for those jobs through the free Tafe and other avenues. Q: Yesterday was a demoralising day for your campaign. See the newspaper treatment of it this morning. You can see that you have less chance of winning the election today rather than two days ago? Anthony Albanese: Yesterday I made a mistake and guess what? I fessed up to it, and you probably made a mistake from time to time, Andrew. There are other people that have made mistakes [about] numbers, even today. John Howard had, I think, pretty clear comment about what he thought about it. My approach is, I fessed up, took responsibility, that is what I will do. From time to time, if ever I make a mistake, I will own it and I will accept responsibility. But as I quoted the Ramones on day one of the campaign, here is a Taylor Swift comment for you. My theory is: 'Shake it off.' Anthony Albanese focuses on the mental health announcement today, rather than making motherhood statements. We get to the questions: Q: Is Labor exaggerating the casualisation of the workforce? Analysis of data by the University of Melbourne says it is actually about 5% below the peak which is a 2003. Can you explain your comments on this change in the workforce? (This is what Scott Morrison was referencing in his press conference). Albanese: We're not exaggerating the level of insecure work. It is a range of areas where this is happening. Casualisation one of them. Contracting out with led by companies. Also the gig economy, which doesn't classify people as employees - it classifies them as contractors rather than employees. What we are seeing around Australia is a massive rise in insecure work. There are more people having to work

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two, three, four jobs to get by. I would say to the government who are dismissive of this that they need to get out more and talk to people on the ground about how they are really struggling. The Labor leader Anthony Albanese is up now, talking about Labor's commitment to restore Medicare for telehealth mental health appointments for those living in rural and regional areas. It should never have been removed. It should have been a permanent level of support. Because we should regard people's access to mental healthcare as no different from if someone breaks in arm - they expect to get treated by a doctor. Psychiatric services, dealing with people's mental health, whether they be young people, people in the workforce, older Australians, that is an epidemic. We need to make sure that you have access to services wherever you live. Telehealth can be so important. That is why today's announcement is critical. Victoria will host the 2026 Commonwealth Games, the state's premier Daniel Andrews has announced. The opening ceremony will be held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, though the games will largely be based in regional Victoria, with Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Gippsland to each host their own athlete's village and sport program. Shepparton will also hold sporting and cultural events. The government will invest in community infrastructure, including housing and world-class sports facilities ahead of the event. Andrews says the games will contribute more than \$3b to Victoria's economy, creating more than 600 full-time jobs before the games, 3,900 jobs during and a further 3,000 jobs after it ends. It's a great honour to have Victoria chosen as the host venue for the 2026 Commonwealth Games - we can't wait to welcome the world to all of our state. The Commonwealth Games in regional Victoria is great for jobs, hospitality and our economy. This press conference is expected to hear AFL boss Gillon McLachlan will be stepping down at the end of the season. And Scott Morrison has his new campaign slogan: This election is a choice. And you know, for the last three years, he's had plenty to say about me, he's had plenty to say from the back seat. He's had plenty to say on the Monday morning after the game on the weekend. But when you have to actually step up and put your hands on the wheel, it's a lot easier. It's a lot easier sitting in that back seat. And it's a lot easier sitting there on a Monday morning passing judgement. Sledging me, making criticisms of me, seeking to attack me over these last three years, that's not a substitute for having an economic plan. It's not a substitute for knowing the things you need to know about what's going on in the Australian economy. It's not a substitute for the strength you need to stand up to the many challenges going on in this country. It's not a substitute. He talks about being - he raised as one of his great credentials, as being the acting prime minister in this country. I don't think he got through a total of 48 hours in that job. If he thinks filling in for 48 hours is preparation for this job, he's got no idea. This is a tough job. And it won't be easy under Albanese. Here is the other speech Scott Morrison wanted to deliver (on a question on Russian sanctions): The sanctions are a badge of honour for Australia standing up for freedom. I have copped a lot of criticism not just from Russia but from countries in our own region. I'm happy to wear that as a badge of honour for standing up for Australians. Australians know I'm not a pushover. Australians know I stand up for what I believe in. You can follow a clear... thread of the things that I have stood up for. Over my entire political life, whether it's on the economy, whether it's on the borders, whether it's on national security, on