



## [Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry](#)

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**theguardian**

**Section:** [AUSTRALIA](#) NEWS; Version:20

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**Byline:** Stephanie Convery (now) and Natasha May (earlier)

**Highlight:** Former NSW deputy premier John Barilaro charged with assault and malicious damage PM says it would be 'extraordinary' if Scott Morrison didn't cooperate with secret ministries inquiry Get our free news app, morning email briefing or daily news podcast

### **Body**

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block-time published-time 8.19am BST

OK, that excellent and infuriating interactive on the stage three tax cuts I mentioned earlier?

Well, if you've played around with it, our [Full Story podcast team](#) wants to know how you'd spend the \$243bn that could be saved by not implementing the tax cuts.

Would you make university free? Buy a nuclear submarine? Raise jobseeker?

If you're comfortable sharing your thoughts, please call us and leave a one minute voicemail on (02) 8076 8550.

And here's a link to the interactive again, for your convenience:

Related: [Scrapping the stage three tax cuts would save \\$243bn. How would you spend it?](#)

block-time published-time 8.15am BST

The nation's building ministers have concluded their meeting in Sydney. We flagged yesterday that minimum energy performance standards for new homes [would be raised at today's gathering](#) – an improvement that's been years in the making.

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

The plan to raise energy efficiency standards from 6 stars to 7 stars has got the nod, we hear, with ministers agreeing a 12-month transition, according to the ACT's Rebecca Vassarotti, one of the ministers at the gathering. That's on the shorter end of the timeframe since industry had been pushing for a three-year phase-in.

The [ministers' communique said](#) :

The key changes are adopting a minimum standard of 7 stars and the introduction of an annual energy use budget

For the average new home, achieving a 7 star rating may require elements like better insulation, higher quality glazing and smarter floor plans.

Recall that housing stock accounts for about 12% of carbon emissions and 24% of electricity use. As long-lived assets, the more energy efficient our houses are, the better for energy bills and pollution. (As we noted, though, the issue will be how well these standards are implemented – and the track record is not very promising.)

Vassarotti, ACT's minister for sustainable building and construction, said:

With a climate emergency upon us, changes to our minimum energy efficiency standards must be made fast, but fairly.

Also agreed were improved accessibility in new homes, such as corridors wide enough to take a walker or wheelchairs, step-free entry and having a toilet on the entry floor.

More details are in this article today:

Related: [Improved accessibility and 7-star energy efficiency standards approved for new homes](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.18am BST

block-time published-time 8.10am BST

The company we reported on earlier that has just won Queensland government approval to expand its open-cut coal mine, has released a statement, saying it had begun preparations to resume mining operations and anticipates being granted the water licence it requires.

New Hope Corporation chair Robert Millner said in a statement to the ASX:

New Hope and the local communities around Acland and Oakey are now only one step away from restarting the New Acland mine where there has been mining activity for over 100 years.

Millner calls the legal objections to the mine "lawfare" designed to slow down the approvals process.

The mine has been the target of a [decade-long campaign by environmentalists](#) and farmers, who [argue that its expansion has no economic merit](#), is counterproductive to the local agricultural industry, and environmentally destructive.

block-time published-time 8.01am BST

Lachlan Murdoch was never much of an inspirational figure in the pantheon of news publishing, having secured his place at the helm of Fox News by a process of primogeniture, Richard Ackland writes.

His [defamation action against Crikey](#), a relatively modest but worthwhile online subscription news and commentary service, reveals much – about ego, the drift of American politics and media, and defamation law itself.

Read the full comment piece here:

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

Related: [Lachlan Murdoch vs Crikey may turn out to be a misconceived adventure in reputation repair | Richard Ackland](#)

block-time published-time 7.42am BST

Storms next week in the east. Cool. It's not like we haven't had enough rain or wind or hail or whatever to see us through the winter.

enltrWeather Update: Stormy weather for eastern states from Monday. Video current: 2.00pm AEST 26 August 2022. Know your weather, know your risk. For the latest forecasts and warnings, go to our website <https://t.co/NciIEGbGBL> or the [#BOMWeather](#) app. [pic.twitter.com/zDcJRZCGFB](https://pic.twitter.com/zDcJRZCGFB)

— Bureau of Meteorology, **Australia** (@BOM\_au) [August 26, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 7.39am BST

Key event

NSW rail industrial action could continue for another six months – minister

The [New South Wales](#) transport minister, David Elliott, has warned that industrial action that has crippled Sydney's rail network could continue for another six months under a "worst-case scenario".

Appearing before a budget estimates hearing on Friday, Elliott also conceded there was "no way in the world" the government would meet a commitment made by his predecessor, Andrew Constance, to replace the state's entire bus fleet with electric vehicles by 2030.

In 2020, Constance set an ["aspirational target" of replacing Sydney's fleet of 8,000 buses with electric vehicles by 2030](#). About 100 such vehicles have been delivered, with another 200 due next year.

On Friday transport department officials described the commitment as a "challenge" set down by the former minister, which was unlikely to be met.

A business case for the full electrification of the bus fleet is yet to be completed, and is not due until November.

Elliott told the hearing in response to questions from Labor's John Graham :

There's no way in the world we're going to meet that timetable, so I don't know why he said it.

I'm not committing to the timeframe my predecessor offered up because [from] where I stand right now that might not be realistic.

Am I going to defend a song and dance, as you say, I doubt it.

Read the full story here:

Related: [Sydney rail union dispute could go into 2023 under 'worst-case scenario', NSW transport minister says](#)

block-time published-time 7.21am BST

NT records 6 deaths from Covid-19, with 19 people in hospital

There were 114 new cases of Covid-19 recorded in the Northern Territory in the 24 hours to 4pm yesterday.

Of those in hospital, there are five patients requiring oxygen and no patients in intensive care.

You can see all the details of [the NT's latest Covid update here](#).

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block-time published-time 7.15am BST

Tasmania records no new deaths from Covid-19, with 35 people in hospital

There were 265 new Covid-19 cases in the state in the last 24 hours. Of the 35 people in hospital with Covid, 13 are there specifically for Covid. One person is in intensive care.

See [all the day's statistics from Tasmania here](#).

block-time published-time 7.02am BST

Have you played around with our interactive that shows you just what the government could do with the money that it's going to spend on the stage three tax cuts yet?

Basically, the tax cuts create a flat tax rate of 30 cents in the dollar for anyone earning between \$40,000 and \$200,000, abolishing an entire rung of **Australia's** progressive income tax ladder.

My colleagues Nick Evershed and Amy Remeikis have put together this extremely excellent and also enraging interactive in which you can decide what to spend that money on instead.

So far, I've given everyone free university education, boosted arts spending, natural disaster response, added dental to Medicare and boosted Medicare rebates and preventative healthcare, upped rent assistance by 30%, built enough social housing to meet current demand, AND I STILL HAVE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS LEFT. This is madness.

Related: [Scrapping the stage three tax cuts would save \\$243bn. How would you spend it?](#)

block-time published-time 6.52am BST

QLD approves expanded open-cut coalmine on Darling Downs

Queensland's resources minister has approved the expansion of a coalmine on the prime agricultural land of the Darling Downs.

The proposed stage three of New Hope Group's New Acland open-cut coalmine was described by anti-coal campaigners as something that should be met "with horror".

Scott Stewart announced on Friday afternoon he was approving the mining leases for stage three of the New Acland coalmine, near Toowoomba, "after careful consideration".

The project also requires an associated water licence from the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water.

The mine has been the target of a [decade-long campaign by environmentalists](#) and farmers.

The proposal would lift New Acland's output from 4.8m tonnes to 7.8m tonnes a year, and extend the mine's life for 12 years to 2034.

New Hope Group exhausted its last coal reserves at the mine in late November, and has made almost 300 workers redundant since 2019.

The mine had been under investigation since 2018 over "alleged unauthorised disturbance" in an area known as west pit. In June, the department said it had accepted an environmental undertaking proposed by New Hope Group, which would see them commit \$2m to habitat rehabilitation to avoid the matter going to court.

Read more of the background to this decision here:

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

Related: [Queensland gives environmental approval to New Acland coalmine expansion](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.55am BST

block-time published-time 6.43am BST

Former deputy NSW premier John Barilaro charged with assault

Former New South Wales deputy premier John Barilaro has been charged over a scuffle with a freelance cameraman on Sydney's northern beaches earlier this year.

NSW police on Friday served a future attendance of court notice for alleged assault and malicious damage offences on a 51-year-old man, via his legal representatives, they told AAP.

