

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals 'fearmongering' on voice ahead of party's decision on referendum stance



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Highlight: Julian Leaser confirms Liberal party will meet Wednesday to decide position on Indigenous voice to parliament. Follow live 'A great Australian': Anthony Albanese leads tributes to Yunupingu Get our morning and afternoon news emails, free app or daily news podcast

Body

block-time published-time 8.22am BST

My colleague Antoun Issa has put together a great summary of today's news so far:

Related: [Yunupingu hailed as 'one of the greatest Australians'; female cricketers get pay rise; and Paris to ban e-scooters](#)

block-time published-time 8.07am BST

Latest electricity figures show prices are up

Meanwhile, the federal government probably won't be crowing too much about how its gas and coal price caps are affecting electricity prices. In recent weeks, falls in wholesale prices in the national electricity market since speculation about possible caps near the end of 2022 were cited by ministers and some government officials as proof they were having some impact.

The latest weekly wholesale price figures for the national electricity market point to sizeable increases of late.

enltrWholesale power prices in the national electricity market have been edging higher, particularly for the current quarter. (Source: ASX) pic.twitter.com/8Y5TVi00dc

— [@phannam@mastodon.green](#) (@p_hannam) [April 3, 2023](#)

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Lots going on in the energy sector, including the closure by the end of this month of the remaining three units of AGL Energy’s Liddell power station.

Watch this space, as they say.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.21am BST

block-time published-time 8.01am BST

ACCC expects east coast gas supplies to be sufficient but winter might be tight

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has released its [March 2023 interim gas inquiry report](#), finding that only another 3 petajoules of gas is needed to meet forecast demand this year.

That’s an improvement from the 27PJ shortfall forecast by the competition watchdog only last January. No “material shortfall” is expected in 2023, Gina Cass-Gottlieb, the ACCC’s chair, said.

Cass-Gottlieb added:

If LNG producers commit an extra 3PJ of gas to the domestic market, in addition to amounts already contracted, a shortfall will likely be avoided, but we remain concerned about adequacy of gas supply in the winter months.

Some of that browbeating of the industry – which exports about 70% of the gas it produces – seems to have worked.

An increase in forecast gas production also helps, as might the easing of global demand after what turned out to be a relatively mild winter for Europe at least. Nations there have been struggling to find substitutes for Russian gas after that nation’s invasion of Ukraine.

Still, a cold burst in south-eastern [Australia](#) in winter might still stretch supplies. The ACCC notes that southern states (especially Victoria and South [Australia](#)) still face a projected 26PJ shortfall that will require Queensland gas to be piped south.

enltrACCC says gas producers are within 3 petajoules of gas supply to meet demand, an improvement from the projected shortfall of 30 PJ in its January forecast. Still, “we remain concerned about adequacy of gas supply in the winter months”, ACCC chair Gina Cass-Gottlieb says. pic.twitter.com/m9l2iwzSbe

— @[phannam@mastodon.green](#) (@p_hannam) [April 3, 2023](#)

However, in the fourth quarter a surplus of 18PJ is expected across the east coast gas market, so some of those contracts might be tweaked.

Cass-Gottlieb said:

If gas supply is brought forward, for example through gas swaps, or if LNG producers commit further gas to the domestic market, supply should be sufficient to meet demand in the third quarter of 2023.

We encourage producers to consider this information and amend their plans to ensure domestic demand will be met each quarter.

Mind you, the problems aren’t only for this year, with shortfalls still projected from 2027 without expanded projection, the ACCC said. (Or, without diverting more of the gas earmarked for exports to the domestic market, which might be an alternative approach.)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 8.04am BST

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block-time published-time 7.52am BST

Aly and Joyce asked about Liberals' Aston byelection loss

Anne Aly and Barnaby Joyce are asked for their thoughts on the Liberal party's loss at the Aston byelection. Aly speaks first:

It's up to [the Liberal party] to do a postmortem but I've been hearing a lot of talk about the Liberal party needing to take heed, to look at itself and to change, perhaps one of the ways they can do that is to recognise that their obstruction in parliament and unwillingness to work with the government on any issues is starting to really affect their brand and their vote.

Joyce shares his thoughts:

I will acknowledge two things. One is they want us to never challenge them in parliament and for them to have a carte blanche ... they just want carte blanche on legislation when they should be more honest about the details. They don't like Peter Dutton as leader because he is very effective and the vast majority of legislation that goes through the parliament is bipartisan, it's just because it's not colourful you don't see it ...

block-time updated-time Updated at 7.56am BST

block-time published-time 7.44am BST

Anne Aly claims Liberals 'fearmongering' on Indigenous voice

Minister for early childhood education and youth, **Anne Aly**, is asked whether there is room for compromise on the wording of the voice proposal:

I would hope the Liberals would come to this with open arms and open hearts but the fact is, Greg, the prime minister has had several meetings with Peter Dutton. He's had ample opportunities to be constructive on this and he simply hasn't and quite frankly, the questions they are asking and the kind of fearmongering that is going on is very disingenuous.

The questions that they've been asking in parliament are not questions the Australian people are asking, these are questions devised by the tactics group in opposition in order to ask in question time and undermine the process.

I hold hope for Liberal party and the Liberals that they are going to come to the table and hopefully learn the lessons from Aston and from other elections that they need to be constructive and to work with the government on this stop because this is an issue that precedes a Labour government.

This is for the Australian people and I think if the Liberals really want to demonstrate that they are heeding the lessons from the Aston byelection and other elections, they will move forward constructively.

Labor MP **Anne Aly**. Photograph: Morgan Hancock/AAP

block-time updated-time Updated at 8.01am BST

block-time published-time 7.40am BST

Barnaby Joyce: Indigenous voice 'goes against the tenor of how democracy works'

Shadow minister for veterans' affairs Barnaby Joyce is also speaking on the voice referendum. When asked if the Nationals "jumped the gun" by opposing the voice – following news the Liberal party is meeting this week to decide their position – he replied:

No more jumped the gun than the Greens who seemed to get to the position of yes without getting all the details.

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We're still for solicitor general advice. This is the biggest change in my life I would say, well for almost a century. We're [talking] about an unelected body defined on race having access to the executive of government ... I think it is so massive and it goes against the tenor of how democracy works.

With that much say in a position of power, you've got to be elected, not selected ... I don't see this as bringing the country together, I see it as dividing us up.

National party MP Barnaby Joyce (centre). Photograph: Mike Bowers/The Guardian

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.47am BST

block-time published-time 7.33am BST

David Coleman reflects on Liberal party's Aston byelection loss

Coleman was also asked about the Liberal party's loss in the Aston byelection, and said the party will "reflect on that result and learn from it".

Obviously [it was] a very disappointing result, there is no point beating around the bush on that.

The government obviously is still in a honeymoon period. We lost Alan Tudge who did have a strong personal vote in that election and to be frank, the issues in Victoria that we saw in the week or two before the election were clearly not helpful. So I think there is a range of things that have occurred there.

Our task, as it always is, is to hold the government to account as we approach the next election to put forward an alternative set of policies for Australia but no beating around the bush, as I said, disappointing result and we will reflect on that result and learn from it.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.42am BST

block-time published-time 7.29am BST

Liberal MP David Coleman says he doesn't want to pre-empt discussion on the voice

Shadow communications minister David Coleman, also appearing on Afternoon Briefing, is being asked about the Liberal party's upcoming party room meeting on Wednesday to decide their position on the voice.

Coleman said he doesn't want to pre-empt the discussion or outcome:

It is an incredibly important issue. We've only changed the constitution eight times in 122 years. We all want the very best for Indigenous Australians, we all acknowledge that there are many things in our past that were frankly terrible, as they relate to Indigenous Australians. We all want to do all that we can to improve the situation of Indigenous Australians. But it doesn't necessarily follow that everybody has to agree exactly with everything that Anthony Albanese says on the issue. So we'll talk it through on Wednesday.

Shadow communications minister David Coleman. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.38am BST

block-time published-time 7.23am BST

Malarndirri McCarthy urges Julian Leeser to back a bipartisan approach to the Indigenous voice to parliament

Afternoon Briefing host Greg Jennett has asked Malarndirri McCarthy whether Yunupingu expressed confidence in the success of a voice referendum:

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I certainly got a sense there was a finality to a journey that he’s been fighting for so long Greg, that he saw in prime minister Anthony Albanese someone who he could believe in and trust in, when he came to Garma to say that we were going to a referendum in terms of the voice and following through on the Uluru statement from the heart.

Jennett also asked McCarthy for her thoughts on Julian Leeser’s earlier comments at the National Press Club. Leeser questioned why the government would “risk the social and racial harmony” of the nation if success is not guaranteed in the voice referendum.

McCarthy responded:

On this day of deep reflection for us up here [in the Northern Territory], I would say to Julian Leeser, who I have worked with closely over the years, we even went to Antarctica together, I would say to Julian why would you risk the journey that you have travelled on with us and with First Nations people by saying no to supporting a bipartisan approach?

Earlier today it was announced that the Liberal party will be meeting on Wednesday to decide their official stance on the voice.

Malarndirri McCarthy at the Garma festival in north-east Arnhem Land on 29 July 2022. Photograph: Carly Earl/The Guardian

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.31am BST

block-time published-time 7.16am BST

Malarndirri McCarthy pays tribute to Yunupingu: ‘He really led a movement of all our generation’

The assistant minister for Indigenous Australians, Malarndirri McCarthy, is paying tribute to and remembering Yunupingu while appearing on the ABC’s Afternoon Briefing:

No doubt it was quite groundbreaking when the Northern Land Council and other councils came into being as a result of the 1976 Aboriginal Land Rights Act, and that came into being because of the work of Yunupingu and so many other First Nations leaders.

That was a time of great change, but also optimism and hope for the future and yet an understanding of the deeper challenge facing systemic resistance against what many did not like to see, in terms of Aboriginal land rights going back to Aboriginal peoples, so he really led a movement of all our generation.

... I was only a young girl at the time when he was chairman of the Northern Land Council, and I remember those occasions, and then meeting him when I was a journalist, doing stories and then obviously on a closer and more personal level, he assisted us in our fight as the first First Nations people to fight for country under the Aboriginal Land Rights act and that took us over nearly four decades.

Assistant Minister for Indigenous Australians, Senator Malarndirri McCarthy. Photograph: Martin Ollman/Getty Images

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.20am BST

block-time published-time 6.55am BST

Albanese shares post-Aukus deal Adelaide trip photos

The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, has shared some photos on social media of his trip to Adelaide – his first visit to the city since the Aukus deal was announced.

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He toured a Collins-class submarine at Osborne with the South Australian premier, Peter Malinauskas, and met with local workers.

Speaking earlier, Malinauskas spoke about the Aukus deal and what that means for South **Australia**:

There can be no doubt about the fact that the Aukus opportunity of building nuclear submarines here in South **Australia** represents the greatest opportunity we've had in our state ... Up to 5500 people employed directly, right here in Osborne, to build the most complex machines that have ever been built in human history.

The size and the scale of this enterprise cannot possibly be overstated. South **Australia** is not just excited about that task, but we are already gearing up for it.