social services policy. I have always been very consistent. I'm being exactly who I have always been going to this election. I'm not pretending to be anyone else. On Sydney house prices, Scott Morrison says: I know how hard it is to buy a home here. I lived my whole life in this city. I love being in the centre of this city today. I know what drives it. But it's - it can be tough. And it can be really hard to buy a home. That's also why in addition to the support we give on tax relief and income support, to help people deal with cost of living pressures like rents, we also help those who want to get in and buy their first home - 300,000 Australians we have helped into owning their own home through the home guarantee program and ask - and the homebuilder program. A week out from the last election, I announced that policy. I said it would get Australians into homes and despite the fact that we have seen strong increases in house prices, we have enabled Australians to get into homes by reducing their deposit from 20% down to 5%, and even further down to 2% for single parents. Now, I have met those parents who bought their homes. They're here in western Sydney. They're up on the central coast of New South Wales, they're over there in Western Australia and up in the suburbs of Brisbane, and I've seen the look on their kids, for the first time in their life, they've got a place they can call home. They're not getting kicked out in six months, seeing their schooling disrupted. That has changed their lives. The other thing that changes lives in this country, getting a job. You get a young person into their job and their risk of spending a lifetime in welfare - I learned this as social services minister, I have been around a while - you get them into a job in in their early 20s, their chances of spending a life time on welfare goes like that. It's why it's so important to our economic plan. We get a couple more answers about CHOICE before Scott Morrison gets into a bit of an argy bargy with a reporter (I think it is Jonathan Kearsley from Nine) about Morrison's personal unpopularity. Q: You talk consistently about how Australians know you over the

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last three years. They don't appear to like you. At the last campaign, you campaigned on your own. Today you have campaigned here with foreign minister Marise Payne and the treasurer Josh Frydenberg. Is it a sign your popularity is on the nose, you are damaged goods across Australia? Morrison: It's not a popularity test. You go to the dentist*, it doesn't matter if you like him or not. You want to know they're good at their job. This is about whether people are good at managing the economy and have a strong economic plan. I have a great team. I'm happy to showcase my team every single day. There's a choice not just between me and Anthony Albanese, there's a choice between Josh Frydenberg and his opponent. There's a choice between Peter Dutton and his opponent. There's a choice between Marise Payne and Penny Wong. You had your question, thanks for your ongoing contribution. My point is, we've got a strong team. It's a strong economic team, it's a strong national security team, and that's the team that has brought Australia through one of the most challenging periods that this country has seen since the second world war. As we come out of that, and we have set ourselves up for success, you can't risk it on an inexperienced and unproven team that doesn't have a plan for the economy and you know doesn't know how to manage money. * This dental analogy has been coming up a bit with Coalition MPs. Here is the speech Scott Morrison called this press conference to give, making reference to Anthony Albanese yesterday being unable to name the national unemployment rate or the official cash rate: I agree with John Howard in that, you know, leaders will not get every single figure right. That's not really the issue here. The issue is there's something Anthony Albanese should be apologising for, it should be that he doesn't have an economic plan. That's the real problem with Labor. That they don't have an economic plan that can underwrite the things they will talk about at this election. They don't have the economic experience. They are not proven and tested. Last time they were in government unemployment was higher, interest rates were higher, electricity prices were higher. And what we know from the Labor party today and the information that has been released by the finance minister and the treasurer... they can't stop spending. They don't know what their promises cost. But the other thing it says about yesterday, sure, he didn't know the number, but he didn't miss it by that much. He missed it by that much. And what matters about that is he thought unemployment had a five in front of it. Not even a four in front of it. And it's going to a number with a three in front of it. And what that tells me is his working assumptions about our economy and what Australians are achieving in our economy he doesn't know and he doesn't understand. Australians have worked hard to ensure there's now 375,000 more Australians in work today than there was before the pandemic. He hasn't seen that. He hasn't recognised that. He hasn't acknowledged that. In fact, it was the Labor shadow treasurer who said the real test of our budgets is what happens to unemployment. Well, it's gone to 4%. And he's not acknowledging that. And he hasn't noticed it. Despite the fact, as the treasurer made fairly clear in the parliament, that's