The former politician was involved in the altercation with freelance cameraman Matt Costello outside a bar in Manly on 3 July.

Footage circulated online shows the pair struggling as they grab and push one another while the man tries to film Barilaro, who then walks away.

Barilaro later confirmed the incident, saying he was confronted in the dark outside a bar and felt harassed during a night out with friends. He told 2GB in July:

To come out and have a camera shoved in your face. I'm a private citizen. All I did was push a camera out of my way. I did not manhandle an individual.

Barilaro is expected to appear at Manly local court on 12 October.

Former NSW deputy premier John Barilaro has been charged with assault over a scuffle with a freelance cameraman earlier this year. Photograph: Bianca de Marchi/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.47am BST

block-time published-time 6.32am BST

If you're just joining us and want to catch up on the details of the just-announced inquiry into Scott Morrison's secret ministerial appointments (of himself), my colleague Paul Karp has all the details here:

Related: [PM says it would be 'extraordinary' if Scott Morrison didn't cooperate with secret ministries inquiry](#)

block-time published-time 6.23am BST

enltrAVOID SMOKE - Thursday Island - fire as at 2:52pm Friday, 26 August 2022. For all current warnings, updates and mapping go to <https://t.co/vqyJTV7c8M>. <pic.twitter.com/EMMfW7sdZU>

— Qld Fire & Emergency (@QldFES) [August 26, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 6.13am BST

Santos halts offshore drilling while awaiting federal court decision

Gas company Santos has agreed to halt drilling in the Barossa gasfield, 265km north-west of Darwin and near the Tiwi Islands, as the federal court deliberates on a challenge to the regulator's decision to allow it to go forward.

Tiwi man Dennis Tipakalippa is suing the federal offshore gas regulator, alleging that [proper consultation about the project did not occur with the Munupi Clan](#), but that the regulator had evidence that the Munupi were relevant and interested parties who needed to be consulted on the project by law.

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Santos began drilling last month. Traditional owners told the court that Santos' Barossa offshore gas project posed a risk to sacred sites and their spiritual connections to the sea.

Tipakalippa said in a statement:

Drilling into the seabed is like drilling into our bodies. I'm relieved that Santos will drop drilling before it gets to the gas and will not start any new well – that is a big worry for us, so it's very important to get that promise.

This week, we have had our voices heard. We will fight to protect our Sea Country, from the beginning to the end.

Tiwi Islanders hold a banner protesting the Barossa gas project. Photograph: Rebecca Parker

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.28am BST

block-time published-time 6.01am BST

enltrAlbo's inquiry into the Morrison madness will report the day before the Victorian election. Nice timing.

— Neil Mitchell (@3AWNNeilMitchell) [August 26, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 5.56am BST

I've got the official terms of reference for the inquiry on paper now.

It says that the inquiry is into "the appointment of former Prime Minister the Hon Scott Morrison MP to administer departments other than the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and related matters".

You can [read the whole lot here](#) , but the key part I think is that the inquiry will "examine and report on the implications arising from the appointments, including on: the functioning of departments of state, Government Business Enterprises and statutory bodies; the structure of the Ministry; the accountability of the executive to the Parliament; and public confidence in government".

It will also "recommend any procedural or legislative changes which would provide greater transparency and accountability".

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.16am BST

block-time published-time 5.50am BST

And that's a wrap on that presser. Phew! I didn't even have time to introduce myself: Stephanie Convery with you now right through til this evening. Thanks so much to Natasha for her work this morning!

block-time published-time 5.49am BST

Albanese urges 'people to cooperate with the inquiry'

Albanese and Dreyfus are asked whether Scott Morrison will be compelled to give evidence. Again, the PM reiterates that it's Bell conducting the inquiry, not the government:

It is important that people cooperate with this inquiry of Virginia Bell. It is less than two weeks since Australians found out about the appointment to any of the additional departments and ministries that Mr Morrison was appointed to... These are extraordinary circumstances. You can't just dismiss it in the way that Peter Dutton has.

But what we have done is very quickly determined to have an appropriate-level inquiry with a former High Court judge, and we have every confidence that people will cooperate with it.

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If there isn't cooperation, then there are other matters that can be considered in the future. But I would urge people to cooperate with the inquiry. Virginia Bell has undertaken to lead this work and it's important. It's important so that people can have confidence in our parliamentary democracy.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.18am BST

block-time published-time 5.47am BST

Dreyfus harks back to the responses from the three previous Liberal PMs to Morrison 's secret ministerial appointments, by way of underscoring the government's assertion that it's not a partisan matter to have set up an inquiry:

The three past Liberal prime ministers of our country have, all of them, condemned this conduct. That's why it needs to be investigated.

block-time published-time 5.44am BST

Recommendations to be delivered to parliament in late November

Dreyfus also reiterates that it's up to Bell how she runs the inquiry:

It's really important that this be seen as an independent inquiry conducted by her, appropriate to her status. She will be reporting to the government at the end of November, and it's up to her how she conducts this.

Albanese follows up by pressing that point that further, and also notes the timing, which means any recommendations can be dealt with by parliament the following sitting week:

This isn't, you know, a former minister or politician being appointed – this is someone far removed from politics, who is respected across the board. And we don't want to direct Virginia Bell into how she conducts the inquiry. Virginia Bell, I do thank her for being prepared to undertake this, undertake this inquiry.

It is something that is, I think, very positive, the fact that we have such an eminent person undertaking this inquiry, I think, means that it should be welcomed by all who hold our parliamentary system of democracy dear. By all who understand that we can't take it for granted and we need to protect it.

And the reason, of course, why, the timing of the inquiry, will report by 25 November, means that there will be a parliamentary sitting after that so that any changes that are required and recommended can be implemented, put to the parliament in the following sitting week. So that it can be dealt with expeditiously and dealt with in an appropriate manner.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.55am BST

block-time published-time 5.41am BST

Appointment of former high court judge 'gets the balance right'

Albanese says that appointing Bell, a former high court judge, should "bring confidence from the Australian public".

We think this gets the balance right. But I would find it extraordinary if anyone refused to talk to a former high court judge who is, I think, beyond reproach. I'm certain that this appointment will be seen for what it is and that people will cooperate by giving information.

Certainly, the public service will be required, and I don't think it will require compulsion. But if it was the case that Virginia Bell felt like she was not getting the cooperation that was required, then I'm certain that other measures could be considered.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.53am BST

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

block-time published-time 5.40am BST

Mark Dreyfus: inquiry a result of solicitor general's advice

The attorney general, Mark Dreyfus, says the inquiry was "absolutely made necessary" as a consequence of the solicitor general's advice, which was released earlier this week.

Dreyfus reiterates that the government is committed to publishing all ministerial appointments of its own, but also that they want to prevent secret appointments occurring again.

Dreyfus suggests every member of the community can contribute to the process:

Ms Virginia Bell, former high court justice, now asked to inquire into this matter, she will be able to get to the bottom of what occurred and she will be able to make, after consulting with everyone that has something to say about this, after hearing from any member of the Australian community who wants to write to her, offering suggestions, she will be able to make concrete recommendations to our government so that we make sure that no future government can ever do what Mr Morrison did.

Anthony Albanese (left) and attorney general, Mark Dreyfus, arrive for a media conference in Sydney to announce the inquiry into Scott Morrison's secret ministries. Photograph: Bianca de Marchi/AAP

block-time updated-time Updated at 6.13am BST

block-time published-time 5.37am BST

Albanese explains that the inquiry will report into:

Scott Morrison's appointment to administer the departments of Health; Finance; Industry, Science, Energy and Resources; Treasury; and Home Affairs.

The implications arising from these appointments for the functioning of departments, government business enterprises and statutory bodies, and for accountability and public confidence in the system of government.

It will examine and report on practices and processes applying to ministerial appointments, including the public disclosure of these appointments.

It will make recommendations to the government on any changes which could provide greater transparency and accountability to ensure that this can never happen again.

block-time updated-time Updated at 5.40am BST

block-time published-time 5.35am BST

Albanese continues, detailing the terms of reference:

The terms of reference for the inquiry were agreed to by the cabinet. It's very clear, when we received the advice from the solicitor general, who said to, quote, 'The principles of responsible government are fundamentally undermined by the actions of the former government,' that we need to have a quick and appropriate inquiry which is not about the politics but about how this happened, why it happened, who knew about it. We need to have transparency in the process because our system of parliamentary democracy relies upon conventions, relies upon the Westminster system of checks and balances.

block-time updated-time Updated at 5.39am BST

block-time published-time 5.34am BST

Anthony Albanese announces Virginia Bell AC will lead inquiry into Scott Morrison's secret ministries



Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

The prime minister Anthony Albanese has announced the appointment of Virginia Bell AC to lead the inquiry into former PM Scott Morrison's secret ministries. She will give her report by 25 November.