We're going to need a whole lot more workers to build the AUKUS submarines here in **Australia**. Jack, who I met this morning at Osborne Naval Shipyard in Adelaide will work on upgrading the facilities to get ready for the build. pic.twitter.com/IQUGneko6r

— Anthony Albanese (@AlboMP) [April 3, 2023](#)

The manufacturing done here will be some of the most complex in history. AUKUS will create 20,000 direct jobs for Australians. It's the single biggest investment in our nation's defence capability. It will be a transformational moment for **Australia** after a decade of inaction. pic.twitter.com/zulEkXJxSn

— Anthony Albanese (@AlboMP) [April 3, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.02am BST

block-time published-time 6.44am BST

Former prime minister Paul Keating shares tribute for Yunupingu

Yunupingu always had natural leadership qualities about him.

For just on half a century, he was a major spokesman for Indigenous interests and pursued those interests with rationality and consistency.

Much recognition for the interests of Indigenous people happened over the course of his active lifetime including, of course, the High Court decision in Mabo and the practical implementation of what the decision meant under the Native Title Act - the first really significant acts restoring justice in land for Indigenous peoples.

Few would have been more conscious of the contemptuous disregard of Indigenous history, the dismal place that the first peoples found themselves in, in their own country.

He lived to see a lot of progress and will be sorely missed.

Former Prime Minister Paul Keating on the death of Yunupingu. "He was a major spokesman for Indigenous interests and pursued those interests with rationality and consistency." More here: <https://t.co/BlpEdd4mye> pic.twitter.com/eTFDZ0tKaB

— Anna Henderson (@annajhenderson) [April 3, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.01am BST

block-time published-time 6.33am BST

Albanese says he'd go to China if invited

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While speaking in Adelaide, Albanese said he would accept an invitation to visit China were it to be given by president Xi Jinping.

This was after he was asked for his thoughts on state premiers visiting China and whether it is a sign of "the relationship stabilising".

Albanese said dialogue is "always a good thing" and that "we will co-operate with China where we can [and] disagree where we must, and engage in our national interests".

He added:

It is a positive thing that I met with president [Xi Jinping] at the G20 meeting. It is positive that my assistant trade minister Senator [Tim] Ayres met his counterpart in the last week at Yunnan at the forum that was held. I expect that my trade minister, Don Farrell ... will visit China sometime in the coming weeks or months going forward ... I was with premier McGowan yesterday, who is planning to visit.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.42am BST

block-time published-time 6.21am BST

Albanese shares conversation with Yunupingu on wording of voice referendum

Albanese has also shared a personal story of speaking with Yunupingu when the wording for the Voice referendum was announced.

Albanese said:

When I met with him at the Garma festival in July last year, when I committed the government to holding a referendum, he asked me at that point in time, 'Are you serious?' because he had been let down so many times in the past.

And I regarded it as a great honour when his family reached out for me to have a conversation with him on the day that we announced the wording with the Referendum Working Group that will go forward in legislation now and after a committee, that's the words that will be considered before the parliament, for a referendum at the end of this year.

I had the opportunity and great honour of speaking to him that afternoon. He was surrounded by his loved ones and by his community and he said to me on that afternoon, and I will never forget it, he said to me, 'you spoke truth' and that was one of the most heartwarming things that anyone could possibly have ever said to me in my life.

He was an extraordinary leader. We mourn with his people today and we pay tribute to a lifetime of advocating for the rights of Aboriginal people in this country ... I think that today is a day that I certainly recommit myself to do everything we can to make sure that that referendum is carried at the end of this year.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.25am BST

block-time published-time 6.09am BST

'If you don't run on the field you cannot win': Albanese on voice referendum

While speaking in Adelaide just before, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was asked about comments Julian Leeser made at the National Press Club earlier today about the voice referendum.

During questioning, Leeser said:

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... why would you want to risk the social and racial harmony of the country, a reconciliation process, by putting [forward] a referendum whose success is not guaranteed? I think that is a reflection that the prime minister needs to seriously think about.

Albanese responded:

I say if not now, when?

Indigenous people expect this to be advanced.

...we know that when consultation occurs you get better outcomes. That is why we need to get this done and to not put it to the Australian people is to not advance, it is to, by definition - if you don't run on the field you cannot win. You cannot succeed.

We will give Australians that opportunity and I would urge people like Julian Leeser who has a history of genuine support for reconciliation and advancing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to not just vote yes, but campaign for yes in the referendum that will be held sometime between October and December.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.17am BST

block-time published-time 6.04am BST

Thanks Natasha for guiding us through the morning! I'll be here to see you through the rest of today's news.

block-time published-time 6.00am BST

Thanks for your attention this afternoon and apologies for all the legalese. Emily Wind will take your through the rest of today's news!

block-time published-time 5.58am BST

Our own Josh Butler asks:

You've been a long-time supporter of the voice and involved in the processes that you have concerns about the current government's plans or format. Would you rather see the referendum fail than passed in a format you don't prefer?

Leeser :

The government needs to ask themselves whether there is enough support for the moment to put the referendum, that's the question need to ask themselves.

I compare this to the republic referendum where at this point in the cycle the republic was tracking at 70 or 80%. This is in the low 50s.

When I go around my community and I ask people seriously what they think of the voice, the thing people most often say to me is "I love the TV program." I don't say that with any joy or sarcasm. That is the response I most often get.

People don't know what this is. The idea there is momentum that we have to do this now is the prime minister's artificial timetable. My position on this has always been that we should take the time to get this right.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.02am BST

block-time published-time 5.55am BST

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Leeser is asked about the genuineness of the Liberal position when they were in power when Ken Wyatt brought the Voice to the Morrison cabinet three times and it did not progress.

Leeser denies there wasn't genuine commitment to progressing the voice:

There has been a standardisation of what happened. I didn't serve in the Morrison government but what did Ken Wyatt do? He brought for the Calma Langton report, the Calma Langton report said roll out the local and regional voices first. What did we do? We responded, we committed to rolling out the local and regional Voices and we committed the money to that process as well.

block-time published-time 5.52am BST

'No monopoly on morality'

When Karen Barlow from the Canberra Times asks Leeser about whether the Liberal party accepts the political consequences of heading down towards the no side, he responds:

You're making an assumption about where we're going to end up. The second thing to say is everybody who comes to this debate wants things to be better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

There is no monopoly on morality here, no monopoly on a desire to achieve better outcomes. Both sides of politics have spent enormous amounts of money on Indigenous affairs with little to show for it.

That's why we all come to this debate. The question for all Australians is whether this is the right model to achieve that and this is a decision that parliament will face and ultimately the decision Australians will face.

I got involved in this debate many years ago because they wanted to find a way that we could achieve this. I was attracted to the idea of the Voice because it wasn't symbolic, because it was something that was structural. The question is, have we got the detail in that structure right?

block-time updated-time Updated at 5.54am BST

block-time published-time 5.48am BST

The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, declares of Aukus:

This is a well thought out plan.

(Always reassuring when a leader has to say that.)

Albanese talks about the planned rotational visits to Australia by US and UK nuclear-powered submarines from 2027. He says the submarines will be present in Australia "for a considerably longer period of time" than they had done in the past. Albanese says that is also about how to skill up the workforce.

block-time published-time 5.46am BST

Leeser warns of 'sugar hit' of referendum passing on an ineffective voice model

Back to the questions Leeser is taking at the National Press Club. Clare Armstrong from News Corp asks the shadow attorney general about the moral consequences of pursuing the no campaign:

You talked about the primary goal of the voice not being about the feeling everyone has on the night of the referendum, but with this proposal there is an element that is not about practicality.

It has been lamented what kind of Australia we would wake up to the day after an unsuccessful referendum. In fact despite being critical of the wording last month Professor Greg Craven said, I'm going to quote:

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"I would vote for it because if I was forced to take a position as to the sort of advanced morality of doing justice to our Indigenous brothers and citizen, I could not vote against it."

I wonder, what do you think it would say about **Australia** and what message it would send to Indigenous Australians if the Voice vote failed and do you agree with Professor Craven that there is moral impetus here to support regardless of your legal reservations?

Leeser responds that "the constitution is for keeps" and shouldn't be sacrificed for the "sugar hit" that will come from the morning after the referendum:

I think the first thing to say is that we shouldn't put a referendum if it is in any danger of failure, that's the first thing. The government should not be putting the country through this.

Secondly, referendum is about changing the constitution and the constitution is for keeps. So we have to look carefully about the words being put into the constitution, we have to consider their legal ramifications, because the sugar hit that will get on the night of the referendum or the day after will soon dissipate if the body is not serving the interests of Indigenous Australians and is not working the way it is intended.

I want to see a situation where only put a question if it is guaranteed a success. I do think we should put a question if there is a chance for failure and I think the prime minister needs to reflect on that.

...I think is ultimately is not about what the parties do here in Canberra, ultimately what the Australian people do and I think Australians should be very circumspect in amending the constitution.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.52am BST

block-time published-time 5.38am BST

Albanese spruiks Aukus submarine plan in South **Australia**

The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, has stepped up at the Osborne shipyard in Adelaide to laud Aukus as "a most exciting proposal".

There doesn't seem to be a new announcement as such, but says he has spoken to the workforce. He says the long-term proposal will provide certainty to workers.

Albanese says:

Aukus is the biggest single investment in **Australia**'s defence capability in our history. Osborne will be at the epicentre of all that we do.

Albanese argues the nuclear-powered submarine plans "will strengthen **Australia**'s national security and contribute to regional stability in response to the unprecedented regional challenges which we are facing". (He doesn't directly name what country or countries are responsible for those unprecedented regional challenges.)

Albanese repeats one of his talking points that **Australia** is investing in its defence capability but is "also investing in our relationships in the region as well".

The South Australian premier, Peter Malinauskas, says South Australians appreciate the scale and size of the commitment the federal government has made.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.47am BST

block-time published-time 5.33am BST

Liberals may not resolve voice stance entirely on Wednesday

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Leeser earlier confirmed that the Liberal party will meet on Wednesday to decide its position on the voice to parliament. However, he says that a “completely concluded position” may not be reached.

I don’t think people should assume that we will have a completely concluded position on things on Wednesday when we have the committee process to go and there may be things that come out of the party room that help direct the work of the committee and members.

Leeser says a vote will be unlikely:

It is rare things come to a vote in the party room. Usually things are worked through, people have their say and a consensus is arrived at.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.45am BST

block-time published-time 5.26am BST

Taking questions, Leeser is asked by Cameron Gooley from SBS and NITV:

Is your party conducting a campaign to actively undermine this referendum and also, at this meeting on Wednesday, given what happened in Aston, do you believe that you and your colleagues need to change how you are going about conducting this debate?

Leeser defends the party stance:

We’ve come to this debate with an open mind, that was Peter Dutton’s position since he has been leader and he has asked for detail. When the words were first released, I welcome them and I also asked for detail. The detail has not been forthcoming.

... In relation to the Aston byelection, let me say this. The people of Aston have been to the polls three times in the last 10 months. They had a retiring member and as we saw in the state election in New South Wales, the votes of retiring members don’t always transfer across to people.