exactly where it went. But it's not just on this issue. His assumption that unemployment had a five in front of it, that's what I found more staggering. If he said 4.3 or 3.8 or something like that, it was a memory slip. What this showed was he had no idea what has happened with Australia's economy recovery. He's also wrong on another thing - he's been going around at the unions' behest, talking about rising rates of casualisation in the workforce. His fundamental understanding of the economy is wrong. He doesn't know what's happening in the economy. Casualisation, as has been set out in the Financial Review today, shows it's been trending down. And it's been about the same level for about 20 years. So you're going to hear a lot of claims made by Anthony Albanese in this election, another one he makes is about Medicare. You know, Medicare bulk billing rates have lifted from 82% when we came to government, they're now at 89%. Here in Parramatta they're 98% Medicare bulk billing. Medicare has never been stronger than under this government. When you go to 2016, and they tried to say that if a Coalition government was in charge of Medicare, all would be lost, Medicare has never been stronger than under a Liberal Nationals government. On to the questions to the PM: Q: There's a high proportion of religious people in this electorate [Parramatta]. You promised before the last election that religious discrimination bill. It never happened because you couldn't get the support of your own MPs on the floor of the House of Representatives. So will you revive that legislation if you win? What's the time frame and will it be the same legislation, the same package that did not pass the House and the Senate in the second-last week of parliament? Scott Morrison: Well, as promised, I put that legislation into the parliament, and I was hopeful it would have bipartisan support. But it didn't. The Labor party used it as a trojan horse to seek to make other changes on other acts. I found that very disappointing. That bill would have passed had the Labor party supported it*. And the Labor party didn't support it. My views about protecting people against religious discrimination are well known and my credibility on those issues are not challenged or under question. And I hold those views just as strongly today as I always have, throughout my entire life. Unfortunately, those strong views have not shared by my political opponents. * The bill didn't pass because it

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didn't have the support within the Liberal party. And the changes to the Sexual Discrimination Act with amendments to protect trans students. On the labour force, there are more people working multiple jobs than ever before. If you have three jobs, you are still only counted as being employed once, so there are more jobs in the economy than people employed. For every entry level job being advertised, there are 23 people who have been on an unemployment payment for more than 12 months and they are competing with people who have been unemployed for a few months and with people who want to switch jobs. Experts don't know why there are now more people on unemployment benefits than before the pandemic hit. Scott Morrison continues: The key way we've been able to do that is we've been able to get people off welfare and we've been able to get them into work*. You know how to balance a budget? You get people off welfare where they're receiving benefits and you turn them into workers, where they pay taxes. And under our government, only paying as much as is necessary and ensuring they can keep as much of what they earn as they possibly can. That's what keeps our economy strong. Now, through all of that, I have had a strong partner in this economic partnership that has been delivering this strong economy. And it is a team that I lead. And Marise is here and has done an outstanding job, having just returned from the Nato foreign ministers' meeting, ensuring that Australia is well positioned to be dealing with the global international security issues. I lead a very strong team. But I'm particularly proud of my economic team. And I'm very proud of my good mate, and treasurer, who has now delivered his fourth budget, and he knows exactly what he's doing when it comes to managing a strong economy. *Department of social services data shows there are more people receiving unemployment payments (jobseeker and youth allowance) now than before the pandemic hit. You may have noticed there were a lot of numbers in that spiel. That is absolutely deliberate. Scott Morrison pledges a target of 1.3m new jobs over five years: Together with the treasurer, we have formed an economic partnership that has ensured that, at this election, we can present a very clear choice. And this election is a choice. It's a choice between the responsible, economic and financial management that has enabled Australia to be coming through this pandemic stronger than most of the advanced economies in the world. [Lists industries] They've all worked incredibly hard to take us through this pandemic. And that just fills me with confidence about what's ahead for us in the economy. We've worked hard to get to the point where we can really take advantage of the economic opportunities that this country now has, the best since the post-war era. And we're well positioned to take advantage of that with our economic plan. And that's why today, we can commit to a 1.3m jobs target pledge over the next five years. You know, over the course of