Albanese:

The government has established an inquiry into the appointment of former prime minister Scott Morrison to administer various ministerial portfolios. The inquiry will be led by the Hon Virginia Bell AC. Virginia Bell was appointed to the high court of **Australia** in 2009 and served for 12 years. Virginia Bell is an eminent individual with an extensive and diverse legal career as a community lawyer, a barrister, a Law Reform commissioner, a supreme court, as well as court of appeal, judge, before assuming her high office in the high court of **Australia**.

Virginia Bell AC, a former high court judge, will lead the inquiry into Scott Morrison's secret ministries. Photograph: Alan Porritt/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.08am BST

block-time published-time 5.32am BST

I am handing the blog over like a hot potato to Stephanie Convery before prime minister Anthony Albanese and attorney general Mark Dreyfus take to the stand to announce the details into the Morrison inquiry.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.32am BST

block-time published-time 5.24am BST

Greens urging government to respond to Senate inquiry recommendations into shark mitigation

Following the news that a 10th whale has been caught in Queensland shark nets this migration season, the Greens are calling for Labor to respond to the recommendations from the 2018 Australian Senate inquiry into shark mitigation policy.

Peter Whish-Wilson, who led the inquiry, told the Guardian:

There is no evidence that nets and drumlines make ocean-goers safe. They are merely designed to provide a sense of security.

**Australia** is the only country in the world to utilise these lethal and unjustified measures, making us an international embarrassment.

The federal government has an important role to play in protecting endangered marine life killed by lethal shark nets and drumlines deployed by the states. It also has a significant role in driving national investment in emerging shark risk mitigation measures to protect ocean goers.

In 2018 the Australian Senate inquiry into shark mitigation policy found that the federal government needs to show leadership in striking the right balance between mitigating the risks of shark encounters and conserving nature.

While the Morrison government deliberately avoided taking any responsibility and showed no leadership in this critical matter of public interests, I'm eager to commence working ASAP with the new Labor government. Labor should start by doing what the previous government failed to do and respond to the Senate inquiry recommendations into shark mitigation.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.29am BST

block-time published-time 5.08am BST

Albanese to announce details of Morrison secret ministries inquiry shortly

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

Prime minister Anthony Albanese is expected to shortly announce details of an inquiry into Scott Morrison 's secret ministerial appointments.

Albanese will hold a press conference at 2.30pm AEST from Sydney, where he will be joined by attorney general Mark Dreyfus.

Albanese had flagged that an "eminent" legal expert would helm an inquiry, but questions remained over what powers the probe would have, whether it would be able to compel witnesses like Morrison or his staff to appear, and what form it would take.

The Greens have pushed for a judicial inquiry with powers similar to that of a royal commission.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.12am BST

block-time published-time 5.04am BST

Grassfire in Gulgong

Firefighters are trying to contain a grassfire that has broken out in Gulgong in western NSW.

The national outlook for bushfires released yesterday warned that grassfires remained a threat even if the risk of bushfires was low.

enltrWATCH&ACT: Beryl Rd, Gulgong (Mid-Western LGA) Aircraft assisting firefighters to contain a grassfire burning 6km west Gulgong. Access hampered by wet ground. No current threat to properties. People in area to monitor conditions, know what they'll do if the fire threatens [#NSWRFS pic.twitter.com/VYmsWbuBPh](#)

— NSW RFS (@NSWRFS) [August 26, 2022](#)

Related: [La Niña rainclouds bring silver lining as fire risk stays low across much of eastern Australia](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.12am BST

block-time published-time 4.54am BST

South **Australia** records no Covid deaths and 176 people in hospital

There were 770 new cases in the last reporting period, and 10 people are in intensive care.

enltrSouth Australian COVID-19 update 26/08/22. For more information, go to <https://t.co/XkVcAlWPSN pic.twitter.com/3V69aIPq3W>

— SA Health (@SAHealth) [August 26, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.56am BST

block-time published-time 4.48am BST

Weekly Beast is out!

Amanda Meade 's Weekly Beast is out, tackling the legal battle between Lachlan Murdoch who has filed defamation proceedings against independent news outlet Crikey, with the Sydney Morning Herald getting caught in the crossfire.

Related: [Sydney Morning Herald caught in the Crikey crossfire as letter to Lachlan Murdoch knocked back | The Weekly Beast](#)

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block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.57am BST

block-time published-time 4.36am BST

Littleproud accuses PM of 'copying National Party's biodiversity homework'

The leader of the Nationals and shadow minister for agriculture, David Littleproud, said he welcomes the Labor government's federal biodiversity certification and trading scheme announced today.

However, in a statement, Littleproud has accused the prime minister Anthony Albanese of "copying National Party's biodiversity homework". He said:

The prime minister was not creating a once in a lifetime opportunity as it had already been done by the previous Government.

The concept, the trials with farmers, the trading platform were all funded and delivered by The Nationals in Government.

This exact legislation was also already introduced into Parliament.

The Agriculture Biodiversity Stewardship Scheme was one of my greatest achievements in Government and I'm pleased that the new Government will adopt it.

Littleproud said the previous Government invested more than \$96m into the scheme and called on the government to stick to its original purpose.

The aim of this scheme was to provide a passive income stream for farmers, through a voluntary market that big corporates will pay for, and not the tax payer, to not just abate carbon but actually improve the environment.

It is now a matter of getting on and getting it done. We had farmers interested and businesses ready to go. The trading platform was being built.

But it was The Nationals that made this happen. If the Prime Minister is genuinely invested in this he will make sure this is not held up and implemented as soon as possible."

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.45am BST

block-time published-time 4.28am BST

WA records one Covid death and 225 people in hospital.

There were 1,429 new cases in the [last reporting period](#) , and seven people are in intensive care.

block-time published-time 4.19am BST

Snowy Hydro managing director offers resignation

In an interesting development on the energy front, Paul Broad, the managing director and CEO of Snowy Hydro, has offered his resignation.

Broad has been Snowy's head since 2013 and has led "organisational expansion and innovation, transforming Snowy Hydro into a dynamic and integrated energy business," the commonwealth-owned organisation [said on its website](#).

Broad's exit, if confirmed, could add another cloud over the future of Snowy's giant pump-hydro scheme, dubbed Snowy 2.0. That project will probably end up costing multiples of the original \$2bn tab when then PM Malcolm Turnbull announced the plan in 2017.

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Snowy 2 is also years behind schedule, with the AFR earlier this year reporting it won't be finished until 2028. (The Australian Energy Market Operator still has a 2026 start date pencilled in, optimistically.)

Speculation has swirled about whether Broad would hold on to his role once the federal government changed in May. Snowy's behaviour in the run-up to the recent suspension of the national electricity market in June had raised concerns among some officials.

One insider recently described Snowy's actions as "rapacious", which sat at odds with the organisation's 100% federal ownership.

However, another person familiar with the energy ministers' meeting in Canberra earlier this month said Snowy did not feature during that gathering (even though the market suspension was discussed at length).

Snowy said its board will now begin a process to identify "new leadership", with Roger Whitby, chief operating Officer, holding the fort in the interim.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.27am BST

block-time published-time 4.15am BST

NSW transport woes could be resolved next week, but 'worst case scenario' is another six months, transport minister says

As Sydney commuters face train delays this week due to industrial action, NSW transport minister David Elliott says he hopes a resolution will be reached.

Elliott was questioned at a parliamentary hearing over negotiations with the Rail, Tram and Bus Union and said he hopes to end the dispute soon, but conceded it could drag on for months.

He said the earliest time frame for a resolution "could be next week".

If we get [it] done this week ... next week I have just got to go to the union and say, 'Let's go, boys'.

That is the best-case scenario. The worst-case scenario in my mind, it could be up to six months.

An industrial dispute between the Rail, Tram and Bus Union and the NSW government could drag on for months. Photograph: REX/Shutterstock

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.33am BST

block-time published-time 4.04am BST

Showers predicted for NSW

enltrCurrent temperatures across [#NSW](#) with the chance of showers along the coast due to onshore winds. Settled weather conditions are expected for most areas during the weekend before a trough will move into western NSW from about Monday. Forecasts: <https://t.co/SPHgGej0wx> [pic.twitter.com/qjkJa3hTuK](https://t.co/qjkJa3hTuK)

— Bureau of Meteorology, New South Wales (@BOM\_NSW) [August 26, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 3.49am BST

Ministers for Indigenous affairs meet to address closing the gap

Tackling disadvantage experienced by First Nations people in health, education and other areas will be on the agenda when the federal government meets today with Aboriginal peak bodies and state and territory ministers for the first time since the election.