We’ve got a government that is still in this extended honeymoon phase, and while we have had a great candidate in Aston, a barrister, counsellor ... multicultural background, she only had five weeks to get known in the community.

I think we need to take a lesson from Aston, we need to listen to what the community is saying to us and we need to redouble our efforts to ensure that we as a party to meet the aspirations of Australians.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.37am BST

block-time published-time 5.18am BST

Leeser concludes his address

Ok thanks for staying with me on this very legalistic speech from self-professed constitutional “Nerdus Maximus” Leeser. We’ve gotten to the end and Leeser has given us a summary of what he wants us to take away:

In conclusion, the constitutional amendment has now been presented to Parliament. There are three points of our compass that have been set.

First, we support local and regional voices and call for the funding of them in the budget.

Second, any national voice must be deeply connected to the local and regional voices across **Australia** and it would have been better had the national voice been settled by reaching a bipartisan legislative consensus before we went to a referendum.

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Third, the government should reconsider the wording of the alteration with a particular focus on the issues I’ve raised.

He ends with these words:

I wish the referendum was in a better place than it currently is. I wish it was heading to a 1967- style result, but it is not.

I wish the government was finding common ground and trust in Australians with all the facts. They are not. They are mucking it up.

My colleagues and I will keep working through the detail and try to get answers for the questions Australians are asking. ...The next generation deserve their voice to be heard locally regionally and nationally. They deserve to be given as much opportunity as any other young Australians to thrive and prosper. This is the common ground we must find what all of us in public life must strive to deliver.

Australia’s shadow attorney general, Julian Leeser at the National Press Club in Canberra. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.24am BST

block-time published-time 5.14am BST

Leeser says his second issue with the constitutional amendment is about the form of constitutional recognition, and something in legal terms which is known as a “chapeau” (which means “hat” in French):

The third significant way that the government’s proposal recognises Indigenous Australians is through the preambular statement.... This is the set of words which reads in recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first people of **Australia** and then the subsections sits underneath it.

This type of provision is sometimes called a “chapeau”, it’s a symbolic statement that sets out an incontrovertible fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the first peoples of **Australia**.

Of course, everyone agrees with the statement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the first people of **Australia**. The issue with the chapeau is that it can frame the interpretation of the provision that sits underneath it or in this context, called in aid to the interpretation of other provisions of the constitution and that raises questions.

For instance, the government proposes to confer constitutional function of making representations to the parliament and the executive. But by putting the provision under the chapeau, would we be implying representations can only be made if in some way they are in recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as first peoples of **Australia**. In other words, in simple terms, what rights, obligations and privileges are being recognised as first peoples and what does the term imply at all?

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.20am BST

block-time published-time 5.04am BST

Leeser goes on to explain his concern about the wording of the constitutional amendment, particularly the clause which mentions the voice will make presentations to the executive.

We already heard much debate about the inclusion of executive government. As a matter of principle, I believe the voice of the local, regional and national level should be engaging with the decision-makers, it should be contributing to policy development, warning of problems emerging engaging and thoughtful debate.

...But that’s not the issue here. Instead the question is - what are the implications of putting that clause in the constitution. The inclusion of that clause in the way to Stratford arrays three immediate issues.

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First, who can the voice talk to? Which agencies are in which are out it comes to being part of the executive government?

Second, what can it talk about? What are matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians?

Third, what does it mean to make representations? Does it imply or leave room for any reciprocal constitutional obligation on parliament or the executive?

There are a few bold obsession to the contrary in the government's explanatory materials but the issue has not been considered in any depth in any public forum.

It is not enough to say these questions will be addressed in legislation afterwards, you can't out-legislate the constitution.

And I raise this issue is not only of a technical level but as a political one as well because this course will be the rallying point for the no campaign. Those who want the referendum to succeed, it puts the broader constitutional question at risk.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.05am BST

block-time published-time 4.58am BST

'In the constitution every word and even capitals matter'

Leeser goes on to say as well as calling on the government to commit funding to the local and regional voices, the second area he wants to see get "back on track" is the wording of the proposed constitutional amendment:

The second area where we must get the voice back on track is in relation to the wording of the proposed constitutional amendment. In the constitution every word and even capitals matter. There is nothing inconsequential in the constitution.

The beauty and strength of our constitution is a mechanical sparse rulebook for our nation.

Symbolic statements made with the best intent leave room for clever lawyers to egg on activist judges to imply all sorts of things that were never intended.

This matters in the constitution because the high court is the arbiter, parliament cannot amend the judgement of the court, the courts interpretation is final.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.09am BST

block-time published-time 4.55am BST

Shadow attorney general calls for establishment of local and regional voices

Leeser says he wants to use this speech to discuss how to get the work on the voice "back on track and how we can give the idea of voice the best chance of success."

First, the government should recommit to local and regional voices and provide funding for them in the next month's budget. Local and regional has to be part of any model put forward, it's been forgotten by the government, ignored even in the voice design principles released last week.

... I'm calling on the government to re-embrace the principles of the Calma Langton report, allocate funding in May's budget to establish a local and regional voices, to start the policy and work on how to do this and we will back it in.

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals ‘fearmongering’ on voice ahead of party’s decision on referendum stance

...Ideally the local and regional voices would have been rolled out and retested before any national voices, which was always our plan.

But we are where we are and I can’t undo the government passed my choices at this point. I want to be clear. To fail on local and regional voices is to deny voices to Indigenous Australians who live outside the major capitals and it will ultimately mean no change on the issues that matter.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.58am BST

block-time published-time 4.48am BST

‘Labor is messing this up’

Leeser goes on to criticise the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, for not having the “views of a person looking to reach consensus.”

The approach has discarded one of the guiding principles Pat Dodson and I wrote about in our report, namely, and I quote, balancing the urgency of a Voice against the likelihood of referendum success. We have seen that.

...What we witnessed in word, in deed, in action has been a repudiation of the collaborative spirit that is much the process since 2014.

Good process builds consensus. It helps narrow the issues for the debate in the referendum, but Labor is messing this up. I’m so sad about that. I look at where we are compared to where we should be on this journey and I lamented, I truly do.

In abandoning this approach of working to find common ground the government has been forsaking a vital ingredient that’s been instrumental in building public support and confidence as well as developing a model that has the best chance of moving the dial Indigenous health, education, housing, safety and economic advancement.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.50am BST

block-time published-time 4.40am BST

Leeser laments ‘top-down’ approach of Labor government on voice

Circling back to Leeser’s National Press Club address. The shadow attorney general says the process which he oversaw as part of the parliamentary select committee he co-chaired with Pat Dodson emphasised the importance of the regional bodies being implemented ahead of a national body. Leeser says the election of the Labor government with a plan to deliver the national body first has seen a “top down” approach implemented instead.

In accordance with the timetable set by the Calma-Langton report, the Morrison government committed to the rollout of the local and regional bodies in December 2021 and budgeted a \$32m commitment to get the process started. Our plan was to build from the ground up. The plan was for local and regional voices first as recommended by Calma Langton.

Local and regional voices, then a national voice. Local and regional voices were the foundation. With the insight, life experience and moral authority moving up to Canberra rather than down from.

That was the process in place at election day last year. Had we been elected in May last year those bodies would have been well on their way.

... Unfortunately we lost the 2022 election and the way debate has been conducted has changed.

I recognise that the prime minister made a referendum on the national voice a signature policy and he mentioned it at every campaign stop and election night. There was nothing hidden in what he wanted to do.

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals 'fearmongering' on voice ahead of party's decision on referendum stance

But the deliberative process of the past decade engaging in debate, finding common ground, building coalitions, developing careful processes and working across the aisle has been abandoned. It is now top-down.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.44am BST

block-time published-time 4.25am BST

Man and woman found dead after light plane crash in Queensland

A man and a woman have been found dead after a light plane crash in the Clarke Ranges in central Queensland.

Police and emergency services located an aircraft shortly after 11am, believed to be the aircraft which was due to land at Lakeside.

It comes after a frantic search for the passengers after a plane failed to arrive at an airpark west of Proserpine at 6.30pm on Sunday.

The aircraft departed cattle station Natal Downs, south of Charters Towers on Sunday afternoon.

Police said formal identification processes are still underway and no further information can be provided.

block-time published-time 4.24am BST

Liberal party to decide position on voice this Wednesday

Shadow Indigenous Australians minister Julian Leeser has now confirmed that the Liberal party will meet on Wednesday to decide its position on the voice to parliament.

Speaking at the National Press Club, Leeser said the Liberals would meet to figure out their formal stance.

On Wednesday, we are having a party room meeting to determine our position and determine our way forward.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.21am BST

block-time published-time 4.15am BST

Leeser is emphasising there were different drafts to the voice conceived during the Abbott government:

Anne Twomey was the principal draughts-person for the voice body we put to Tony Abbott in 2014. Anne's drafting showed one way a voice in the constitution could be achieved.

I signed up because the idea of the Pearson Twomey voice proposal was political influence, not judicial veto.

In my mind, those words in 2014 were never meant to be inviolable. We put out an idea to show how it could be done. It was an idea that needed to be tested not just by lawyers, academics and activists but in the broader political debate among the Australian people.

I saw it – not as the final word – but very much as Voice 1.0.

Since that time, Anne Twomey has devised at least two other versions of provisions to enable a Voice in the constitution to help contribute to the discussion on debate.

Voice 1.0 was not the only proposal. Warren Mundine and Tim Wilson were also developing an idea for local and regional voices. Their idea was an enhancement of the original idea. It was about empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in their communities right across the country.

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals ‘fearmongering’ on voice ahead of party’s decision on referendum stance

Making a difference on the ground. It was for that reason with proposals for a local and regional Voice and national body, the Uluru Statement from the heart speaks of voice but not voice to parliament.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.26am BST

block-time published-time 4.11am BST

Leeser goes on:

At the time we were developing this idea Noel Pearson was trying to work out a way to encourage constitutional conservatives to work with Indigenous leaders to advance constitutional recognition that both could support.

We started to listen, to talk, to argue, to engage with each other, to try to find common ground.

Noel’s proposal was for a national voice to advise on policies and laws affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. I support the idea of the voice. As a Liberal I believe in the dignity of the individual. I believe that the policy is made when the People directly affected by the policy are consulted on that policy.

As a conservative I believe in the principle of subsidiarity. I believe through empowering people, building institutions and fitting responsibility and decision-making closer to people and local communities we are more likely to be successful in shifting the dial on Indigenous affairs.

The result of that engagement was a package of reforms that we put to prime minister Abbott. The Declaration of Recognition, the rewording of the racist power in the constitution to become an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander power, the removal of the spent race-based provision in section 25 of the constitution, and the voice proposal which Noel had devised and workshop over several months with Greg Craven, Anne Twomey, Damien Freeman and myself.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.18am BST

block-time published-time 4.07am BST

What piqued Leeser’s interest in constitutional recognition?

While the framers of the constitution were not perfect they got a lot of things right.