this pandemic, we've not only ensured that we have 375,000 more jobs than at the start of the pandemic, but through important measures like jobkeeper, which the treasurer and I, night after night, together with the finance minister at the time, ensured working with officials that we got that right. And that could be the right intervention at the right time. We knew when to start it. We knew when to stop it. And all the other measures we put in place have set Australia up to save 700,000 jobs. And so businesses like this and so many around the country can be looking forward with confidence. You know, Australia is the 13th-largest economy in the world. It is a \$2.1 trillion economy. The budget is some \$625bn in expenditure. The health budget alone is some \$105bn. The social security budget is over \$220bn. Our defence budget, including the capital works that we're doing to rebuild our defence forces, almost \$49b. And then Medicare - over \$30bn. These are the big things that Australia has to deliver through a strong economy. And we, as a government, have been able to guarantee those essential services because we've been able to continue to strengthen the budget even in those most difficult times. The prime minister Scott Morrison goes first with his press conference. He has Josh Frydenberg and Marise Payne with him (and he makes a point of saying Payne is the minister for women). He is in Parramatta and also has with him candidate Maria Kovacic, who seems to be being moved by someone to ensure she is in the shot behind Morrison and smiling. Almost a fortnight on from the budget, there are more signs of a bounce in consumer confidence. The ANZ-Roy Morgan gauge of sentiment has risen for a second week in a row, although the bump is only half of last week's, and the gauge remains pretty negative. Among the states, confidence rose in NSW by 6.1%, snapping four weeks of decline. Confidence also rose in WA (10.4%), while it dropped in Victoria (-1.3%), Queensland (-0.2%) and SA (-10.7%), ANZ says. A drop in global oil prices, along with the halving of the fuel excise, has nudged petrol prices well below the \$2 a litre mark. (They were averaging \$1.68 in NSW this morning.) "With the terminal gate prices of petrol declining further last week, retail prices are likely to be even lower in the coming weeks," ANZ's head of Australian economics David Plank says. Still, inflationary expectations remain unchanged at about 6%, even with those lower fuel prices. (The CPI last year was 3.5%.) Plank, though, predicts some of those inflationary expectations to ease in coming weeks, particularly if fuel prices continue to sink. Still, investors remain pointed the other way. According to the ASX gauge that tracks where that pesky Reserve Bank

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cash rate target is headed, the central bank will be politically polite and not raise interest rates at its May 3 meeting, but then a steady climb is predicted to follow: Meanwhile, here's a short summary of some of the numbers politicians and voters should keep handy: Also a bit more on Labor's policy this morning about restoring telehealth psychiatric consultations, which has become a big issue for people in regional and rural [Australia](#). Albanese will be standing up in Tasmania a little later this morning to talk about the policy change. The policy relates to a government decision to remove a 50% loading for some rural psychiatric services, meaning some types of consultations providers were no longer able to bulk bill. Tory Shepherd has written about this issue here. Labor has said it will restore the loading if elected, which it expects will support 450,000 consultations over four years. The policy will cost \$31.3m over the forward estimates. "Scott Morrison's cuts to regional mental health consultations during a pandemic which has seen people struggling with mental health issues are unconscionable," Albanese said. "Labor will restore these vital mental health services, making them affordable and accessible to people wherever they live." For a large part of the country, this will be the only news that matters today. Yesterday we received alerts quite early about the leaders' main press conferences being held - we are still waiting to hear when today's will be. There can be a bit of a game of chicken the campaigns play with each other on press conferences - who goes first can be both a power move and a gamble. The advantage of holding your press conference after your opponent is you can respond to and attempt to reframe what they just said. Get in early and you can create questions for your opponent to answer. The Law Council of [Australia](#) has called for major reform to [Australia](#)'s political integrity system, including the establishment of a strong federal anti-corruption commission able to conduct public hearings. In a document outlining the key issues for the nation's legal sector ahead of the election, the Law Council warned the pandemic had shown the ability of governments to use far-reaching and unchecked powers. It also warned of "regular expansions of highly intrusive national security and law enforcement powers". In this context, it has never been more critical that a federal government commits to taking decisive action to continuously strengthen our systems of integrity and independent oversight, including through the development of a Commonwealth Integrity Commission. A Commonwealth Integrity Commission should be aimed at addressing serious and systemic corrupt conduct, be