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The following information was released by the office of the Prime Minister of **Australia**:

JAY BARR, CEO OF SAGEWOOD EARLY LEARNING: Good morning everyone, I'd like to welcome you all to Sagewood Early Learning, Dayton and the Prime Minister here this morning with Anne, Tania and Sunitha from Big Steps. It's exciting that we're able to celebrate our educators with the announcement from the government for the wage increase. I'd like to hand over to Tania. Thank you.

TANIA LAWRENCE, FEDERAL MEMBER FOR HASLUCK: Thank you. So, as the Federal Member for Hasluck, it's an absolute pleasure to have the Prime Minister return again to visit what is a beautiful facility. And, you know, we talk about it takes a village to bring up children and Sagewood is an example of how it all comes together with this fabulous team, Jay and Greg is here today as the owner. But truly, the announcement that has been led by **Anne Aly**, Dr **Anne Aly**, the Minister for Youth and Early Childhood, demonstrates our commitment to not only ensuring fair work for all workers, but ensuring our children get the absolute best start and to that end I will now hand over. Thank you.

ANTHONY ALBANESE, PRIME MINISTER: Well, thanks very much. It's great to be back in Western **Australia** and particularly good to be here in Hasluck. I was at a different centre in Hasluck, I think two days before, two or three days before the election. And there we committed to reform when it came to early learning. Australians deserve the best start in life and we know that 90 per cent of human brain development occurs in the first five years. And this morning, chatting to these bright young children, people like Emily and Madison, helping them is what this is about. Making sure that the work that is done by the early educators here is valued so that they can continue to get that start that they need. Today we're sitting with these very young children where they're learning, today they're learning about U and L, a part of learning about letters, learning in that early stages that assists them when they get to school and assists them as well in the social interaction that they learn at a centre like this. And the people who provide that assistance deserve not just our thanks, they deserve to be paid properly. And that's what this announcement is about. A 15 per cent wage increase for early educators. They're not just child minders, what they do is they provide not just care, but they also provide that education and the benefit of their skills that they develop, that they train for, and that they're passionate about. Now we know that no one goes into this sector just because to make a whole lot of money. They go into it because they enjoy it and they get satisfaction out of seeing these young people grow into future school age children. But they deserve to, while they're having that level of satisfaction, they

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deserve to be able to pay their bills and to get a decent wage, and that's what this is about. A 10 per cent wage increase on December 1 will mean an additional \$103 in the pockets of childcare workers and educators. A 5 per cent increase in December next year takes that total to \$155 of extra wages for our early educators. It's no accident that most of the workers in this sector are women, just like in aged care, and that they are the two sectors that have been the most undervalued when it came to wages and conditions. Now we're making sure there are additional people entering this sector through fee free TAFE and through the support we're giving. And it's an attractive sector, but it's been made more attractive by this. Because unless this wage increase occurred, we would continue to see people leave the sector because, of course, they couldn't afford to stay as much as they would like to. And so workers who are here joining us, you'll hear from Sunitha in a second as well. I do want to congratulate them on the Big Steps campaign. They've gone out there and they've advocated politely but very clearly as well. It is unfortunate that the Coalition appear to have not embraced this change. I find it extraordinary that whilst they say, 'Yeah, workers should be paid more, we don't begrudge that'. Then comes the but - 'But we worry about all of the impact'. But, but, but. Peter Dutton is addicted to saying no. Whether it is support for workers, whether it be support for renewable energy, whether it be support for the minerals and resources sector through the Production Tax Credits that he couldn't bring himself to say yes to as well. What you need from an alternative government is alternative policies. You don't have any of that. Not a single costed policy. The only policy they have is nuclear reactors sometime in the 2040s with no idea of how much it will cost and no preparedness to even go to Collie to tell that community why they should get a nuclear reactor on their doorstep. So we'll continue to be constructive. We'll continue to do what Australia needs. And one of the things that Australia needs, and our youngest Australians in particular need, is a workforce that's properly paid, and my government's very proud that we'll be delivering that. We'll hear from Anne and then from Sunitha to speak about what it means to the workers who work in this wonderful sector.