My interest in constitutional recognition was piqued in 2014 by the decision of the then prime minister Tony Abbott when he was elected to office to put constitutional recognition back on the agenda. I had concerns about his approach because I don’t believe the constitution is a place for symbolic and historic language.

I believe there are legal risks in using such language and so my friend Damien Freeman and I began the work on an ideal which we could recognise the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in our national life without the need for a constitutional amendment.

The result was our idea of a non-constitutional Australian Declaration of Recognition. That document could be developed by Australians, affirmed at a national plebiscite, used in schools and parliaments across our civic, social and sporting life.

It could say so much more because it was not tied down by the risks of judicial interpretation.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.18am BST

block-time published-time 4.04am BST

Leeser speaks about his love for the constitution:

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals 'fearmongering' on voice ahead of party's decision on referendum stance

As a non-Indigenous Australian I've been on a journey seeking to understand Indigenous perspectives on the issue of constitutional recognition.

I came to the debate on constitutional recognition from a deep interest in constitutional history and constitutional law. In my maiden speech to parliament, I spoke to asking my parents for a copy of **Australia's** constitution for my 10th birthday. Definitely earning me the moniker Nerdus Maximus.

I have been involved in constitutional battles past, most notably the 1998 constitutional convention and as a member of the official "no" case committee during the republic referendum.

We have a constitution that is the envy of the world. The constitution is the invisible pillar that holds our great national endeavour together. A document devoid of poetic or symbolic language, it is a practical, clear and concise enough document to fit in your pocket. And yet it was developed over a decade of negotiation and detailed debate and compromise. Our constitution has stood the test of time.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.10am BST

block-time published-time 4.02am BST

Leeser is reflecting on the change he has seen regarding attitudes towards First Nations people in his lifetime.

Like many Australians, I did not go up with Aboriginal people. I remember there being one or two Aboriginal people at school and some Aboriginal students at university but I did not get to know Aboriginal people or much about Aboriginal culture.

As a child of the 1980s and 1990s, at school we were taught about hunter gatherer societies but the public consciousness was not then what it is today.

When I go to schools and talk to people in my electorate, I know there is a hunger to know much more about the culture and traditions of Aboriginal people of our area, and that is a good thing.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their culture is unique to our land. Their traditions, their stories are **Australia's** edition and **Australia's** stories and we should all do more to know or more of them.

block-time published-time 3.58am BST

Julian Lesser begins National Press Club address with tribute to Yunupingu

The shadow attorney general and shadow minister for Indigenous Australians, Julian Leeser, is addressing the National Press Club this lunchtime as the nation prepares for the referendum on the Indigenous voice to parliament later this year.

Leeser begins paying homage to Yunupingu, who has died aged 74:

We gather on a day for Australians which is particularly sad for all Australians but particularly Indigenous Australians. Yunupingu was one of the greatest indigenously modern **Australia** has produced, the leader of the Gumatj.

He was a man of strength, conviction and determination, a true moral voice in our country who I have the privilege of meeting on two occasions. He spoke at this podium in 1977.

He did what few could do, he fought and he built. He fought for rights, for freedoms and for respect. He worked in partnership to deliver land, education, jobs and opportunity.

We remember Yunupingu today. We mourn Yunupingu today. His memory be a blessing.

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals 'fearmongering' on voice ahead of party's decision on referendum stance

Shadow attorney general Julian Leaser at the National Press Club. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.04am BST

block-time published-time 3.55am BST

Committee reviewing security legislation

A key federal parliamentary committee has launched a review of plans to overhaul **Australia's** security clearance approvals.

The government introduced legislation to parliament last week to ensure the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (Asio) would be responsible for issuing, maintaining and revoking **Australia's** highest level of security clearance, known as "positive vetting".

The parliamentary joint committee on intelligence and security announced today that it would review the legislation.

The chair of the committee, the Labor MP Peter Khalil, issued a call for submissions from the public by 21 April. He said:

Reviewing important national security legislation that, through the high-level access security clearances provide, will affect **Australia's** national security architecture is a key part of the parliamentary oversight work of the PJCIS. The review will provide assurance that these changes provide a security framework that will last well into the future.

For more on this issue see last week's story:

Related: [Asio to take over issuing high-level security clearances due to 'unprecedented' espionage threat](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.01am BST

block-time published-time 3.49am BST

Shorten calls for action over robodebt revelations

Speaking about the potential consequences for the former ministers involved in the Robodebt royal commission, Shorten says we'll have to wait for the commission to report back any adverse findings - "but clearly something has to happen".

Shorten says the decision will be up to "fiercely independent" commissioner Catherine Holmes and the counsel assisting. However, he believes action is necessary:

I think for some of the individuals, their behaviour was so egregiously negligent and disinterested, that you know, I think the evidence was damning already.

Furthermore, all governments not just Liberal but Labor and any other government needs to just learn some of the lessons about making sure that whatever program you have, is it lawful, is it legal and if you're getting complaints, are you listening to them?

... We'll find out soon enough the reports due on June the 30th.

But I think it has been shocking the discovery of the lack of attention to detail, the the willingness for people to get into groupthink and just go along with a strategy which was unlawful and then for years – rather than dealing with the issue – discredit the messengers.

Of the two ministers still in parliament, Stuart Robert and Scott Morrison, Shorten said:

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They can't think that this royal commission has shone them in a in a great light to be honest, but we'll let others make that decision. We'll see what happens with the findings.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.43am BST

block-time published-time 3.38am BST

Shorten questions Dutton's transition to opposition leader

The minister for government services, Bill Shorten, says the Liberal's unexpected loss in the Aston byelection largely came down to the party leader Peter Dutton.

Speaking to Sky News, Shorten isn't shying away from criticising Dutton's transition to opposition leader which he says hasn't "cut the mustard".

I think image only goes skin deep. I think it's a problem of substance. He still thinks he's a Liberal cabinet minister in the Morrison government. There's been no modesty or humility.

They lost the last federal election. Yet Peter Dutton is pursuing every one of their policies. He hasn't gotten the memo from the people of **Australia** that when you lose, you must look in the mirror and reevaluate your own policies.

I mean, if you want someone to sit as opposition leader who can clench his jaw manfully, that's Peter Dutton, but you need a bit more than one gear out of the bloke.

I don't know if he can make the transition to leading an opposition. And to do that, you've got to admit where your government's got it wrong.

He hasn't even got up and said that the Robodebt royal commission is anything other than a witch hunt. The bloke has only got one gear, and that's not good for Australian democracy.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.46am BST

block-time published-time 3.29am BST

Child abuse is 'disturbingly prevalent' across nation, new study finds

The Australian Human Rights Commission has called for urgent government action after a study showed child physical, emotional and sexual abuse is "disturbingly prevalent" across the nation, AAP reports.

One in three Australian children experience physical abuse and one in four experience sexual abuse, according to a Queensland University of Technology survey of 8500 Australians published in the Medical Journal of **Australia** on Monday.

The National Children's Commissioner, Anne Hollonds, says the "confronting" findings show there's an urgent need for a child wellbeing strategy.

She said:

We have no reporting on budget allocations for child wellbeing. We have no minister for children. We have no vision, and we have had no urgency for change.

In a prosperous country like **Australia**, child wellbeing should be a bipartisan priority. Today we have a rare opportunity to build a national agreement to prioritise child wellbeing and create a roadmap for reform.

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals 'fearmongering' on voice ahead of party's decision on referendum stance

The federal social services minister, Amanda Rishworth, and the attorney general, Mark Dreyfus, promised to look carefully at the findings when developing more targeted politics. The pair said:

This is a wake-up call to all of us, across all levels of government, and the community. We must do better.

This landmark study, the first high-quality, nationally representative study of the prevalence of all five forms of child maltreatment, must focus our minds on prevention and response to child maltreatment.

The National Children's Commissioner, Anne Hollonds. Photograph: Carly Earl/The Guardian

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.35am BST

block-time published-time 3.15am BST

Loans for homes extended falls in February as housing approvals edged higher

A couple of housing related numbers from the ABS today that will feed into the Reserve Bank 's consideration of whether to hike the key interest rate a record 11th consecutive time tomorrow.

First up was dwelling approvals, with the total rising 4% in February, seasonally adjusted. Economists note this number can be very volatile, particularly for approvals of flats. In January, overall approvals fell 27%, as an example of the fluctuations.

enltrDwelling approvals rose 4% in February, seasonally adjusted terms, following a 27.1% in January, [@ABSStats](#) says. Private sector dwelling house approvals fell a further 9.5%, though, are at their lowest levels since July 2012. pic.twitter.com/XYAxGELKav

— [@phannam@mastodon.green](#) (@p_hannam) [April 3, 2023](#)

Houses in the private sector rose 11.3% in February but remain 13.6% lower than for February 2022, the ABS said. (January's tally was at a 10-year low.)

Daniel Rossi, ABS head of construction statistics, said:

Private sector dwellings excluding house approvals fell a further 9.5% in February, following a 40.3% decline in January, and is at its lowest level recorded since July 2012.

Total dwelling approvals have continued their downward trend since September 2022, following the conclusion of government stimulus and rising interest rates.

Tasmania led the gain, with dwelling approvals more than doubling (122.1% higher) for some reason. Queensland when the other way, with approvals down the most, at 13.7%.

As a hint of higher costs, the value of total building approvals rose 19.7%.

The other set of numbers related to the value of new loans, with those for housing falling 0.9% to \$22.6bn in February, seasonally adjusted, after a revised fall of 2.4% in January, the ABS said.

enltrThe value of new loan commitments for housing fell 0.9% to \$22.6bn in Feb, extending a revised 2.4% drop in Jan, [@ABSStats](#) says. Loans for owner-occupiers fell 1.2% to \$15bn, while those for investors eased 0.5% to \$7.6bn. Loans are down about a third from Jan 2022 record highs. pic.twitter.com/L2ahDqXzAx

— [@phannam@mastodon.green](#) (@p_hannam) [April 3, 2023](#)

Dane Mead, ABS's head of finance and wealth, said new loans for owner-occupiers fell 1.2% to \$15 bn in February 2023, while those for investors eased 0.5% to \$7.6bn.

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He said:

Housing finance continued to decline from the record highs in January 2022, with the total value of new loan commitments falling 33% since then.

The RBA board will meet tomorrow morning. According to [a Bloomberg survey](#), 16 economists reckon the central bank will leave its cash rate at 3.6%. Another 11 tip another 25 basis-point rise to 3.85%.

My tip: a 15bp rise to 3.75% - time to get back to standard numbers!

block-time published-time 3.06am BST

Kevin Rudd has recognised Yunupingu as “one of our greatest ever Australians”

Former prime minister Kevin Rudd has remembered the Yol?u elder, saying “there is no individual who did more than Yunupingu to illuminate the path of reconciliation for us all”:

In the final decades of his momentous life, Yunupingu’s wisdom and experience led him to conclude that constitutional reform was the best way to ensure the security and wellbeing of everyone in our commonwealth.

This was Yunupingu’s clear message when he presented me with a bark petition asking our government to commence a formal process for constitutional recognition, which we did.