empowered to hold public hearings where a closed hearing would be unfair to the person or contrary to the public interest, be heavily focused on education and corruption prevention, and should have consistent processes, powers and requirements when dealing with law enforcement and other public sector corruption. The law council also listed an overhaul of the family law system, the establishment of an independent judicial appointments and complaints body, and greater resourcing for legal assistance services and the federal courts among its election priorities. A small but important policy announcement today from Labor, with the party's shadow assistant treasury minister, Andrew Leigh, announcing an Albanese government will fix fundraising laws. The issue has been canvassed in two parliamentary inquiries, with the royal commission into national natural disaster arrangements finding the need for harmonised fundraising laws across the country to make it easier for charities to fundraise, which in turn would help communities to better prepare and recover. Leigh said the changes would save Australian charities "millions of dollars every year" and allow more money to flow to people in need. Charities are the first line of support for the most vulnerable in our communities. The sector's staff and volunteers have helped millions of Australians rebuild their lives after floods and fires, and have kept communities together in the face of falling volunteer numbers and a decline in donations. But their work is being hampered by unnecessary reporting requirements from a pre-internet age, with excessive paperwork costing the sector more than \$1m every month. He said that charities who want to raise money online through a national campaign need to file paperwork in every state and territory, except the Northern Territory, meaning seven sets of forms that can take weeks to get in order. Leigh highlighted the issue recently when Peter Dutton launched an online fundraiser for the Queensland floods, questioning whether the campaign was in breach of Queensland laws requiring a sanction for one-off fundraising appeals. Graham Readfearn has an update on the student climate activists who took the government to court: Teenage climate crisis campaigner Anjali Sharma has revealed the torrent of sexist and racist abuse she has received while fronting a legal case against the Morrison government's approval of a New South Wales coal project. Sharma, 17, from Melbourne, was one of eight young people who, with the support of octogenarian nun Sister Brigid Arthur, tried unsuccessfully to block the Whitehaven Coal Vickery mine expansion. Lawyers for the group will announce on Tuesday that they will not appeal last month's federal court judgment, which overturned a finding that the federal environment minister, Sussan Ley, had a duty of care to protect younger people from the climate crisis when considering fossil fuel developments. The prime minister, Scott Morrison, will announce a new health minister this weekend, with a report in the SMH today suggesting South Australian senator Anne Ruston may get the gig.

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Ruston is currently minister for Social Services and Women's Safety and manager of government business in the Senate. She has been elevated as campaign spokesperson at this election, becoming a much more prominent member of Morrison's front bench. Morrison has indicated the successor to Greg Hunt will be named this weekend, fuelling speculation about his replacement. Government MPs have been kept in the dark about who will take over from Hunt, with others suggesting two of the prime minister's closest allies - Ben Morton or Stuart Robert - could also be in line for promotion. The former health minister, Sussan Ley, is also considered a safe pair of hands for the role after she resigned from the portfolio in 2016 under Malcolm Turnbull as a result of an inquiry into her use of travel entitlements. Thank you to the Tasmanian locals who are sharing their local knowledge with us - apparently where Anthony Albanese held his press conference yesterday is better known as a popular poke stop on Pokemon Go (yes, people are still playing it). The more you know... This will be happening quite a bit during the campaign. In what is obviously the biggest announcement of the election so far, Twitter has brought back the democracy sausage emoji. NSW Health has reported: As has Victorian Health: I am not sure if people realise just how difficult it is accessing mental health care when you live outside a city (it's hard enough in a city) or how expensive it is. Dipping out of politics for a moment for something which seems to have the whole country obsessed - airport chaos. If you are headed to either Sydney or Melbourne airport, it is recommended you get your paranoid dad to arrive at least two hours before your boarding time. Or, if you are my dad, arrive by 8am for a 5pm flight. Scott Morrison rounds out his FiveAA interview with some opinions on hashtags (and more broadly, social media). It's triggered by this question from David Penberthy: How did politics get so horrible in this country?... You know, some of the things that have been trending hashtags about you over the last couple of years on Twitter just made me shake my head in disbelief. How has how has public life become so deeply unpleasant and how do we make it more pleasant? Morrison - who in parliament recently labelled Labor deputy leader Richard Marles a "Manchurian candidate" before withdrawing the