ANNE ALY, MINISTER FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND YOUTH: Thank you, Prime Minister. It's wonderful to be here back at Sagewood Early Learning with Jay and Greg and of course Tania, the wonderful local member for Hasluck, and of course the Prime Minister for this momentous announcement today where we are committing to ensuring that early childhood educators and workers get a wage that reflects the level of professionalism that they bring to caring for and educating and looking after the safety and the wellbeing of our youngest Australians. This is an investment in a workforce and it is an investment in Australian children - that's what this is. We want to make sure that all 15 per cent of that wage rise goes into the pockets of these amazing workers that you see here. And that's why we've also put a cap on how much early learning centres can increase their fees at 4.4 per cent over the next 12 months, and we'll have more as that progresses. But today is a big day. It's a big day for all of the workers that you see here who for well over a decade have campaigned for a wage that is fair and that reflects their level of professionalism. We say to you, we value you, we see you, we know the work that you do. And I am proud to stand here with the Prime Minister, with the local member and with these educators, with these educators to announce this wage increase. Long coming, well deserved, and it took an Albanese Labor government to deliver it. I'll hand over to Sunitha here, who is one of our fabulous early childhood educators who has been campaigning on this to talk about exactly what this means to our workforce.

SUNITHA RANASINGHE, UNITED WORKERS UNION: Thank you, Minister. Thank you. I've been in the industry for the last 18 years and this is the biggest win that we have won, which is really, really great. And we were having all educators leaving in the past few years because the pay is so low and now they will be coming back. Already they have been contacting me and saying that we are coming back - that's a great win. And then this is the most important thing in our world for our children and they are the future for our world. They are the people who are going to be out there in our community in a couple of years' time. So I'm so grateful to the Prime Minister for appreciating our work towards the children, towards the next generation, and then giving us this exceptional win. And I thank you all for this.

PRIME MINISTER: Well done, Sunitha. Sunitha, of course, as well as other early educators, will get something else, or have got something else already as well that the Coalition opposed, which is our tax cuts. Where they were just about going to get, in some cases, if they were working part time, they were going to get not a single dollar. And given that the wages of people in this sector are just over \$1000, they were going to get hardly anything from the

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tax cuts if we didn't make the tough decision to change it earlier this year. And that, of course, means that these workers will earn more, but they'll also get to keep more of what they earn. Happy to take some questions.

JOURNALIST: The AUKUS update allows for the transfer of nuclear reactors and radioactive material. You've criticised the Coalitions lack of detail around their nuclear policy. Where's your government's detail about how AUKUS related nuclear waste can be handled in Australia?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, there'll be no nuclear transfer from either the US or the UK. That's the detail. That's very clear. And that's not part of the arrangement. Nuclear submarines have nuclear reactors in them, that's the detail there as well.

JOURNALIST: What has Australia agreed to with this new development?

PRIME MINISTER: We've agreed to have nuclear powered submarines, that's what we've agreed to. And the transfer of technology that's related to that, that we'll have access to it as we announced.

JOURNALIST: What are the extra political commitments as part of this new agreement?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, there aren't extra political commitments, I'm not sure what you mean. We work with our allies in the United States and the United Kingdom, and these arrangements are very clear. And you know what's going to happen in WA? Jobs. Jobs here in WA. Not hundreds of them, thousands of them. And perhaps even more than that, indirectly as well, as a result of what we're going to deliver through the AUKUS arrangements. We're very pleased that AUKUS, both Pillar One and Pillar Two, has been agreed. It's something that we have worked very carefully and closely on the detail. It will produce circumstances whereby we'll have a whole range of jobs created here in WA and in South Australia in particular.

JOURNALIST: It was actually President Biden that said there'd be additional political commitments from AUKUS partners. Are you saying there's no extra additional?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, we're allies. It's called the US alliance. We have a commitment that is there through the US alliance, and that's something that's been in place thanks to John Curtin another West Australian. A great West Australian who, during World War Two, Australia turned to the United States. Since then, they've been our most important ally.

JOURNALIST: What's your response to Paul Keating's claim that we're becoming the 51st US state? And his comparison of Taiwan to Tasmania?

PRIME MINISTER: Look, I missed the comparison of Taiwan and Tasmania, I've got to say. But Paul has his views, he's entitled to express them. Paul was a great Prime Minister - that ended in 1996.

JOURNALIST: Does his comments undermine your efforts or the AUKUS efforts?

PRIME MINISTER: Not at all, not at all. Paul has his views. They're well known. My job as Prime Minister is to do what Australia needs in 2024. The world is different. The world has changed between 1996 and 2024 and my government is doing what we need to do today.

JOURNALIST: Any concerns government spending like this childcare announcement will actually end up making the Reserve Bank Governor's job more difficult?