It is devastating that Yunupingu will not be with us in the days ahead, but his absence should steel our resolve to realise a future where Australians are truly reconciled.

enltrOur nation mourns the loss of one of our greatest ever Australians. - [@AmboRudd pic.twitter.com/bGbEklhA3](#)

— Office of Kevin Rudd, 26th PM of ***Australia*** (@MrKRudd) [April 3, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.19am BST

block-time published-time 2.59am BST

Tributes continue to flow for Yunupingu

Senator Patrick Dodson said Yunupingu’s legacy is “immeasurable and will endure in the memory of all Australian people, especially for the Yolngu people, for generations”:

He was a canny and forceful operator on those occasions when we stood together to take on governments intent on diminishing the powers of the land councils.

He weathered tempestuous engagements with good humour, and was always prepared to defend customary law and the rights of traditional owners.

enltrVale Yunupingu. Yunupingu’s legacy is immeasurable and will endure in the memory of all Australian people, especially the Yolngu people, for generations. [Image approved by Yunupingu’s family] [pic.twitter.com/nC0S5M1tMU](#)

— Patrick Dodson (@SenatorDodson) [April 3, 2023](#)

Environment minister Tanya Plibersek said his legacy will “leave a mark for generations”:

enltrYunupingu, a Yolngu man of the Gumatj clan, spent a lifetime fighting for his people and his country. A leader, campaigner, storyteller, and unifying force. His legacy will leave a mark for generations. Thinking of all who loved him and learned from him. A great loss for all... [pic.twitter.com/Hfl2aUZoJy](#)

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals 'fearmongering' on voice ahead of party's decision on referendum stance

— Tanya Plibersek (@tanya_plibersek) [April 3, 2023](#)

Indigenous Australians minister Linda Burney said:

His gifts to us as a nation was a life of truth-telling and a passionate belief in his people and in **Australia**, and we as a nation can gift to him a successful referendum later this year.

In his final months Yunupingu reminded us: "the future is our responsibility", and that we all have a responsibility to show leadership on: reconciliation, recognition, and the referendum.

enltrSo when we are done, all Australians can say: "This is our country. It is a country that we are all proud of. We now rejoice and celebrate with our Indigenous brothers and sisters together as one." pic.twitter.com/dw6Gj1DEUh

— Linda Burney MP (@LindaBurneyMP) [April 3, 2023](#)

Greens leader Adam Bandt said Yunupingu "embodied the strength and heart of his people":

enltrYunupingu embodied the strength and heart of his people. As a leader, he stood firm and demanded to be heard by politicians, governments and mining corporations. His legacy deserves a resounding Yes: Yes for Voice, Yes for Truth, and Yes for sovereignty through Treaty.

— Adam Bandt (@AdamBandt) [April 3, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.05am BST

block-time published-time 2.53am BST

Peter Dutton remembers Yunupingu as 'one of our greatest Australians'

The opposition leader, Peter Dutton, has paid tribute to Yunupingu, paying homage to the revered Yol?u elder's life and role advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land rights.

Dutton also reflected on his recent visit to Yunupingu's homelands, ending his tribute with these words:

When I visited Arnhem Land in February, the influence of Yunupingu was omnipresent in the community.

Testimony to Yunupingu's achievements, he was named Australian of the Year in 1978, made a Member of the Order of **Australia** in 1985, and received an Honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Melbourne in 2015.

Yunupingu passed away on his land in Arnhem Land, among his people and with his family.

Today we acknowledge the life and legacy of not just a great Indigenous Australian, but one of our greatest Australians.

enltrThe news of the passing of Yunupingu will resonate around the nation. Today we acknowledge the life and legacy of not just a great Indigenous Australian, but one of our greatest Australians. pic.twitter.com/l4z7ZPtE3a

— Peter Dutton (@PeterDutton_MP) [April 3, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.06am BST

block-time published-time 2.44am BST

Albanese continues on relationship with China

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In the interview on 6PR Perth, Anthony Albanese also backed the role of state premiers in making trips to China to boost the trading relationship.

The Victorian premier, Daniel Andrews, [attracted some criticism amid accusations about a lack of transparency](#) over his trip to China last week. Other state leaders Mark McGowan (Western **Australia**) and Annastacia Palaszczuk (Queensland) are also planning visits.

The prime minister said today that he was supportive of state premiers going to China, and noted that it was still **Australia’s** biggest trading partner:

Absolutely I am because it is about jobs and it is about them looking after their states.

Albanese reiterated his government’s overall approach to the relationship, including looking for “cooperation with China wherever we can”. He said **Australia** would continue to “stand up” for its policies wherever there were differences.

The prime minister said it was “a good thing” that he met China’s president, Xi Jinping, on the sidelines of the G20 summit in November, and it was also positive that the assistant trade minister, Tim Ayres, [visited the country last week](#).

There is still no date locked in, but Albanese added:

I look forward to my trade minister, Don Farrell, visiting China in coming weeks.

Albanese said he, personally, had “no plans at this point in the time” to travel to China, but he reiterated his past comments that he would go if invited.

Albanese said dialogue was “always a good thing”:

That doesn’t mean we don’t have differences. We’re a great democracy. China is not a democracy. With that, comes differences.

He pointed out that a lot of Australian jobs and economic activity were connected to China and other major trading partners.

Asked about comments from the Chinese ambassador to **Australia**, Xiao Qian, that [China may be interested in investing in events such as the 2032 Brisbane Olympics](#), Albanese said the Australian and Queensland governments were “not looking for any other governments to be engaged”. Albanese said:

We’ll be running the Olympics.

For more on the latest trade talks looming in Beijing this week, see this story:

Related: [Australian and Chinese officials to hold critical trade negotiations in China next week](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.58am BST

block-time published-time 2.33am BST

PM condemns Russia, calls for immediate end to war in Ukraine

The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, has been asked about Russia taking over the UN Security Council presidency (in the latest monthly rotation, a development [Julian Borger covered for the Guardian last Friday](#)).

Albanese told 6PR Perth:

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Russia has shown contempt for the international rule of law so that is a very unfortunate circumstance. It is just a rotation but Russia, if they have any respect for rule of law, for the rights of nation states to exist within their borders, if they have any respect for national sovereignty, they should stop the illegal and immoral war against the people of Ukraine right now.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.57am BST

block-time published-time 2.24am BST

Liberal MP James Stevens on 'bitterly disappointing' Aston result

The Liberal MP James Stevens, who holds the South Australian seat of Sturt on just 0.5%, has commented on the "bitterly disappointing" byelection result in Aston.

Stevens told ABC Radio it was a "very serious message to all of us, members of the federal Liberal party, myself in Sturt and the leadership team". He recognised that "if replicated it would see us barely exist in major metropolitan cities across Australia". The Liberals "can't be a party of government" with such a result and Stevens would "absolutely" lose his seat if it occurred at a general election.

Stevens said that the Albanese government is still "very much in a political honeymoon", the Liberal party had "lost a popular local member in Alan Tudge, seeking to be replaced by an excellent candidate [Roshena Campbell] but one who didn't live in the electorate".

He said:

We need to reconnect with a lot of our supporters that have drifted away and have not drifted back... [We have to accept] We didn't lose the last election and that's a one off that will never be repeated again.

Stevens identified home ownership as "one of the huge opportunities to reconnect with younger voters seriously challenged getting into the housing market".

Asked about social issues like Liberal opposition to the Indigenous voice, Stevens rejected the view the Liberals were on the wrong side. Rather "we're not giving them the positive economic security policy positions that used to be significant in their decision to support the Liberal party".

Stevens said that the voice is "a decision for all Australians" at the referendum suggesting it would not be the focus of the next election.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.34am BST

block-time published-time 2.21am BST

Ken Wyatt calls for conscience vote 'to move forward'

Ken Wyatt, the former Liberal minister for Indigenous Australians, has urged his party to give members a conscience vote on the voice to parliament - saying it would "allow this country to move forward".

As we reported earlier, it's expected the Liberals will meet in Canberra this week to discuss the voice. Sky News reports the party is more likely to oppose the government's preferred model, and potentially propose a model of their own.

One Liberal MP, Jason Wood, has already said today that he would prefer a conscience vote. Wyatt, Indigenous Australians minister under the former Coalition government, told Sky he hoped to see the same. He said:

I would hope that the leadership would give members a conscience vote.

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals 'fearmongering' on voice ahead of party's decision on referendum stance

I'd just say to the leadership: allow a conscience vote to allow this country to move forward.

Wyatt acknowledged that there were many in the current Liberal partyroom who strongly opposed the voice, but said a conscience vote would allow supporters to show their support.

Wyatt, who brought the Langton-Calma co-design report to the Coalition cabinet several times, has criticised his party on numerous occasions for questioning the voice. Last month he told Guardian **Australia** that it would be a mistake "globally" for the Liberals to not offer bipartisan support to a referendum, adding to a perception the party was "racist".

Ken Wyatt, the former minister for Indigenous Australians in the Coalition government. Photograph: Lukas Coch/AAP

Related: [*Ken Wyatt warns Liberals that opposing Indigenous voice could add to 'perceptions' party is 'racist'*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.29am BST

block-time published-time 2.18am BST

Burney challenges shadow minister ahead of NPC address

Further to the last post on the Liberals' partyroom meeting on the voice this week, shadow Indigenous Australians minister Julian Leeser is speaking at the National Press Club this afternoon - so we'll expect to hear more from that later today.

Indigenous Australians minister Linda Burney just gave a press conference in Shellharbour, NSW. She said Leeser, a longtime and notable supporter of an Indigenous voice, needed to explain at the NPC why the Liberals could oppose the referendum.

Burney said:

Julian Leeser needs to explain to the Australian people why his party wants to deny a choice and a vote for the Australian people towards decency at the end of the year.

Burney pointed to Indigenous wellbeing statistics that are worse than the general population, as a reason for supporting the voice.

Why is it that Auntie Jodie and I have a life expectancy 10 years shorter than our non-Aboriginal sisters? Why is it that Aboriginal babies are not born at a healthy birth weight? Why is it that so many of our people are in jails and locked up in youth detention centres? Why is it that so many of our children are removed into statutory home care and why is it that we are the sickest, most incarcerated people on the planet?

These are the reasons why the voice is so important. These are the reasons why **Australia** has a choice to make at the end of this year about recognition and consultation.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.24am BST

block-time published-time 2.14am BST

Burney dedicates 'what will be a successful referendum' to Yunupingu

The minister for Indigenous affairs, Linda Burney, has this morning paid tribute to revered Yol?u elder Yunupingu who has died aged 74.

Speaking in Wollongong, Burney dedicated the referendum later this year to Yunupingu who believed deeply in the need for the voice.

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals 'fearmongering' on voice ahead of party's decision on referendum stance

A great sadness has settled on **Australia** today. With the passing of Dr Yunupingu in his beloved Arnhem Land. He was Australian of the Year way back in 1978 and was one of the most significant leaders for two decades of First Nations people across this country.

He was the clan leader of the Gumatj clan. A Yol?u man. Very responsible for the Bark petition that now hangs in Parliament House. He fought with a passion for his people, for land, for identity, and he loved this country. He said he was the fire. And he believed very deeply in a referendum to recognise Aboriginal people in the Australian Constitution.