insult, and has previously labelled former Labor senator Sam Dastyari "Shanghai Sam" - replies that "we've got to disagree better than we have". The prime minister raises concerns about social cohesion: Well, I think you put your finger right on it when you're talking about hashtags, David. I mean, social media has been eroding the civility of our country, and not just our society, societies all around the world. And, David, you've reported on politics for years and years. You're telling me that people haven't been saying these things about politicians for the last 50 years. Of course they have, but what happens now is you whack a hashtag on it, put it out there into social media, and then people report it. But I'm more concerned about young people who are getting shamed and bullied and harassed on social media. That's why our government has taken the strongest possible measures - other countries are following our lead - to hold social media companies accountable. So you can't have these these these cowards in their basements going around and trolling people. At this point, it's worth pausing to remind readers that the Attorney General's Department has said the Coalition's much-vaunted anti-trolling bill is really about "only defamation" - has admitted the proposal was not intended to address broader issues of harm and abuse online. See that story here. Morrison continues: We've got to disagree better than we have and social media I think has made that a very hard thing to do. And I really do think it's really undermining the cohesiveness of our society and that's why we have taken such a strong stance standing up to those big tech companies and holding them to account. Scott Morrison has brushed off questions about a \$500,000 payout made to Alan Tudge's former staffer Rachelle Miller. Well, I have no visibility on that at all. I can't confirm to you if a payment has even been made. This leads to a robust exchange between Five AA's David Penberthy and Morrison. Morrison acknowledges that the discussion relates to taxpayers' money, but adds that such matters are "handled by the Department of Finance at arm's length from politicians, including the special minister of state". Morrison points to the report, released 4 March, by former bureaucrat Vivienne Thom, finding there was insufficient evidence Tudge had breached the ministerial standards (Miller chose not to participate in the inquiry, arguing the government had ignored her concerns over its terms of reference). Miller had alleged Tudge had been emotionally, and on one occasion, physically abusive to her while they were in a relationship in 2017. Tudge denies the allegations. Morrison adds: And it's there for people to see that Alan Tudge can continue to serve - he has chosen for the sake of the health and family for a period of time to stand aside from the ministry, but there's been no other education minister sworn in, no one went out to the governor general. We're very transparent. Coalition campaign spokesperson, Anne Ruston, speaking on ABC's Radio National yesterday, declined to comment but said the payout was not related to the misconduct allegations raised by Miller but "a separate matter". In February 2021 Miller filed a workplace harassment lawsuit seeking compensation for her treatment as a staffer, including allegedly being belittled in Tudge's office and deprived of further career progression once shuffled into the office of then employment minister

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Michaelia Cash. Cash strongly denied any adverse treatment on Ms Miller in her office. More information in yesterday's story: Penny Wong has also used the "it's a leadership test, not a memory test" line when asked about Anthony Albanese's mistake yesterday: This is a long campaign. I think Australians are very focused on the things they're concerned about. I know there's a lot of focus from the Liberal party on this, but in my view, people are worried, people are concerned with their cost of living, the price of living is going up, but their wages aren't. People are concerned about making sure that Medicare is stronger. Making sure the economy works for them and their families. Ultimately this campaign is not about gotcha moments. It's ultimately about what sort of future we want. Do we want to vote for the future, a better future, or do we want more of the same from Scott Morrison and his government? Scott Morrison has called in to Adelaide radio station FiveAA to speak with David Penberthy. Penberthy wanted to know whether Morrison's standing contributed to the collapse in the Liberal party's vote in the recent South Australian state election. Morrison answers a different question. He rolls out the normal lines about the choice at this federal election. It's a federal election. Penberthy says the Liberal brand "got absolutely smashed" and asks again whether the people of SA were letting off steam or there is residual anger that could be a problem in the SA electorates of Boothby and Sturt? Morrison says the Labor premier made clear that election was fought on state issues. He rattles off some of his frontbench members, including South Australian Anne Ruston who he says has been doing a terrific job - versus an "untested, unproven" team (you'll be hearing a lot of that through the campaign). Asked how many of the new jobs he is promising today will be in SA, Morrison says: It's a macro number that we do right across the economy. He talks about a range of fields including manufacturing, defence industry, food