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The minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney, assistant minister Malarndirri McCarthy and state and territory counterparts are meeting to address the gap in living standards between Indigenous Australians and the rest of the country.

Burney said it was vital that all jurisdictions come together to address the inequities that many First Nations people experience across the country.

The importance of closing the gap cannot be underestimated.

The minister said better data collection is needed to ensure appropriate funds and resources are directed where needed most.

It is not up to government to decide those places.

The 17 targets address disproportionate rates of incarceration, poor health, education, early childhood and the rates of children in out home care as well as strengthening culture and language.

Burney said it was not beyond **Australia** to close these gaps, with [recent data revealing many are not on track](#) :

Until First Nations people are living lives of choice and change, just like other Australians, then we cannot ever hold our heads in the space of Indigenous affairs.

We can ensure that we lift the standard of living for First Nations people in this country, and we can see a referendum come forward for voice to be enshrined in the constitution.

Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney: 'The importance of closing the gap cannot be underestimated.' Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.03am BST

block-time published-time 3.44am BST

Apparently it smells quite bad in the Melbourne suburb of Cranbourne today. Perhaps it's time to bring back pocket posies.

enltrCRANBOURNE ODOUR – EPA officers are in the area after renewed reports of landfill odour overnight and today. This is part of EPA's continued surveillance of the source of recent odour issues. We will keep the local community informed as the situation progresses.

— Environment Protection Authority Victoria (@VicGovEPA) [August 26, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 3.39am BST

Federal biodiversity certification and trading scheme announced

The federal government has extended the principle of carbon credits to biodiversity, announcing a new certification scheme for landholders who restore or manage habitat.

A statement issued today by the prime minister Anthony Albanese and the environment minister Tanya Plibersek says the biodiversity certificates can be bought and sold, with the system to operate in a similar way to current carbon crediting legislation.

They say:

The scheme will make it easier for businesses, organisations and individuals to invest in landscape restoration and management.

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

As companies look to invest in carbon offsetting projects like tree planting, we need to make sure there is a path for farmers and the environment to benefit.

The program will be managed by the Clean Energy Regulator, as the carbon credits scheme is. The government said it will be “consulting widely” on the rules for the scheme in coming months.

Anthony Albanese said it was a “a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” to “kickstart a nationwide restoration”:

Our market will be open to all land managers – whether they’re farmers, people interested in conservation or Indigenous land managers.

This is a chance to support farmers using their knowledge and expertise in a way that benefits us all - a chance to shape a better future.

Tanya Plibersek said:

Businesses and philanthropic organisations are looking to invest in projects to protect and restore nature. We need to make this easier.

Repairing nature is good for productivity. Reducing erosion, protecting topsoil and providing shelter for livestock – it’s all good for business.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.35am BST

block-time published-time 3.28am BST

Collins St peregrine falcons prepare to extend their brood

Since 1991, a pair of peregrine falcons have lived in a nest on the side of a Melbourne skyscraper at 367 Collins Street.

It is the only known peregrine falcon nesting site within the CBD. As well the pair’s contribution to the ongoing breeding success of these rare birds, they also played a role in the wellbeing of Melbourne’s populace during various Covid-19 lockdowns. Here’s something we prepared on the topic during Lockdown 2.0 in 2020:

Related: [Melbourne on tenterhooks as peregrine falcon chicks prepare to take flight](#)

Meanwhile, the female falcon has just laid her eggs for 2022 and is sitting on them as we speak.

One of Melbourne’s beloved peregrine falcons sits on her eggs. Photograph: 367 Collins St Falcons livestream

enltrGod, it's that time of year already: the CBD peregrines are on their eggs and on the live stream: <https://t.co/IQMFWeNNG>

— Bird Michael From Twitter (@wtb\_Michael) [August 25, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.34am BST

block-time published-time 3.17am BST

PM says more needs to be made in **Australia** to lessen reliance on international supply chains

Albanese is asked at the Bush Summit an audience question from a farmer about the increasing costs producers are facing.

Albanese says **Australia** is disadvantaged by being at the end of global supply chains when events such as the war in Ukraine affect supplies.

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

We suffer when we're at the end of global supply chains.

We need to make more things here ... and that includes in food and agriculture, taking our marvellous produce, and make sure where we can we value add.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.19am BST

block-time published-time 3.13am BST

Queensland records eight Covid deaths and 321 people in hospital.

There were 2,091 new cases in the last reporting period, and 16 people are in intensive care.

enltrToday we have recorded 2,091 new COVID-19 cases. Sadly, we have reported 8 deaths in the past 24 hours. Full details ?? <https://t.co/rKHlwrlsQ> <pic.twitter.com/FHG5CfMYNF>

— Queensland Health (@qldhealth) [August 26, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 3.01am BST

Albanese says unlikely friendships come from 'treating people honestly'

The MC of the 2022 Bush Summit, the Daily Telegraph's Ben English, is commenting on how the prime minister has been "making new friends" including the National Farmers Federation and premier Dominic Perrottet.

Albanese responds:

I just treat people honestly and with integrity.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.11am BST

block-time published-time 2.58am BST

Albanese commits to \$75m post-disaster resilience for flood affected areas in NSW

Albanese's speech at the Bush Summit also made a commitment to deliver \$75m post-disaster resilience for all 62 local government areas affected by the February-March floods.

Albanese said during his speech:

As you grapple with climate change, and the intensifying cycles of flood, fire and drought, you deserve nothing less than a government that has your back.

In that spirit, I announce today that the government will deliver \$75m post-disaster resilience to areas across New South Wales devastated by the February-March floods.

It will be delivered by the Emergency Response Fund, which Albanese said "sat idle under the previous government". The money will go towards:

A flood impacts and risk management measures report; A levee assessment and improvement program; Valley level flood risk management assessments; Flood warning infrastructure and systems and associated community awareness; Flood mitigation infrastructure and voluntary house raising.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.10am BST

block-time published-time 2.49am BST

ACT records no Covid deaths and 109 people in hospital.

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

There were 252 new cases in the last reporting period, and two people are in intensive care.

enlrACT COVID-19 update – 25 August 2022 ?? COVID-19 case numbers ? New cases today: 252 (132 PCR and 120 RAT) ? Active cases: 1,463 ? Total cases since March 2020: 201,338 ? For more detail, including an age breakdown of case numbers, please visit <https://t.co/qRDoepyJkh> [pic.twitter.com/pjzr94joDS](https://t.co/pjzr94joDS)

— ACT Health (@ACTHealth) [August 25, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 2.47am BST

‘Being prime minister should cover it’: Albanese

The main speech is over and Albanese is now taking questions.

Before his speech ended, Albanese reinforced his commitment to regional communities, shown in the previous ministerial portfolios he has held including infrastructure. However, Albanese made a jibe at Morrison, saying he hasn’t taken on any new roles to continue to look out for regional Australians – “Being prime minister should cover it.”

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.48am BST

block-time published-time 2.41am BST

PM highlights farmers’ role in regeneration of landscape

Albanese tells the Bush Summit net zero is “once in a lifetime opportunity” to kickstart the regeneration of landscape.

The PM is acknowledging the important role farmers have in the carbon credits scheme which he says the market value on biodiversity helps protect. He says it is:

A chance to support farmers using their knowledge and expertise in a way that benefits us all.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.44am BST

block-time published-time 2.37am BST

‘No ideological op-out’ when it comes to climate, Albanese tells Bush Summit

The prime minister Anthony Albanese is presenting his address at the 2022 Bush Summit.

He is discussing the “critical” biosecurity threats facing the agriculture industry, from foot and mouth disease to the varroa mite affecting NSW beekeepers.

When it comes to climate change, Albanese says there is “no ideological op-out course”.