It is hard to put into words what this loss means for this country. It is hard to imagine the next Garma Festival without Mr Yunupingu. It is hard to imagine going forward for many people. But his legacy is, his inspiration, will live on. And I want to dedicate what will be a successful referendum at the end of the year to Dr Yunupingu.

block-time published-time 2.07am BST

Australia's resources and energy exports are near their peak - if not already past it.

The federal government releases quarterly stats on the outlook for resource and energy exports, and [the latest update](#) suggests the boom years may be almost behind us.

enltrOn government projections, **Australia**'s resources boom will ebb significantly. Thermal coal will lead the way lower. pic.twitter.com/i27ZrIkUaP

— @phannam@mastodon.green (@p_hannam) [April 2, 2023](#)

On the upside, the government forecasts those exports to hit a record \$464bn this financial year, thanks in no small measure to Russia's war on Ukraine sending many buyers scrambling to source commodities from anywhere but Russia.

Brazil's iron ore export troubles have also meant China has had to buy more of our red dirt, pandemic lockdowns notwithstanding.

LNG earnings will hit \$91bn in 2022–23, or triple the revenue of 2020–21. Thermal coal exports will also reach \$65bn this financial year, up from around \$16 billion in 2020–21.

With climate conditions in the Pacific and Indian oceans favouring a retreat from the wetter-than-usual weather of the past three years, the government is also predicting less chance of disruptions for bulk commodity transport. (Drought and bushfires might have some influence, though, should a strong El Nino take hold in the Pacific.)

Looking ahead, though, from 2023-24, earnings from LNG and thermal coal are likely to fall back towards pre-Covid levels, the report said. As the chart above shows, thermal coal in particular is forecast to retreat more than most other commodities.

Still, the government reckons prices for the fossil fuel used in power stations will likely enjoy relatively high prices for a while because of "a lack of spending to bring on new supply matches the impact of diminishing world demand".

We'll have to see if the Albanese government's toughened safeguard mechanism actually works to reduce that future supply from **Australia**. If it doesn't, it's not much of a safeguard.

block-time published-time 1.57am BST

Greenwich calls on Hanson to take action against Latham

The independent MP for Sydney, Alex Greenwich, the target of NSW One Nation leader Mark Latham's homophobic tweets, is calling on Pauline Hanson to take further action "to protect her own name".

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals 'fearmongering' on voice ahead of party's decision on referendum stance

Greenwich told Sky News this morning he hoped the Coalition would refuse to work with Latham, as the government has:

Chris Minns, our new premier, has made a really strong stance saying that he won't work with Mr Latham and I looking forward to the Coalition hopefully saying the same thing. You know, there's no place for this kind of narrative in modern-day politics.

Greenwich said the premier was correct when he said comments such as Latham's "unleash ghouls on those who already face discrimination":

My office has had repeated calls from people making offensive remarks. We've had to report a number of people to the police, police have arrested people.

My social medias are flooded with really graphic homophobic attacks. So Mr Minns the new premier is absolutely right that Latham has unleashed the ghouls.

But he's been doing this to the LGBT community for quite a while.

Greenwich said his office has also been contacted by One Nation voters:

My office for the first time ever has been contacted by One Nation supporters and voters expressing their outrage at Mr Latham and expressing their support for me.

Clearly, this you know, the party that Mr Latham represents in Parliament House is named after Pauline Hanson. Surely if she is so outraged and disgusted by his vile homophobic remarks, she's going to need to take action to protect her own name.

block-time updated-time Updated at 2.05am BST

block-time published-time 1.48am BST

Liberals to debate voice stance

Sky News is reporting that Liberal MPs will be summoned to Canberra on Wednesday for a special party-room meeting to discuss the Indigenous voice referendum.

enltrBREAKING - [@aclennell](#) reports Liberal MPs have been summoned to Canberra for a partyroom meeting on Wednesday, where they will decide their position on the Voice to Parliament [#auspol](#) [@SkyNewsAust](#)

— Cam Reddin (@CamReddin) [April 3, 2023](#)

Sky's political editor Andrew Clennell reports that "the expected position" of the Liberals would be to oppose the Labor government's plan for a constitutionally enshrined voice, but that they would discuss an "alternative proposition" of a voice legislated through the parliament instead.

A constitutionally enshrined voice was the option preferred by delegates at the Uluru dialogues that led to the statement from the heart; a legislated voice was seen as inferior as it could be abolished by a future parliament, like previous Indigenous bodies including Atsic.

Several Liberal MPs said they weren't yet aware of the meeting, when contacted this morning. We've reached out to the offices of Liberal leader Peter Dutton and shadow Indigenous Australians minister Julian Leeser for comment.

It was earlier expected that the Liberals may not come to a position on the voice until next month or later, during the process of the parliamentary inquiry into the constitutional amendment, which was only set up last week.

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals 'fearmongering' on voice ahead of party's decision on referendum stance

Liberal MP Jason Wood, appearing on Sky, said he would prefer a conscience vote on the issue - even though he said a survey from his office found that voters in his electorate were against the voice:

I'd prefer we go to a conscience vote in the party room, allowing members to have their choice.

He said he would like to do a wider survey of his electorate to gauge voter views.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.07am BST

block-time published-time 1.33am BST

The president of the Royal College of GPs, Dr Nicole Higgins, says the news of the report showing GPs are undercharging rather than overcharging their patients comes as vindication for the profession.

enltrVindicated! Claims that Medicare "fraud" is costing taxpayers \$8 billion a year have been dismissed. In fact, as [@NC_Robinson](#) outlines - a new report has found doctors routinely under-bill \$350 million a year due to fear of an audit. A must read. [#Medicare https://t.co/wGyRwXVB93](https://t.co/wGyRwXVB93)

— Royal Australian College of GPs (RACGP) President (@RACGPPresident) [April 2, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.41am BST

block-time published-time 1.22am BST

Research challenges claims of widespread Medicare fraud

About 85% of GPs nationwide have saved Medicare more than \$350m from undercharging patients in consultations, a study suggests.

Of the 2,760 GPs canvassed in the study, nearly 85% undercharged Medicare for at least one consultation within a sample of 40 consultations.

Researchers from the University of Sydney estimated the undercharging by GPs has resulted in savings of \$351.7m to Medicare in 2021-22 during about 90,000 consultations.

The study published in the Australian Journal of General Practice also found GPs undercharged about 12% of total consultations and only overcharged 1.6% overall.

Lead author Dr Christopher Harrison said:

Our study has shown that GPs are more likely to err towards undercharging, than to overcharging.

This contrasts with previous research and reports alleging widespread fraud related to GP billing of Medicare.

General practice is in crisis. Allegations of fraud have been damaging to a workforce that is struggling to attract medical graduates to general practice.

Harrison said a major reason why GPs undercharge, even for long consultations, was the fear of being audited.

The paper analysed data from the Bettering the Evaluation And Care of Health program, a national study of GP clinical activity in [Australia](#) that ran from 1998 to 2016, concentrating on 2013-16. Each year, a different group of 1,000 GPs recorded information on paper about their consultation sessions for 100 consecutive consenting patients.

The data was used to calculate the cost differences between the Medicare benefits schedule items charged and the MBS items that could have been charged based on the length of the consultation.

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The results from the analysis were projected to the total number of MBS items claimed in 2021-22 using the July 2022 rebates. – AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.33am BST

block-time published-time 1.12am BST

Australian play wins at Olivier awards

New Australian play Prime Facie has won big at the UK’s prestigious Olivier awards overnight, picking up best new play for playwright and former lawyer Suzie Miller (beating Aaron Sorkin’s adaptation of To Kill a Mockingbird, among others); and best actor for Jodie Comer of Killing Eve, who starred in the one-woman show on the West End.

The courtroom drama is about a ruthless barrister, Tessa, who specialises in defending men who are accused of sexual assault – until she is assaulted herself. In a [four-star review in the Guardian](#), Arifa Akbar wrote:

Prima Facie’s final messages are urgent in highlighting who our laws fail to protect. If they are delivered in hammer blows, there is power in hearing them spoken on a West End stage, and Comer manages to infuse breath-taking emotional drama in every last word.

The play opens on Broadway next week starring Comer in every role, with another production premiering in Adelaide on 28 April, directed by David Meador and starring Underbelly’s Caroline Craig.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.55am BST

block-time published-time 12.58am BST

Littleproud calls on Hanson to show leadership on homophobic tweet

David Littleproud is asked to weigh in on NSW One Nation Leader Mark Latham’s homophobic tweet about independent MP Alex Greenwich, given that members of his own party had in the past “cozied up” to him and One Nation members.

Littleproud says he has drawn a line in the sand when it comes to Latham:

Where is Pauline Hanson on this? Why is he even in a political party any more? ... If he was in my party and made that sort of remark, and it shouldn’t ever be said again, what he what he actually put up on Twitter.

But where is the leadership of Pauline Hanson? All she’s done is gone to ground saying he won’t call me back. Well, take control of your party, call him in and show that you have some leadership.

In fact, when some of my colleagues in the last parliament were giving medical advice on vaccines, I called them out publicly and wasn’t afraid to do that as the deputy leader.

We all have a responsibility. We have a privileged position as being politicians and, if someone oversteps the mark, then they need to be hauled in and they need to give an explanation. If their explanation isn’t good enough, then you have to have the courage and conviction to move them on.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.59am BST

block-time published-time 12.46am BST

Labor conducted ‘character assassination’ of Dutton, Littleproud says

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals ‘fearmongering’ on voice ahead of party’s decision on referendum stance

David Littleproud also says the way in which Labor shaped the narrative around the Aston byelection was a “character assassination” of Liberal leader Peter Dutton.

Littleproud was critical of how the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, as well as Labor campaign material, had framed Dutton. He believes federal politics should instead look to the example of the NSW state election:

Chris Minns and Dominic Perrottet fought on ideas – not on personalities or character assassination. And I think we, as politicians, need to do better because that’s why the Australian people don’t like politicians.

When you’re trying to bring down an individual on character assassination. That’s not we should be doing a notion of the prime minister of this country. That’s an exalted position in society.

And I think the Labor party, while it might have achieved what it was looking for, I don’t think it’s advanced the narrative of federal politics any further as a result ...

I think New South Wales election paved the way for a kinder, smarter way of politics being done where it is a contest of ideas, and that’s what it should be.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.51am BST

block-time published-time 12.37am BST

Littleproud weighs in on Aston loss

The leader of the Coalition’s junior partner, David Littleproud, is delivering his postmortem on the Liberal’s historic and unexpected loss in the Aston byelection at the weekend.

Littleproud says the Liberal party lost credibility amid the fallout of state MP Moira Deeming attending a rally headlined by British anti-transgender activist Kellie-Jay Keen where neo-Nazis were photographed performing the Nazi salute. Deeming [says she’s done nothing wrong](#) after attending the rally that was “gatecrashed” by neo-Nazis.

Littleproud this morning told Sky News:

As the Nationals leader, I don’t want to give too much advice, but you don’t have to go too far past the cluster that was the Victorian Liberal party last week in dealing with Moira Deeming.