PRIME MINISTER: Not at all. This is, have a look at what we're doing here. We're giving these workers a decent wage so that the sector continues to be able to exist. Every analysis says that if you continued to underpay workers in this sector then they wouldn't be able to continue and people would continue to leave the sector. What that would mean is that people who rely upon dropping their kid off here at this centre wouldn't be able to continue in their work. The downward spiral in productivity for the economy would be very damaging. We want to make sure that this sector that plays a critical role, not just in and of itself, but in the whole way that the economy functions, is able to not just exist and survive, but to thrive into the future. And in addition to that, we are making sure that costs are kept

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down so that families will benefit. Good for workers, good for children, good for families, good for our economy, good for Australia. That's what this announcement is.

JOURNALIST: Did you consider delaying the announcement given that inflation is still lingering?

PRIME MINISTER: These workers need a pay increase. They have waited and campaigned for years. There is, all the data is out there about people leaving the sector. It is the right time as well to make sure that we put that cap on costs. Our childcare subsidy changes that we made in legislation earlier in our term have resulted in an average price decrease of 11 per cent across the board. What we are doing is making sure that we address cost of living issues by giving tax cuts to all Australians, energy price relief, cheaper childcare, fee free TAFE, the increase that is now happening in wages - all addressing the cost of living, whilst we're moderating inflation. We've produced two budget surpluses in a row. That's two more than our predecessors produced in almost a decade, even though they were elected promising to have a surplus in their first year and every year thereafter.

JOURNALIST: On cost of living, do we need more competition in service stations when it comes to fuel prices? Adelaide pays less than the rest of the country because it has more independent service stations.

PRIME MINISTER: I'd like to see more competition right across our economy, of course. And that is something that does have an impact. And of course competition is good for prices and that's why the reference that you make there is that that's not the only sector that that would apply for.

JOURNALIST: Senator Fatima Payman had a secret meeting with Muslim community leaders two weeks ago. Do you believe that that's sort of an undercurrent and possible alliance of Muslim bloc voting at state and federal?

PRIME MINISTER: Look, Australians, we have a secular democracy here. That's a good thing. We'll be campaigning each and every day on, when the election's called, about the difference that we've made. This is the difference that a Labor government brings. It's real, it has an impact on real people, it benefits the real economy. That's what we're doing.

JOURNALIST: On gas, Prime Minister, just on the Browse project. Is your government supportive of that Woodside Browse Project?

PRIME MINISTER: Well we, of course, have environmental laws in place that allow for proper environmental assessments. We support the resources sector, of course, subject to those environmental approvals.

JOURNALIST: Just on that, do you agree with the WA Treasurer that job security and energy reliability can't be thrown out the window for environmental concerns in that regard?

PRIME MINISTER: We of course need job security. We of course need energy reliability. And we need to make sure it's done in a way that protects our environment. That's the objective that I'm sure that we share with the Cook government here.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, how long are you in WA for and what else is on your schedule?

PRIME MINISTER: I've had a busy morning. I've done four radio interviews, one of them on the phone, but three of them in studios this morning. I had a fantastic event last night up in the electorate of Pearce, hosted by Tracey Roberts, and I want to thank the sports club who hosted us there. I have had various other meetings in WA. I'll be heading back over, parliament's sitting next week. So this is my last event, with the possible exception of a radio interview on the way to the airport, this is my last event in WA here. But I'll be back. I can announce that we will be bringing the entire Ministry here on the 2nd of September, so in just a few weeks' time. I'll be here from the Sunday, I'll be here on the Monday, the Tuesday and the Wednesday. I'll be engaging with West Australians it's possible we'll have a regional visit as well as part of that. I'm a regular visitor to Western Australia and have been so for at least 20 years.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, just on that. You have made repeated trips to WA. Have you learned anything you didn't know before about WA and what makes us different to other states?

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PRIME MINISTER: The truth is I think that you need to be here in Western Australia because quite often people who are living in the Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra triangle don't get WA. You have to spend time here. You have to engage here. You have to develop relationships here with business, with political leaders, with the community. It's a great state. And it's not just Perth, of course. As Prime Minister, I've been to Port Hedland, Karratha, Kalgoorlie, Albany, Bunbury and other parts of this great state. We will continue to engage, the Ministry Meeting here will be the fourth time that I've brought the Cabinet, not just to Perth, this will be the third Cabinet Meeting in Perth, but we also had one in Port Hedland. We need to engage. I've been to WA more times than the previous three Prime Ministers combined under the Liberal government. And Peter Dutton, I'm not sure how many times he came here as a Minister - he was a Minister for nine years. When I was a Minister, I used to come here 10 times a year as well, because this state matters and it's important because it does help to drive our national economy - and that's why it's critical.