The greatest reward comes in the stewardship of the land.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.39am BST

block-time published-time 2.22am BST

Australian bushmaster spotted on frontlines in Ukraine

enlr [#Ukraine](#) : An Australian ???? Bushmaster Protected Mobility Vehicle which is currently being actively used on the frontline- this has a EOS R400-Mk2 remote weapon station with an American Mk. 19 Mod 3 automatic grenade launcher. This is the first time we have seen this combination. [pic.twitter.com/hcNLjpqU6Q](https://t.co/hcNLjpqU6Q)



Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

— ???? Ukraine Weapons Tracker (@UAWeapons) [August 25, 2022](#)

Other Australian bushmasters have been pictured in Ukraine, like this one destroyed in May:

enltr [#Ukraine](#) : The first verified loss of a Ukrainian Bushmaster Protected Mobility Vehicle (with a EOS R400-Mk2 remote weapon station), donated by **Australia**. This one was recently destroyed by the Russian forces in Trypillia, [#Donetsk](#) and [#Luhansk](#) oblast border. [pic.twitter.com/wZ0icckfHT](https://pic.twitter.com/wZ0icckfHT)

— ???? Ukraine Weapons Tracker (@UAWeapons) [May 28, 2022](#)

Here is video of the vehicles arriving in Ukraine (there were 20 all up) and being road-tested by the Ukrainian military:

enltr Australian Bushmasters have made it into Ukraine [pic.twitter.com/3ztCOnSTEm](https://pic.twitter.com/3ztCOnSTEm)

— OSINTtechnical (@Osinttechnical) [April 27, 2022](#)

The Daily Mail earlier this week reported a story about [Russia showing off a destroyed bushmaster](#).

block-time published-time 2.16am BST

Syndicate operating locally has international connections, NSW police say of ice seizure

State crime command acting director of operations, Detective Chief Superintendent John Watson, told the media conference:

This seizure is the biggest in **Australia's** history so what we are seeing now is the syndicate that was operating locally on our shores, they had international connections. We are looking well into that.

block-time updated-time Updated at 2.22am BST

block-time published-time 2.12am BST

NSW police detect further 1,060kg in **Australia's** biggest-ever ice bust, bringing total seized to 1.8 tonnes

NSW police operations have made multiple busts recently out of sea containers coming into Port Botany in Sydney, the latest this morning \$1.6bn worth of ice, the largest discovery of its kind in **Australia**.

NSW police are speaking at a media conference following that record discovery, saying the investigation has progressed since this morning's announcement.

Assistant commissioner Erin Dale :

With this consignment following on from last week - last week we talked about the 24 containers coming through and ABF officers identified initial anomalies and initially detected 750kg of methamphetamine.

Joint to that shipment we had further consignment which is about 19 containers arrived last week into Port Botany. On further examination, a further 1,060kg of methamphetamine was detected.

This brings the total seizure to over 1.8 tonnes of methamphetamine which has a street value over \$1.6 billion.

The consignments - the concealments were very sophisticated in nature as to concealed built-in marble slabs, tiles.

Crime scene evidence photo from NSW police of seized ice. Photograph: Stuart Cadden/NSW Police

block-time updated-time Updated at 2.46am BST

block-time published-time 1.53am BST

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

Victorian firefighter redress scheme announced

Firefighters exposed to harmful levels of toxic substances at a former Victorian training college will be compensated in a new redress scheme, AAP reports.

The Country Fire Authority's Fiskville training site was permanently closed in 2015 after tests showed firefighters were being exposed to dangerous chemicals.

The Labor government set up a parliamentary inquiry into the site, with a redress scheme among 31 recommendations made.

Victorian emergency services minister Jacylyn Symes on Friday apologised to those affected by the Fiskville site and announced a \$57 million redress scheme.

People who worked or trained at Fiskville, lived at or in the vicinity of the facility, or went to the Fiskville state school will be eligible to apply for compensation.

The maximum amount each applicant can claim is \$45,000.

The scheme will also provide non-financial support including case management and counselling.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.58am BST

block-time published-time 1.45am BST

Renewed calls to ban shark nets as 10th whale this season caught in Queensland net

The ABC is reporting that a whale has been freed this morning after being caught in shark nets off Noosa Main Beach.

The news brings renewed calls for the banning of shark nets, among them Greens Senator Peter Whish-Wilson.

enltrNETS OUT NOW! This isn't a choice between keeping marine life or humans safe, both are possible! Modern alternatives to shark nets that better protect ocean-users and the environment exist. We wouldn't accept 50 year old safety measures anywhere else, so why our beaches? [pic.twitter.com/C8rLOVMVgw](https://pic.twitter.com/C8rLOVMVgw)

— Peter Whish-Wilson (@SenatorSurfer) [August 26, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.53am BST

block-time published-time 1.39am BST

Linda Burney: government can address tangible disadvantage and symbolic change

The minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney, Coalition of Peaks' Pat Turner and assistant minister for Indigenous health Malarndirri McCarthy are speaking now at the big meeting they are having in Adelaide on addressing disadvantage among First Nations Australians.

They'll be meeting later today with all of the Indigenous heads of peak organisations to discuss health, wellbeing and justice targets.

Minister Burney is speaking now on the steps of Parliament House with SA attorney general and Aboriginal affairs minister Kyam Maher.

She says it's vital that all jurisdictions come together to address the inequities that many First Nations people experience across the country:

The importance of closing the gap cannot be underestimated.

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

Burney says that the federal government can address both tangible disadvantage and what is often referred to as symbolic change such as a voice to parliament:

We can ensure that we lift the standard of living for First Nations people in this country, and we can see a referendum come forward for voice to be enshrined in the constitution.

Asked about health and justice including in troubled Banksia Hill and Don Dale detention centres, with reports of overcrowding and self-harm, along with calls to raise the age:

The clear message from the federal government is that we are most concerned about these reports and want to work collaboratively with states and territories on addressing the issues.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.45am BST

block-time published-time 1.34am BST

500 new Aboriginal health worker trainees announced ahead of joint council on Closing the Gap

Senator Malarndirri McCarthy followed Burney in that media conference held earlier ahead of government and Indigenous leaders meeting to Close the Gap.

I certainly want to announce today that our focus is around 500 Aboriginal health worker trainees across [Australia](#). I'm looking forward to working with Pat Turner and NCCCHO, but also the Aboriginal community health sector, because we know that health, jobs, housing, all of these are absolutely critical. There are social policies that our government is absolutely committed to. We are focused also on renal disease, on rheumatic heart disease, and, of course, in the jobs sector the revamping of the Community Development Program. So, we can do both - we can ensure that we lift the standard of living for First Nations people in this country, and we can see a referendum come forward for a voice to be enshrined in the constitution.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.37am BST

block-time published-time 1.29am BST

Linda Burney says data needed for Closing the Gap reforms to succeed

Government officials are meeting with Indigenous leaders from the joint council on Closing the Gap for the first time since 2021 in Adelaide today.

A media conference was held ahead of that meeting and this is what the minister for Indigenous Australians Linda Burney had to say:

The Closing the Gap targets are absolutely fundamental to changing the lives of First Nations people in this country. But more significantly, as outlined, is the four priority reforms.

And, in particular, the shared decision-making and the point about data collection. You cannot do what we need to do in terms of Closing the Gap unless there is proper data to make sure that the efforts and the resources that we're putting into areas are the areas that are most in need. It is not up to governments to decide those places. It is up to organisations ... and the Coalition of Peaks to tell government where our efforts need to be put.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.36am BST

block-time published-time 1.24am BST

Building ministers to discuss changes including lifting energy efficiency ratings

It's Friday so it means some federal, state and territory ministers are meeting somewhere. This time, it's building ministers, and the gathering is in Sydney this afternoon.

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

We flagged some of the changes expected to emerge from the meeting in this article yesterday, namely the long-overdue lifting of energy efficiency ratings from 6 stars to 7 stars for new homes in the national construction code, the first such change since 2010 :

Related: [\*Tougher seven-star energy efficiency standards for new Australian homes set to be approved\*](#)

That's not the only item on the agenda though, another being accessibility standards for new homes.

Mick de Brenni, Queensland 's minister for energy and public works says voluntary codes set up a decade ago haven't been enough to nudge home builders, so a "silver level" standard needs to be formally added to the code.

Among the mandatory features for new homes (and significant renovations) would be step-free access, corridors wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs, and a toilet on the entry level.

"These are simple design features that you see in public buildings all the time, that you see in our hotels and motels across the nation," De Brenni told us just before boarding a flight south. "They have been striving to accommodate all Australians equally."

"It makes sense... that those design features that deliver quality, deliver dignity, are now in everybody's homes too," he said.

Queensland hasn't set a precise timetable for the changes to be introduced in that state, but a six-18 month period is the target, and de Brenni is hoping to nudge counterparts elsewhere to sign up to similar code modifications and timing.