It was untidy, and whatever the semblance of respect the brand had in Victoria was lost during that week.

I think the fact also that the people of Aston were asked to vote three times in the last 10 months didn’t help.

And effectively they had a candidate that that was parachuted in and no matter how good she was – and I think she was a very credible candidate – the electorate wants someone that’s local. A local champion that’s connected to community.

Related: [John Pesutto’s failure to expel Moira Deeming could prove to be his undoing](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.47am BST

block-time published-time 12.28am BST

Marking the battle to save the Franklin River, 40 years on

As the environmental adage goes, “Conservation is temporary, destruction is permanent.”

On that sombre note it’s worth remembering that four decades ago, the monumental battle to save Tasmania’s Franklin River was nearing its happy conclusion.

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From the time of the start of the blockade, in December 1982, right up until the high court’s ruling on 1 July 1983 in favour of the Hawke government’s bid to halt the “Gordon below Franklin” dam, the future of this spectacular region was in doubt.

We look at some of the memories of those who have gone down the river lately (and at key anniversary periods in the past):

Related: [*Four decades on, has the Franklin River and those who fought to save it been forgotten?*](#)

The Tasmanian government, then run by the Liberals, planned at least one other dam on the river had the first one got up. (Tasmania’s Labor party at the time also backed the damming of the river.)

Lots of questions remain, including whether a campaign to stop the dam would succeed today. On the one hand, social media would spread the cause far and wide. On the other, anti-protest laws in Tasmania and on mainland states would raise the costs significantly for those willing to risk arrest.

Anyway, if readers are wondering whether to take the plunge (literally) and raft down the Franklin, your correspondent highly recommends it.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.36am BST

block-time published-time 12.23am BST

Latham says he’s on leave

Mark Latham has thanked supporters after being widely condemned for a homophobic tweet and told them he would be on leave until the New South Wales upper house results had been finalised.

The state One Nation leader posted to Twitter late last night:

Thanks everyone, I’m now on leave. Back when we finally get a LC result.

At the weekend premier Chris Minns said his government would not work with Latham at all and would not support any claim by Latham to chair an upper house committee.

Latham has refused to apologise for his homophobic and graphic tweet targeted at independent MP Alex Greenwich. It has been deleted.

Related: [*Labor is not going to work with Mark Latham, new NSW premier Chris Minns says*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.33am BST

block-time published-time 12.19am BST

Crackdown on gambling in Victoria

Punters at Melbourne’s Crown Casino will have to take a 15-minute break every three hours and won’t be able to gamble for more than 36 hours in a single week under changes to the venue’s code of conduct.

The state’s gaming minister, Melissa Horne, this morning announced the changes to the casino’s responsible gambling code of conduct, which she says will minimise gambling-related harm.

It includes new limits on the length of time a person may gamble at the casino, with Crown required to enforce 15-minute breaks if a person has been gambling for three continuous hours.

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Anyone who has gambled for 12 hours in any 24-hour period will be required to take a break for 24 hours, with no person able to gamble for more than 36 hours in a single week. Crown staff will have powers to exclude them from the casino floor.

The changes act on recommendation 11 of the royal commission into Crown's suitability to hold a casino licence, which was completed two years ago. Horne says of the 33 recommendations from the royal commission, 29 have been either fully implemented or legislated and awaiting commencement in the coming months.

Horne has also gazetted another direction to gambling advertisers to replace the former "gamble responsibly" taglines on advertisements with new evidence-based warnings that better challenge people to think about their gambling activity and minimise harm. Some new taglines include: "Chances are, you're about to lose," and, "You win some. You lose more." The taglines will also be accompanied by details of gambling support services to encourage people to seek help. Horne said:

This direction reflects my expectations that Crown must aim to be a global leader in the reduction of gambling harm – or lose their license.

Crown is on track to implement mandatory pre-commitment in all electronic gaming machines by the end of this year. When combined with the strengthened code of conduct, the harm reduction protections will be world leading for a casino of this size.

She says Crown has six months to update its code and any breaches may lead to disciplinary action by the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission. The maximum penalty for a breach is up to \$100m.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.35am BST

block-time published-time 12.16am BST

Albanese hails 'targeted' budget measures

Circling back to the prime minister, Anthony Albanese's , interview with ABC Radio. Before he addressed the breaking news of the death of Yunupingu, Albanese said the measures included the May budget would be "targeted".

If you target investment in the right way you can have a win win.

Labor's largest budget cost would be its childcare reform, which, along with other measures including fee-free TAFE places, would be a responsible investment which would not add to inflation, the PM said.

Albanese did not give away whether the government was considering a higher petroleum resource rent tax, which the Australian Financial Review said was on the budget agenda on Friday.

The publication claimed a source familiar with the discussions said the government was trying to find a way to bring the PRRT receipts forward.

Albanese only said that the government would receive the review of the PRRT – which the Morrison government initiated – before the budget was delivered.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.39am BST

block-time published-time 12.04am BST

'He touched so many people with his gracious leadership and kindness,' Langton says

Prof Marcia Langton, Indigenous academic and professor as well as a close friend of Yunupingu, is remembering him as a "magnificent person and a magnificent leader":

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Langton told ABC Radio:

Many know him as a ceremonial leader because of his towering presence, leading ceremonies at the Garma festival for so many years and, also most importantly, at events that he himself curated in order to present representations to prime ministers and ministers of Australian governments. Throughout his life, he has spoken and made representations to every prime minister of his adulthood.

He was a great clan leader, a great family man, and very much loved by so many Australians to come into contact with him through his Garma festival, and so many other good works.

He was a musician. He was one of the most important singers and north-east Arnhem Land ... So many people will be in mourning for him. He touched so many people with his gracious leadership and kindness.

Such a shame really he didn’t live to see better outcomes.

Marcia Langton with Noel Pearson and Yunupingu at the 2018 Garma festival. Use of this image has been approved by Yunupingu’s family. Photograph: Melanie Faith Dove/Yothu Yindi Foundation

The RN Breakfast host asks Langton about the fact that Yunupingu didn’t live to see the voice to parliament referendum he fought for:

Indeed it was his idea. I was with him in Arnhem Land. And he said to me, I want to see Noel Pearson. They’d never met and he told me to find Noel and get him to come speak to him.

Noel jumped on a plane immediately ... [Yunupingu] put to him constitutional recognition as a matter of the highest importance because ... he felt the existential threat towards his clan, and other Aboriginal people.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.19am BST

block-time published-time 11.56pm BST

‘A man who stood tall in his beloved country, and worked to lift our entire continent’

The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, has released an official statement on the death of Yunupingu :

Yunupingu walked in two worlds with authority, power and grace, and he worked to make them whole – together. What he could see was not the reinvention of Australia, but the realisation of a greater one. With his passing, consider what we have lost. A leader. A statesman. A painter. A dancer. A singer and musician who always carried his father’s clapsticks and felt the power they carried within them. Australian of the Year in 1978. Member of the Order of Australia. National treasure. A remarkable member of a remarkable family. A great Yolngu man. A great Australian. A man who stood tall in his beloved country, and worked to lift our entire continent in the process. Yunupingu understood a fundamental truth: if you want to make your voice count, you have to make sure that it’s heard. He made sure with the sheer power of his advocacy for land rights. He made sure when he helped draft the Yirrkala Bark Petitions, which delivered such a powerful message that resounded within the walls of the nation’s Parliament. And he made sure when he took part in that masterclass of concise and – he hoped – unifying eloquence, the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Albanese says as Yunupingu put it:

At Uluru we started a fire, a fire we hope burns bright for Australia.

Albanese goes on:

At Garma last year, after I announced the details of the referendum, he asked me, “Are you serious this time?” I replied: “Yes, we’re going to go for it.” When I spoke with him just over a week ago, I told him I was confident we would get there. This brought him some comfort, as did his totems of fire and baru, the saltwater crocodile, which

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watched over him in his final days. Now Yunupingu is gone, but the gurtha – the great tongue of flame and truth with which spoke to us – is still with us. As it burns away all that is superfluous and false, it lights the path ahead for us. Just as he saw what was going on around him with great clarity, he was crystalline when he turned his gaze within.

In Yunupingu’s own words:

My inner life is that of the Yolngu song cycles, the ceremonies, the knowledge, the law and the land. This is yothu yindi. Balance. Wholeness. Completeness. A world designed in perfection, founded on the beautiful simplicity of a mother and her newborn child; as vibrant and as dynamic as the estuary where the saltwaters meet the freshwaters, able to give you everything you need.

Albanese writes:

He belongs to all of that now. Our hearts go out especially to the Yolngu, the Gumatj clan, and the great Yunupingu family. To all who loved him, to all who were moved by him, to all there who have gazed out to where the Gulf of Carpentaria meets the sky. We will never again hear his voice anew, but his words – and his legacy – will keep speaking to us. Yunupingu now walks in another place, but he has left such great footsteps for us to follow here in this one.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.22am BST

block-time published-time 11.42pm BST

Prime minister pays tribute to Yunupingu

Prime minister Anthony Albanese has paid tribute to the Yolŋu man Yunupingu, one of the most significant Indigenous figures in history and a former Australian of the year, as “an extraordinary leader”.

When told of his death during an interview on Radio National, the PM said:

He was one of the greatest of Australians.

An extraordinary leader of his people, respected right across Indigenous and non-Indigenous **Australia**.

Albanese said “he showed the way”.

A towering figure in the campaign for Indigenous constitutional recognition, and a member of the advisory group on the voice to parliament, Yunupingu has been spoken of often by Albanese and Indigenous Australians minister Linda Burney in the scope of the referendum.

Albanese has previously spoken of visiting the Garma festival last year and speaking to Yunupingu about the referendum. The PM mentioned this conversation in the RN interview, saying Yunupingu had asked him, “Are you serious?” about the push for a referendum.

The PM said:

I said to him that I was serious, that we would do it.

Albanese said he would speak with Yunupingu’s family about the potential of holding a state funeral.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.10am BST

block-time published-time 11.36pm BST

Indigenous leader Yunupingu has died aged 74

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Yunupingu’s daughter Binmila Yunupi?u has issued the following statement behalf of the family:

Today we mourn with deep love and great sadness the passing of our dearly loved father Yunupi?u. The holder of our sacred fire, the leader of our clan and the path-maker to our future. The loss to our family and community is profound. We are hurting, but we honour him and remember with love everything he has done for us. We remember him for his fierce leadership, and total strength for Yol?u and for Aboriginal people throughout **Australia**. He lived by our laws always. Yunupi?u lived his entire life on his land, surrounded by the sound of bilma (clapsticks), yidaki (didgeridoo) and the manikay (sacred song) and dhulang (sacred designs) of our people. He was born on our land, he lived all his life on our land and he died on our land secure in the knowledge that his life’s work was secure. He had friendship and loyalty to so many people, at all levels, from all places. Our father was driven by a vision for the future of this nation, his people’s place in the nation and the rightful place for Aboriginal people everywhere. In leaving us, we know that Dad’s loss will be felt in many hearts and minds. We ask you to mourn his passing in your own way, but we as a family encourage you to rejoice in the gift of his life and leadership. There will never be another like him. In time we will announce the dates for bāpurru (ceremonies) that will see him returned to his land and to his fathers. These ceremonies will be held in North Eastern Arnhem Land. We ask the media to respect our grieving space over the coming weeks as we put together ceremonial arrangements to honour Dad. Instead of flowers, we invite those of you who were touched by Dad’s fire to share with us your personal recollections and memories of his life. This will lift our spirits.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.47pm BST

block-time published-time 11.20pm BST

‘My party needs to earn the trust of Melbourne again’

Keith Wolahan, one of two remaining federal Liberal MPs in Melbourne, has told ABC News this morning that the onus is on the party to earn the trust of the Victorian capital again.