and beverage production, infrastructure, cyber and technical jobs. Penberthy: "No mention of subs?" Morrison: "Of course we're building subs in South Australia ... our defence industry is massive in south Australia." Flashback to last week: Penny Wong is now chatting to the ABC, where she is asked about the New Zealand National party's criticism of Labor's aged care policy: I think prime minister Ardern was appropriate when she said she wasn't going to engage in a domestic election in Australia. I would say this - this is a recommendation of the royal commission. This is a recommendation that arises out of the situation that we see older Australians facing. Neglect, people are being neglected. Now, what we are saying is let's work to bring in more nurses to the sector... a lot of nurses leave the sector every year, or leave their employer. We need to train more Australians to get into this workforce, and yes, as is currently the place, migration will be part of the story but not all of the story. Bill Shorten popped up on the Nine Network this morning, where he repeated the "it's a leadership test, not a memory test" line that Labor MPs have been using when asked about Anthony Albanese's stumble yesterday. Shorten then moved on to the season: Listen, it was a mistake which I know that Albo didn't want to make. He has come out and taken responsibility for it. But I also know that across 42 days there is going to be a lot of spills and adventures and good days and bad days. The last person who never made a mistake - we are celebrating Easter - was 2,000 years ago. Sure, you wouldn't want to have said it but we absolutely have got to get back on the bike and focus on getting our policies out to the people. For more on that, Katharine Murphy and Josh Butler have reported on some of the alarm which went through the moderate Liberal camp at the comments from their leader yesterday: Liberal moderates have expressed concern that Scott Morrison has flagged committing during the election campaign to a ban on transgender women playing women's sport. Campaigning in the marginal seat of Gilmore on Monday, the prime minister said he shared the views of the Tasmanian Liberal senator Claire Chandler, who has advanced private member's legislation allowing sporting groups to exclude transgender people from single-sex sports. Morrison added he would have "more to say" on the issue. The Liberal senator Andrew Bragg later said a change wasn't necessary because the Sex Discrimination Act already contained carve-outs for strength and stamina. Back to Simon Birmingham - he was asked, as a moderate Liberal - what he thought of Scott Morrison's foray into the "culture wars" after the prime minister yesterday supported "brave" Liberal women who were fighting to ban trans women from women's sport. Birmingham: These are sensitive issues and they should be handled sensitively. I understand certainly the concerns of women's sporting organisations for the safety and the fairness of the competitions that they run. Equally, it's important that nobody is unfairly discriminated against in terms of their rights to participate in aspects of society in sport. I trust that everyone that looks at this does so with the appropriate sensitivity for all of the rights. Labor is also facing criticism for its aged care nurse plan (a registered nurse in every aged care home, as recommended by the royal commission) from... New Zealand. The NZ opposition think that the higher wages in Australia would worsen Aotearoa's own nursing shortage. Scott Morrison is still in New South Wales - with western Sydney seats the target today. Anthony Albanese is still in Tasmania. The interview (after delving into Anthony Albanese's gaffe yesterday) then moves into the reported \$500,000 Finance department

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payment to Alan Tudge's former staffer, Rachele Miller (as first reported by News Corp's Samantha Maiden). The prime minister said he didn't know about it so the ABC asks the finance minister. Simon Birmingham also doesn't know about it. There are limited things that I can say there, because those sorts of negotiations that occur between a former employee in a termination settlement or the like that occurs are negotiated at arm's length from ministers... Q: So you're not curious? It is taxpayer money. Birmingham: I am curious, often, in different things, but there are probity and privacy issues at play here... Q: We're talking about a Cabinet minister and a former Liberal party staffer and taxpayer money. Birmingham: I understand, but in terms of the way those probity and privacy and confidentiality matters apply, I simply do not get briefed or brought into those deliberations or discussions... Q: I suspect many people would say it was inappropriate for a politician or a minister to be the one negotiating those sort of employee settlement arrangements. But we're talking about a minister who is still in Cabinet, a former Liberal party staffer. Don't taxpayers have a right to know where there is a \$500,000 payment being made to someone? Birmingham: I can't confirm, because I don't get briefed, and don't know whether those assertions or figures are accurate or true. What does occur in relation to matters of employee settlement or termination are that they get negotiated by the relevant entities working through those issues and whether it's occurred in relation to one job that somebody held in the Parliament or a different job that somebody held in the Parliament - and in the case you're