The minister is expecting pushback from the housing industry. Queensland reckons improving accessibility from the get-go would increase the average costs by \$2,900-\$4,300, or about 1%.

De Brenni, though, said retrofitting could cost 15-20 times that, and in some cases isn't possible. While one benefit would be to allow people to live in their homes longer - and hence ease the strain on aged care and other similar out-of-home services - young families too would benefit particularly if prams are in use. (Exemptions for steep blocks, and so, will remain.)

When [builders] said it can't be done, what they're really saying is they don't want to do it. "I'm sure there were complaints when people called for seatbelts to be mandatory in cars.

(The building industry has been approached for comment.)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.31am BST

block-time published-time 1.18am BST

Employment minister says gig economy 'drives down wages and is spreading like a cancer'

Tony Burke has reaffirmed that Labor will empower the Fair Work Commission to order minimum conditions for gig workers.

He will tell the Transport Workers Union on Friday:

Consultation will officially start today. I want to make this clear: we are not consulting about whether we should act. That decision has been made. There will be a new responsibility given to the Fair Work Commission. This consultation process is about how that occurs. Because I know Australians want the technology without the exploitation.

There are plenty of places in the world where people have jobs where you can only make ends meet with tips. **Australia** should never be that sort of country. While the consultation is beginning with the sorts of gig companies

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

most Australian will have represented on their phones, the need to get this right goes much further than transport and food delivery. Gig work drives down wages and it has been spreading like a cancer through the economy.

Extending into the care economy – into aged care and the NDIS – and into industries like security. Gig work must not become the equivalent of a get-out-of-jail free card in Monopoly where business is able to avoid the minimum standards that Australians hold dear. 21 st century technology must not mean 19 th century working conditions.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.22am BST

block-time published-time 1.16am BST

Jim Chalmers: 31,000 Australians missing work each day because of long Covid

The treasurer has gone on to those figures reported to News Corp papers mentioned earlier:

Another challenge in the economy is obviously the ongoing impact of Covid. Our labour market has been absolutely smashed by Covid and by long Covid increasingly. Now, we've released numbers that show something like 31,000 Australians are missing work each day because of the impacts of long Covid, as part of a bigger challenge that we have with managing Covid itself.

So, whether it's labour shortages, the impact of long Covid, concentrated disadvantage, and long-term unemployment in communities like this one, there's no shortage of issues for us to grapple with at the local level and at the national level as well.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.24am BST

block-time published-time 1.13am BST

Unemployment to be a key focus of jobs summit

The treasurer Jim Chalmers is speaking in Logan, Queensland about the challenges the government will try and tackle at next week's jobs summit.

He says the topic of unemployment is very personal to him because of how his own seat of Logan is one of the communities where unemployment remains a problem.

The [national] unemployment rate is 3.7%. On this side of Compton Road, it's 6.2%. And that gives you an indication, it gives you a flavour of the challenge that we have in our labour market in making sure that no community is left behind.

So, this will be a key concern, a key focus of the jobs summit next week in Canberra, is how do we make sure that the opportunities of a growing economy and a tight labour market are within the reach of more and more people so that we can grow this economy together and so that people can have the benefits of work, they can work hard, they can get ahead, they can feed themselves and the people that they love.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.16am BST

block-time published-time 1.00am BST

Long Covid is reportedly draining Australia's workforce

An estimated 31,000 Australian workers are calling in sick every day because of the debilitating symptoms of long Covid, AAP reports.

Treasury data given to News Corp papers shows 12% of those missing work as a result of Covid are suffering the long-term after-effects of the virus.

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

NSW and Victoria reported a combined 8,580 cases of coronavirus on Friday, with 5,645 and 2,935 new infections respectively.

NSW reported 1,780 people in hospital with the virus while Victoria reported 386.

Victoria reported 25 deaths of people infected with Covid-19, NSW reported 22.

The treasurer, Jim Chalmers, indicated that tackling the impact of Covid would be on the table at next week's jobs summit. Chalmers told News Corp:

Covid is having a long-term impact on the productivity of our workforce.

NSW premier Dominic Perrottet is pushing to reduce the required seven-day isolation period to five days for people who test positive for Covid.

Perrottet plans to bring it up at next week's national cabinet meeting with his state, territory and federal counterparts.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.13am BST

block-time published-time 12.51am BST

NSW building commissioner David Chandler to remain in job

The announcement comes just a month after Chandler abruptly resigned from the role, a move which sparked significant controversy within the government.

His resignation letter, which was later released through parliament, raised a series of concerns, including what he called the "advised relationship" between the former fair trading minister Eleni Petinos and a property developer, Coronation Property, which hired former deputy premier John Barilaro after he left parliament.

The letter has [since been referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption](#) by premier Dominic Perrottet "out of an abundance of caution".

Petinos has since been sacked from cabinet in the wake of allegations she ran an unsafe office, allegations she has denied. Perrottet has insisted that the decision to sack her was unrelated to the concerns raised in Chandler's letter.

In a statement on Friday, the new minister for fair trading, Victor Dominello, confirmed Chandler would now stay in the role until at least next August.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.03am BST

block-time published-time 12.42am BST

Dominic Perrottet gives keynote speech at 2022 Bush Summit

The NSW premier has begun to give his keynote address in Griffith at the 2022 Bush Summit.

Perrottet is saying Services NSW provided the basis for the state's success during the pandemic.

He is also expected to announce funding to incentivise frontline workers, particularly teachers and nurses, to fill labour shortages in the regions, the Australian is reporting.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.45am BST

block-time published-time 12.35am BST

Climate Council says urgent response needed in face of deadly predictions from Harvard study

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

A new study out today from Harvard University projects northern **Australia** could face dangerously high heat levels most days of the year by 2100, while southern regions of **Australia** may experience deadly heatwaves annually.

Dr Simon Bradshaw, the director of research at the Climate Council, had this response to that news:

This study paints a grim and confronting vision for our future, but the silver lining is that heat is one area of climate extremes where stronger action today is going to make a huge difference to our future.

If we really set emissions plummeting this decade, then as early as 2040 we would start to see fewer deadly heatwaves than would otherwise occur. Every tonne of avoided emissions, everything we do now to step up our efforts, is going to be measured in lives saved and in a better future for people born today.

There are substantial public health measures we could be taking to prepare for an increase in extreme heat days, including naming heatwaves as we do cyclones, so people are more aware of their danger and can better prepare for their arrival.

Of course, the most important and urgent mitigating factor is to rapidly phase out fossil fuels and race towards **Australia** achieving net zero emissions by 2035. It's a big job, but it is absolutely crucial we get this right. Every fraction of a degree of warming saved, will be counted in lives saved.

My colleague Donna Lu has the full story about that study:

Related: [Northern Australia could have dangerously high heat most days of the year by 2100, study finds](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.38am BST

block-time published-time 12.23am BST

Nick Kyrgios pitted against good friend Thanasi Kokkinakis in US Open first round

The US open draw is out and best mates Nick Kyrgios and Thanasi Kokkinakis are set to face off in the first round.

When they play together as a doubles team the pair is known as the "Special Ks".

Related: [Nick Kyrgios pitted against good friend Thanasi Kokkinakis in US Open first round](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.25am BST

block-time published-time 12.12am BST

NSW records 22 Covid deaths and 1,780 people in hospital.

There were 5,645 new cases in the last reporting period, and 36 people are in intensive care.

enltrCOVID-19 update – Friday 26 August 2022 In the 24-hour reporting period to 4pm yesterday: - 96.9% of people aged 16+ have had one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine\* - 95.4% of people aged 16+ have had two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine\* [pic.twitter.com/WlrVWmyYpA](https://pic.twitter.com/WlrVWmyYpA)

— NSW Health (@NSWHealth) [August 25, 2022](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.15am BST

block-time published-time 12.09am BST

Victoria records 25 Covid deaths and 386 people in hospital.

There were 2,935 new cases in the last reporting period, and 18 people are in intensive care.

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

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: <https://t.co/eUcG51gd78> [pic.twitter.com/x6nkUUOrjE](https://t.co/x6nkUUOrjE)

— VicGovDH (@VicGovDH) [August 25, 2022](#)

block-time published-time 12.04am BST

Serious e-scooter injuries double in Victoria

Electric scooters may be a fun way to travel around the Melbourne city centre but the number of serious scooter-related injuries has almost doubled in the state, AAP reports.

Forty-nine people have been admitted to The Alfred's trauma centre in the past year as a result of incidents involving e-scooters and e-bikes.

Eighteen patients have ended up in intensive care, the Victorian hospital has told AAP.