He said the Aston loss at the weekend “wasn’t an easy night for my party”:

I think the first thing we need to do as a party is to keep our cool and reflect on the message. But clearly, my party needs to earn the trust of Melbourne again. I’m one of only two seats that are in Melbourne.

I think people want us to focus on them and their problems. I think they see my party, particularly here in Victoria – we hear these labels of moderates and conservatives, but the Liberal party has values that I think speak to mainstream **Australia**. We need to talk about that more.

Wolahan said the infighting in the state Liberal party was one of many reasons for the historic byelection loss. But he continued to back party leader Peter Dutton :

Politics is about messaging, but also substance and character. Peter Dutton is a person of substance and character. I’ve got to know him well over the last 10 months. As I said live on air, I’ve seen good and bad leaders. Peter Dutton is a really good leader. I’m confident we can do that ...

Of course it’s not a good time. But I’ve been a member of the Liberal party since the late 90s. And I’ve seen the tide come and go. And it’s important that you pick yourself up and you properly analyse the messages and provide solutions.

I don’t think – we’ve heard from commentators over the many decades that it’s the end of the Liberal party. And it never is, because we have a lot to offer this country and this state. But we have to communicate those solutions.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.49pm BST

block-time published-time 11.12pm BST

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals ‘fearmongering’ on voice ahead of party’s decision on referendum stance

NSW to ban mobile phones during school hours

NSW will become the latest state to ban mobile phones during school hours. Premier Chris Minns told ABC News Breakfast the statistics back the measure, which will be introduced in the state’s public high schools:

The statistics are in. We know that kids who are in schools who have a mobile-phone ban in place are getting better test results, there’s more social interaction at school, there’s more physical interaction at school.

We’re seeing the principal of Davidson high school saying he’s seen a massive turnaround in behaviour – less bullying within his school – since he implemented a mobile-phone ban.

In Western **Australia**, South **Australia**, the Northern Territory and Victoria – all of those states have implemented a ban, and I don’t want to see New South Wales kids fall behind.

I know a lot of adults find it difficult to concentrate when a mobile phone is in front of them, so I don’t know why we expect children to have that kind of discipline.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.16pm BST

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Police ministers to discuss creation of national gun register

Australia’s first legal officer is bringing together the nation’s police ministers to urgently progress the national firearms register, AAP reports.

Attorney general Mark Dreyfus will convene the roundtable today as the federal government works to expedite the development of the register after high-profile shootings.

National cabinet ordered police ministers to report back by the middle of the year after the shooting of two police officers and a third person in Wieambilla, Queensland, in December.

Dreyfus said **Australia** already had some of the world’s strongest gun laws but there was room for improvement:

The Albanese government is committed to working closely with jurisdictions on this initiative, which is vital to preserve the safety of the community and police.

A national firearms register will ensure police across all Australian jurisdictions have timely and accurate information to assess any firearms risk posed and protect the community from harm.

Prime minister Anthony Albanese said it was a necessary measure after state and territory leaders were briefed by **Australia**’s top spy about the rise of rightwing extremism and so-called “sovereign citizens”.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.11pm BST

block-time published-time 11.00pm BST

Former MPs say Liberals must ‘do the hard policy training’

Staying on the fallout from Aston, two former Liberal MPs who lost their seats to teal candidates at last year’s federal election have penned a piece in the Australian Financial Review this morning echoing Malcolm Turnbull’s criticisms of the party’s direction.

Tim Wilson and Jason Falinski write that “Aston lances the delusion the party can abandon urban electorates because electoral fortunes all reside in the outer suburbs”:

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals 'fearmongering' on voice ahead of party's decision on referendum stance

Nostalgia about Aston as the perceived turnaround point of the Howard government also reflects why the Liberals lost.

Liberals are still approaching politics like it is the early 2000s, when voters got their news from nightly TV broadcasts and demography was their friend, with dominant anglo Boomers whose worlds were relatively small.

The world has moved on. Voters are younger and more worldly, and more are angry and feel the system is rigged against them. And the answer from the Liberals is to tell them they've "never had it so good" ...

Nostalgic for the Howard era, many commentators say the Liberal Party isn't conservative enough and have misdiagnosed the party's problems, keeping its supporters focused on the wrong battlefield.

If politics is downstream from culture and is a contest of ideas, then for too long Liberals have turned up half an hour late to play a game at Marvel Stadium when the lights are on at the MCG. The battlefield isn't about being more progressive or conservative. Politics is about power, and who is empowered. Labor wants to empower Canberra, corporates and industry super.

The correct battlefield for the Liberal Party should be policies that deliver empowered citizens, community and competitive commerce, not how to empower Canberra differently.

Liberals should have ridden a demographic wave and fought last year's election on the importance of home ownership over super, but it chose not to until it was too late.

Until Liberals turn up to the ground, do the hard policy training so they can frame the contest and accentuate their strengths, the electoral outcome will be predictable.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.06pm BST

block-time published-time 10.50pm BST

'The party has gone backwards dramatically since I was overthrown': Turnbull

Malcolm Turnbull is now speaking to ABC Radio about the Liberal party's direction after the Aston byelection loss:

[In Victoria] the party has gone backwards dramatically since I was overthrown as leader of the Liberal party.

The problem is the party is now in a position where what had hitherto been the crown jewels, the safer seats, most of them are now in the hands of teals and now they're losing mortgage-belt seats.

Which is where we're told by the rightwing press is where the Liberal party is going to be more valued if they swing to the right.

Turnbull is sceptical of what one of the two Liberals left representing metropolitan Melbourne, Jason Wood, told the program. Wood believes the party just needs to sell its leader Peter Dutton better.

The former PM highlights that Dutton is being marketed, but by Labor:

The idea of putting Peter Dutton on posters everywhere ... Peter is on posters everywhere, but they're Labor posters.

Turnbull says it's clear the party has to move back to the centre "where the voters are." However, he says he doesn't know who an alternative Liberal leader could be.

I'm just making the point that to move to the centre would be very difficult for Dutton... You've got Dutton out there again on Insiders, essentially rubbishing the move to renewable energy and then raising the furphy of nuclear power.. this is all effectively culture war stuff.

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals ‘fearmongering’ on voice ahead of party’s decision on referendum stance

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.23pm BST

block-time published-time 10.41pm BST

Turnbull and Archer call for Liberals to return to centre

Malcolm Turnbull and Bridget Archer are calling for the Liberals to return to centrist values after the weekend’s historic byelection loss. The Albanese government became the first to win an opposition seat in a byelection in more than a century.

Turnbull has told my colleague Amy Remeikis the [*party’s future rested on its ability to change course – and leader*](#) :

The problem is that they have to move back to the centre.

It is hard to see how that can be done with a leader who is so indelibly associated with the right of the party and whose support base in the Murdoch media is calling for the Liberal party to move further to the right.

Backbencher Archer, one of the party’s leading moderates, made similar calls for a return to the centre, telling the Sydney Morning Herald yesterday:

I think the party needs to stop ideological dog whistling and return to centrist Liberal values.

You’ve got ideological culture warriors who would rather we lose than make space for a diversity of views and that’s a problem... the party is at a crossroads and needs to decide – it’s a choice between ideology and electability.

Archer told the paper there was a strong case for fresh blood on the opposition frontbench because “we have to have a commitment to change and renewal”.

Related: [*Dutton’s leadership safe for now, Liberals say, despite calls for change of direction after historic loss in Aston*](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.56pm BST

block-time published-time 10.33pm BST

Record-breaking rower to reach home soil

Australian endurance rower Michelle Lee will arrive in Cairns this morning after 235 days at sea, AAP reports.

The solo seafarer has traversed more than 14,000km on her journey to Queensland’s far north, rowing from the coast of Ensenada in Mexico.

Solo rower Michelle Lee at sea. Photograph: Robin Skjolborg

The months-long expedition has taken Lee through the paths of five hurricanes and four cyclones, including the devastating Cyclone Gabrielle. She said:

My patience has been tried and tested, I’m ready to land. I’m just dreaming of stepping on land. I expect it will take me a week to become a socially acceptable human again.

The mammoth feat is not the first for Lee, a 50-year-old massage therapist from Sydney’s north-west. In 2018 she became the first Australian woman to row across the Atlantic Ocean.

The achievement led to her being named the 2019 National Geographic adventurer of the year.

Australia news live: Anne Aly claims Liberals 'fearmongering' on voice ahead of party's decision on referendum stance

Throughout her journey, Lee has shared regular dispatches from her 7.7-metre carbon-fibre vessel, the Australian Maid. Updates detail the awe of rowing alongside schools of fish approaching the Great Barrier Reef, finding a handbag and wattle branch lost at sea, and a craving for a Devonshire tea with all the trimmings.

Scones, fresh cream and a hot cup of tea are not far away for Lee, who is already planning her first few meals on land. She said:

A stack of pancakes is going to be so amazing, as is a bunch of celery, some chopped capsicum and cucumber.

The Australian Maid will carry Lee to the Cairns marina, where crowds are expected to welcome her home about 9am AEST.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.19pm BST

block-time published-time 10.28pm BST

Good morning!

The attorney general, Mark Dreyfus, will meet state and territory police ministers today to discuss the creation of a national firearms register. National cabinet ordered police ministers to report back after the Wieambilla shooting that left two police officers and a civilian dead last December.

This morning in Cairns, Australian endurance rower Michelle Lee will set foot on land for the first time after 235 days at sea. She has traversed more than 14,000km on her solo journey from the coast of Ensenada in Mexico.

Home prices nationally have gone up for the first time in 10 months, with high rents and migration helping turn values around.

A report shows the rental crisis is only due to get worse because of a [*shortage in supply of new houses and units caused by costs and ongoing constraints in construction.*](#)

The National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation said banks increasing their interest rates relative to the Reserve Bank of **Australia** guidance had reduced the supply of dwellings.

The Liberals continue to face the fallout of their unexpected loss in the weekend's byelection in Aston. Opposition leader Peter Dutton yesterday [*accepted responsibility for the loss but said he had no plans to step down.*](#)

Jason Wood, one of the two MPs left in metropolitan Melbourne, told ABC Radio this morning the party doesn't need a change in leadership, just to sell Dutton better.

The other, Keith Wolahan, the member for Menzies, told ABC Radio he believed the party was not offering solutions to the next generation and needed to do a better job of listening.

Let's get into it!

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.30pm BST

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