raising, there were multiple different employers and the terms of those termination arrangements, I just can't provide the details because they don't get shared with me by the department, given the privacy provisions put in place. Simon Birmingham, who is once again taking on the Coalition spokesperson role, is being interviewed on ABC News Breakfast, where he attempts to explain how the 1.3m new jobs over the next five years is because of Coalition policies and not just population growth and how you can't just say that most of those jobs would occur no matter who was in government. It all goes to the economic plan you apply. The 1.3m additional jobs that we're committing to drive and to grow across the Australian economy, building on the 1.7m jobs that have been created since our government was elected are all driven in part by our investments, our regard for investment in infrastructure, our support for small businesses, driving digital capacity in small businesses, our modern manufacturing strategy, targeting across the country to live the value-adding and manufacturing capabilities of Australian industry. Good morning and welcome to day two of the official campaign - just 39 to go. Yesterday was a bit of a doozy of an opener. Scott Morrison had to "clarify" the record to make it clear that Alan Tudge was STILL a member of his cabinet. "Technically" was Morrison's answer. Technically in that Tudge remains a member of the frontbench, who has chosen themselves to step aside and in the event the Coalition wins a fourth term, will be back on the frontbench. So not just technically, then. That was despite Morrison's comments on 4 March that Tudge was not returning to the frontbench. It's all very difficult to keep track of. And you can bet that Anthony Albanese would have spent at least part of last night being quizzed on the cost of a range of items, as well as the various rates which guide the Australian economy, after being unable to answer what the cash rate was or the unemployment rate yesterday. But he had an unlikely supporter in all that - John Howard, who declared "who cares" while campaigning with Ken Wyatt in Western Australia. When asked what the unemployment rate was, he also couldn't answer the question and said he thought it might have a "3" in front of it (it's 4%). Albanese very quickly fessed up to messing up and said that is what he would do if prime minister - admit his mistakes and then move to fix them. The Coalition already has its attack ads ready. What a day. (There wasn't any mention of the time Morrison accidentally endorsing Beijing's position on Taiwan not so long ago.) So what is on the agenda for today? It's jobs and the economy for the Coalition with Scott Morrison wanting to create 1.3m new jobs over the next five years, using existing measures - and it is pretty much just what happens with population growth. It's also an announcement which has been made a couple of times in the past - Morrison last made it in 2019. The Liberal campaign is in Sydney - I'd expect it to head to Sydney's west today. Anthony Albanese and Labor are still cleaning up after yesterday. Labor's announcement is on increasing access to mental health care. The Labor is still in Tasmania. You have the entire Guardian brains trust at your disposal as we go through day two, as well as Katharine Murphy, Sarah Martin, Paul Karp, Daniel Hurst, Mike Bowers, Gabrielle Chan and Josh Butler focused on the election. It's a four coffee day. Ready? Let's get into it. 80785 false false Tory Shepherd (now) and Amy Remeikis (earlier) Nationals leader Barnaby Joyce campaigning with Country Liberal Party candidates Jacinta Price (right), Tina McFarlane and Damien Ryan at Stokes Hill Wharf in Darwin on Tuesday. Australian opposition leader Anthony Albanese and Father Bob Maguire take a look at chocolate Easter eggs during a visit to Father Bob Maguire Foundation. Labor candidate for the seat of Higgins Michelle Ananda-Rajah, Australian opposition leader Anthony Albanese, Father Bob Maguire and Labor MP for the seat of Macnamara Josh Burns

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pose for photographs during a visit to Father Bob Maguire Foundation. Prime minister Scott Morrison takes a selfie with Falcon the golden retriever during a visit to Assistance Dogs [Australia](#). Prime minister Scott Morrison shakes hands with Shannie the golden retriever during a visit to Assistance Dogs [Australia](#). The Antipoverty Centre has calculated that the amount of people relying on jobkeeper has increased by 41% over the course of the pandemic. Australian Greens leader Adam Bandt addressing the media yesterday on day one of the 2022 election campaign. NAB says the retail sector has helped to boost business confidence. Morrison invoked a dentistry analogy this morning, but there's a big hole in it. AFL chief executive Gillon McLachlan with his wife Laura and children after announcing he will step down from his role at the end of the season. Anthony Albanese says the government is 'dismissive' of the level of insecure work. Victoria will host the 2026 Commonwealth Games, with the opening ceremony to be held at the MCG. Scott Morrison during a visit to Rheem [Australia](#) in Parramatta in Sydney this morning. AFL chief executive Gillon McLachlan will reportedly step down from the role after eight years. Minister for families Anne Ruston may be in line to replace Greg Hunt as health minister. Shadow foreign affairs minister Penny Wong.

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