It's a significant jump on the same time last year, when there were 24 trauma centre admissions and five intensive care cases. Trauma services acting director associate professor Joseph Mathew said:

There's an extremely worrying trend of people using these e-bikes and scooters under influence and of drugs and alcohol.

Further to that, a number of people choosing not to wear safety gear such as helmets.

What people don't realise is the normal protection that a car offers with seatbelts, airbags, is not available on the motorbikes or e-bikes or scooters.

When you come off at 20 to 30 kilometres per hour without any protection, you fall and you have devastating injuries.

A 20-year-old e-scooter rider died in February this year after he collided with a station wagon on the Princes Highway in Narre Warren, south-east of Melbourne.

An e-scooter rental scheme has been trialled in the City of Melbourne, Port Phillip and Yarra, allowing people to ride hired scooters in bike lanes, on low-speed roads and shared paths.

VicRoads says many people have been riding e-scooters illegally on roads and footpaths, putting safety at risk.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.07am BST

block-time published-time 11.55pm BST

Anthony Albanese to call for 'market for biodiversity'

The PM will give a speech at the Bush Summit in Griffith this morning. Writing [in the Daily Telegraph](#), Albanese revealed the government will create a "market for biodiversity".

He said:

As we move toward net zero, we're creating a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to protect **Australia's** natural environment and kickstart a nationwide restoration.

We will introduce legislation to underpin a market for biodiversity. This will operate in a similar way to our current carbon crediting legislation.

With companies looking to invest in carbon offsetting projects like tree planting, we need to make sure there is a path for farmers and the environment to benefit.



Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

We need to protect waterways, provide habitat for native species, reduce erosion, protect topsoil, improve drought resilience and create shelter for livestock.

Placing a market value on biodiversity helps us achieve that.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.59pm BST

block-time published-time 11.53pm BST

Shorten acknowledges 'challenge for media diversity in this country'

Shorten was also asked about Independent MP Zoe Daniel flagging she will move in parliament for setting-up of a judicial inquiry into what she describes as outsized media concentration and the lack of media diversity in Australia, all in the interests of protecting Australian democracy.

Question:

In your view, do companies like News Corp exercise way too much power in this country?

Shorten:

Well, in terms of Ms Daniel's motion, she's entitled to move what she wants. The government said they're not going to have a specific inquiry into News Corp. I think there is a challenge for media diversity in this country. We've seen the increasing concentration of media. One thing I know that Labor is committed to, in terms of setting back or rolling back some of the threats to media diversity, is to properly fund the ABC.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.57pm BST

block-time published-time 11.48pm BST

Bill Shorten's message to Peter Dutton: 'Don't try and defend the indefensible'

Circling back to the minister for the NDIS Bill Shorten's interview with ABC News Breakfast this morning following the government's announcement of the royal commission into the robodebt scheme.

Shorten was asked about opposition leader Peter Dutton saying the royal commission in his view is nothing more than a witch-hunt and a bid by the government to simply get square with Scott Morrison. Shorten responded:

Well, he would say that, wouldn't he? I mean I'd say back to Mr Dutton two things. One – if the people that you're defending, Mr Morrison and others, have done nothing wrong, there's nothing to worry about, is there?

But more importantly than that, we had a situation where the human oversight was taken out and the machines were left in charge. Even beyond the issue of Coalition ministers boasting about the scheme and shaming vulnerable people and creating almost two classes of Australians – those who were not on the welfare safety net and those who were, and implying that the latter group are somehow were likely to be cheats and doing the wrong thing – we can never again be in a situation where a government, unquestioningly accepts what the machine says and assumes that when the machine says one thing and people say another thing that the machine's right.

So there's a lot to learn here. And I would also just remind Mr Dutton as a former opposition leader myself, don't try and defend the indefensible from a previous government.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.56pm BST

block-time published-time 11.30pm BST

Auckland waterfront blast injures five

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

Five people have been admitted to hospital after suffering burns in an explosion in downtown Auckland, New Zealand, AAP reports.

The blast occurred at around 6:30am Friday morning in the upmarket Wynyard Quarter on the waterfront.

St John Ambulance has reported five people required hospital-level care, including four in a serious condition, and one first graded as critical but then re-classified as moderate.

A worker told news outlet Stuff the incident happened in a portable building at a construction site, suggesting a gas cooker had been left on overnight.

Frank Walsh, a senior fire officer at Auckland Central Station, told the NZ Herald they beat ambulances to the scene and attempted to assist the injured with fire hoses.

On arrival we were confronted with five quite badly burnt patients.

We then handed the patients over to the ambulance crews as more resources arrived.

Burned clothing has been left at the site.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.32pm BST

block-time published-time 11.22pm BST

**Anne Aly**. English language requirements prevent childcare workers filling shortages

The minister for early childhood education is on ABC radio discussing the crippling workforce shortages in Australian childcare.

Aly says one of the biggest barriers when it comes to immigration for potential childcare workers is that the requirement for English skills is too high.

She says an academic level of English, rather than a function level of English, is required.

It still needs to maintain a high standard of English but needs to be functional.

Minister for early childhood education **Anne Aly**. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.25pm BST

block-time published-time 11.16pm BST

Bill Shorten: 'there's a good case' to have Morrison and ministers brought before robodebt royal commission

Bill Shorten appeared on ABC Breakfast News earlier this morning following the government's announcement yesterday of a royal commission into the robodebt scheme. Shorten told ABC:

Asked what he would like to see come out of the commission, said he wanted to know "how a government can unlawfully raise \$2bn worth of debts against nearly half a million of its citizens... and why it was never stopped after hour and a half years when there were complaints from 2016 onwards that this scheme was out of control and causing massive harm."

Asked about whether he would expect Scott Morrison and other relevant portfolio ministers at the time to be compelled to appear before the royal commission, Shorten said it's a matter for commissioner Catherine Holmes to decide.

But as the federal court found in the resolution of the class action... the judge in the case said that senior public servants and responsible ministers ought to have known.

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So there's a good case to have them explain why did they break the law, why didn't they know they were breaking the law – if, in fact, they didn't know they were breaking the law – and why did they ignore all the warnings signs until a class action and Victorian supreme court finally got a determination it was unlawful four and a half years later.

When ABC News asked Shorten to clarify whether he would “welcome” Morrison and relevant ministers appearing before commission, Shorten replied:

I don't think the word “welcome” is the right word.

I wish that this had never happened. But the parliament was broken in the last term. When we raised these issues in parliament, the government brushed us off. They never answered did they think the scheme of unlawful. For 4.5 years, they stubbornly and stupidly defended an unlawful scheme, so at some point I think, for closure for the victims and also to make sure that it can't happen again, it would be important, I think, for the responsible people who created and ran robodebt to explain why they did this.

block-time updated-time Updated at 12.05am BST

block-time published-time 11.15pm BST

Baby koala flood survivor returned to wild

An inquisitive and gentle baby koala found crying for its mother during one of the worst days of this year's catastrophic flooding in the NSW Northern Rivers has been released back into the wild, AAP reports.

Koala joey Gulliver was found walking on the ground alone in torrential rainfall at Tregeagle, west of Ballina, on February 28.

Gulliver was rescued on the same day hundreds of residents from towns in the Northern Rivers were stranded on rooftops, as floodwaters inundated Lismore and surrounding areas.

NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet told media at the time the situation was “unprecedented” and “distressing”.

Gulliver was calling for its mother, which could not be located by rescuers.

The 14-month-old marsupial was taken in by rescue organisation Friends of the Koala, which partners with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) to care for koalas and return them to the wild.

Gulliver was found to be in good shape by vet Jodie Wakeman, but because of its young age the joey was put into at-home care until it was old enough to return to the bush.

The young koala was alert, inquisitive and gentle-natured, according to its carers.

After nearly five months in care, Gulliver was released back into the wild last week.

block-time published-time 11.02pm BST

Drugs worth \$1.6bn seized in NSW

A massive haul of the drug “ice”, with an estimated street value of \$1.6bn, has been seized in NSW in the largest discovery of its kind in [Australia](#), AAP reports.

Last month, Australian Border Force officers homed in on a number of sea cargo containers that arrived at Port Botany in Sydney.

They found 748kg of methylamphetamine concealed in marble stone.

NSW police strike force investigators later arrested and charged three men, aged 24, 26 and 34, who remain before the court.

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

Then last week, ABF examined more containers at Port Botany and found another 1060kg of methylamphetamine also concealed in marble stone.

In total, more than 1,800kg of the drug “ice” – with an estimated potential street value of more than \$1.6bn – was seized.

This is **Australia**’s largest seizure of the drug, NSW police said in a statement.

Authorities will provide more details at a press conference in Sydney on Friday.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.10pm BST

block-time published-time 10.50pm BST

Greens support unions’ collective bargaining proposal

RN Breakfast host Patricia Karvelas is now speaking to Bandt about the upcoming jobs and skills summit.

Bandt has said he supports the Australian Council of Trade Unions’ proposal for collective bargaining.

There would need a change to the law.. with the Liberals saying they’ll take an oppositional role, the only way that will happen is with the support of the Greens.

Our position is that workers should be able to bargain collectively at whatever level they choose.

We need to start lifting wages and the govt’s hands off approach to the cost of living pressures people are facing is not good enough. We cannot proceed with the stage 3 tax cuts, which will predominately benefit men and the very wealthy.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.57pm BST

block-time published-time 10.46pm BST

Bandt flags party’s support in Senate could help Greens push to stop new coal and gas

Asked by ABC Radio how the Greens will push to stop new coal and gas:

We need to have a moratorium on new coal and gas... we’ll be pushing for a climate trigger in our environment laws because we know the climate crisis is the biggest threat to **Australia**’s environment.

... but also the government’s safeguard mechanism is coming up that’s going to require the support of the Senate.

We are heading towards the climate cliff at 200km an hour the government is gently tapping the brakes with its climate legislation but then flooring the accelerator by opening new coal and gas projects.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.50pm BST

block-time published-time 10.43pm BST

Government undoing its own climate legislation, Greens leader says

On Wednesday, resources minister Madeline King announced 10 new areas totalling over 46,000km of ocean, would be open for exploration.

The leader of the Greens Adam Bandt is now speaking to ABC Radio about that decision.

Bandt said despite the decision, the Greens will still be supporting the government’s emissions reduction legislation, but his party is still continuing to advocate for a moratorium on new coal and gas projects.

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The ink isn't even dry on the climate legislation and the government is already undoing it... you don't end the climate wars by opening new coal and gas projects.

Australian Greens leader Adam Bandt. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.57pm BST

block-time published-time 10.40pm BST

In hiding, an Afghan woman set alight by the Taliban is forced to wait to join her brother in Brisbane

The last post told you the statistics behind the visa backlog.

My colleague Eden Gillespie brings you this story which shows you the human impact of where those backlogs leave people like Huma.

Related: [\*In hiding, an Afghan woman set alight by the Taliban is forced to wait to join her brother in Brisbane\*](#)

block-time published-time 10.35pm BST

Immigration minister says system is 'broken' but new staff reducing backlog

Immigration minister Andrew Giles has told a Sydney thinktank **Australia**'s visa system has been devalued and decimated, and will take years to restore. He told the Sydney Policy Lab last night:

The former government lost control of the visa system. Almost 1m visa applications were waiting for this Labor government. Good governance demands a figure far smaller.

Endless waiting affects migrants, families, businesses, and the community alike. Partners separated from their loved ones.

State governments unable to complement their stretched healthcare and education workforces. Universities unable to compete against global peers to discover new ideas and knowledge for the benefit of all Australians.

Giles said **Australia** typically has between 40,000 and 80,000 people living in the country on a bridging visa – an administrative visa given to someone who has a visa application pending. Currently, there are more than 330,000 bridging visa holders:

There is no better indicator of a broken system, mired in uncertainty for everyone involved. In a system where waiting times can be months or even years, there is no known end date to most bridging visas.

The majority of people who hold them are prohibited from leaving **Australia**. Daily life becomes a struggle. Changing jobs or even applying for finance becomes much more difficult.

Giles said at one point more than 200,000 applications for citizenship were waiting on determination from the department, with some people waiting more than five years for citizenship to be granted.

The minister said new investments in staff and training within the Department of Home Affairs had reduced the backlog, but there was more work to be done, and the redress would take time.

Giles said the government, too, would target the exploitation of migrant workers, seeking to end the weaponisation of "rolling" temporary visas to undercut pay and conditions:

**Australia**'s modern story has been told by people whose contribution is premised on the fact they were not guests in this country. This continues on the pathway to a better **Australia**, a reconciled nation that harnesses its diversity.

This is part of the recipe for a better **Australia**.

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.39pm BST

block-time published-time 10.29pm BST

Employment minister open to unions' collective bargaining proposal

The ACTU's proposal for sector-wide collective bargaining is of interest to a new government prepared to consider "left-of-field" ideas, minister for employment and workplace relations Tony Burke has said.

Appearing on the ABC's 7.30 ahead of a national jobs and skills summit next week, Burke said the new government needed to reinvigorate **Australia**'s industrial relations system and "get wages moving":

In the lead-up to the summit, I'm not – we're not ruling things in or out, there's some ideas pretty much left-of-field that we kept on the table. I do have to say I'm interested in what the ACTU has put forward. We need to be able to get bargaining moving and there are a few examples in different workforces where that concept of multi-employer bargaining is really interesting.

Burke alleged the former government deliberately kept wages low as a "design feature" of its economy:

We deliberately want to get wages moving. And we have this very unusual situation with the economy at the moment where unemployment is so low and that should create the hydraulic pressure that is pushing wages up, but instead, the pressure is there but the pipes have leaks in them. And bargaining not working is one of those key leaks. So if multi-employer bargaining is one of the ways of opening that up ... I'm interested.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.37pm BST

block-time published-time 10.26pm BST

Drugs worth \$150m found in imported car

More than \$150m worth of the drugs ice and cocaine have been found in a vintage Bentley in a shipping container at Sydney's Port Botany, AAP reports.

The container carrying the 1960 vintage Bentley S2 arrived on a ship from Canada this month.

The car underwent an X-ray and examination and authorities found 161kg of methylamphetamine and 30kg of cocaine hidden behind the headlights.

Yesterday NSW police executed a search warrant at Rooty Hill in Sydney's west and arrested and charged two men aged 20 and 23.

A third man, 25, was arrested and charged in Ballina in the northern rivers region during a vehicle stop after police found 2.2kg of ice and more than \$1.1m in cash.

All three men were refused bail to appear at local courts today.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.36pm BST

block-time published-time 10.23pm BST

Industry minister gives green light to grants awarded under Morrison secret ministries

The Industry minister, Ed Husic, has announced that a review of the grants awarded under the modern manufacturing initiative, which [Labor complained made Scott Morrison](#) the personal decision-maker for up to \$800m of grants, did not breach any grant guidelines and will go ahead.

Australia news live updates: John Barilaro charged with assault; Virginia Bell to lead secret ministries inquiry

The audit checked whether grant rules were followed, whether the advice of the independent panels was followed and whether the program as a whole delivered value for taxpayers.

It found that the grants were all supported by an independent assessment committee and the processes adhered to grant guidelines. Husic said:

Despite the brazen attempt of the former Morrison government to politicise this grant process by delaying announcements until the election period and failing to inform unsuccessful applicants, the Government is now satisfied the companies have been awarded MMI funding according to the applicable grant process.

The Department of Industry, Science and Resources will now begin the contracting process for the 68 grants announced under the program.

Husic also took aim at the former government for waiting until “the last possible moment close to an election” to announce the successful recipients, and for failing to notify those who had been unsuccessful among the 400 applicants.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.51pm BST

block-time published-time 10.22pm BST

Good morning!

In the latest news out of former prime minister Scott Morrison's secret ministries saga, the grants for the modern manufacturing initiative which Morrison would have overseen due to his swearing into the industry portfolio looked as though they could be in doubt.

But the current industry minister, Ed Husic, has given the green light to the grants, with an audit finding they did not breach any grant guidelines.

Meanwhile, the employment and workplace relations minister Tony Burke has indicated that he is open to the Australian Council of Trade Union's proposal for collective bargaining.

Burke told ABC's 7.30 last night that collective bargaining could help get wages moving:

I do have to say, I am very interested in what the ACTU have put forward.

Nine papers is also reporting that Burke will use a speech later today to announce a sweeping expansion of the industrial relations system.

Nick Bonyhady reports Burke will declare “Uber-style labour contracts a ‘cancer’ on the Australian economy, and is launching talks with major players on how to extend traditional employee rights to gig workers”.

The minister for immigration, Andrew Giles, gave a speech in Sydney last night on the administration of the immigration system, saying the government is starting to shift the backlog of visas:

We have shifted the backlog from almost a million visa applications to around 900,000.

Let's get going!

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.28pm BST

**Load-Date:** August 26, 2022