JOURNALIST: Have you noticed a change amongst your Cabinet, your frontbench, in terms of attitude and understanding of the resources sector in WA and bringing it across? Are attitudes changing there?

PRIME MINISTER: My Cabinet gets WA. To get the scale of a Port Hedland or a Karratha, you have to see it. You have to see one of those trains where you can see the front of the train but you can't see the end of it. You have to see the scale. You have to talk with the workforce about the experience of being FIFOs or about the growth that I've seen in a town like Karratha. When I started coming to Karratha 20 years ago as the Shadow Infrastructure Minister, when the Howard government was still there, there was nothing like the hotels. There was no high rise or medium rise buildings there on the coast. It was a very different place. It is now a vibrant place to live. I opened, as a Minister for Regional Development, I opened an early learning centre in Karratha, which was one of the first that they had, and it was full on day one. It was booked out a long time in advance. They just didn't have those services. And it's to the credit of the WA government in particular, working with local government as well. I met with one of the deputy mayors from a community near here yesterday as well, sitting down as well with people, really makes a substantial difference.

JOURNALIST: On AUKUS, Prime Minister. In President Biden's letter, where he refers to that non-legally binding agreement with the additional related political commitments, are you saying there's nothing new being asked of Australia with those additional political commitments?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, we have a relationship, an alliance with the United States. That's what we have. We have political engagement between Australia and the United States as well. I visited the US three times last year including for an official state visit, including where we launched the official, AUKUS went from being an idea and a concept into being a very real, tangible phenomenon, that I did, of course, with President Biden and with the UK Prime Minister.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, you backed away from a Makarrata Commission on Insiders on the weekend. Are you committed to that Commission?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, we're committed to advancing the interests of Indigenous Australians. I gave a significant speech on Saturday about economic empowerment of Indigenous Australians. I know that some are engaged with debates about processes and they're important. But we didn't campaign for the Voice as an end in itself - it's about how you close the gap. How you have engagement, how you provide opportunities for First Nations people in education, in health. In all of these areas, the outcomes are not good enough. We need to do better. All governments need to do better.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, I believe you also had an update on religious discrimination laws. Can you provide an update on where they are at?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, we provided legislation to the Coalition a long time ago now, months ago. We provided them with that on the basis that we wanted to see if we could get some bipartisan support, because that's an issue that requires that. One of the things I've spoken about is the need for greater social cohesion. And the last thing that Australia needs is any divisive debate relating to religion and people's faith. I respect people's faith and I think that they should be able to engage free of discrimination. And so it's quite clear, the timing I said, had to be that we

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would introduce legislation during the Budget session if agreement could be reached. Agreement hasn't been able to be reached because there's been no suggestions from the Coalition of amendments of the legislation. So I don't intend to engage in a partisan debate when it comes to religious discrimination, and I think that that is unfortunate.

JOURNALIST: Linda Reynolds has told the court that Senator Kitching's prior knowledge of allegations -

PRIME MINISTER: Yeah, you've answered the question in raising the court. And the last thing that I'm about to do is comment on something that is before the court. So I have no intention of engaging in something that is before the courts.

JOURNALIST: Are you offended -

PRIME MINISTER: I have no intention of commenting about things that are before the courts. People will make their own judgement on those issues, and I certainly have mine, but I have no intention of commenting on things that's before the court. That would be entirely inappropriate.

JOURNALIST: Senior members of the Islamic community have told Sky News the government has not done enough to stop the war in Gaza. They want to know why you haven't recalled our ambassador from Israel or expelled their ambassador to Australia. Can you say what have you personally done to help end the conflict?

PRIME MINISTER: The truth is that Australia is not a participant in this conflict. And the idea that Australia is in a position to stop this conflict is, quite frankly, just not the case. That is the reality. Australia is not a participant. We do not provide weapons to Israel and there have been no weapons provided for, not just my government, but going back five years, so not even related to, even before October 7. We have continued to put forward a principled position. We've done that by the way that we've voted in the United Nations, by the way that we have sought to lower temperature, not raise it by saying things that just aren't true or making requests that can't possibly be delivered. The votes that we have had in the United Nations, the statements that I've issued with the Prime Ministers of New Zealand and Canada have called for ceasefire, have called for hostages to be released, have called for a de-escalation of the conflict, have called for increased aid for Palestinians in Gaza, and have called for the creation of a two state solution where Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace and security with prosperity. We have been very consistent and at every single opportunity we have sought to decrease tension here in the Australian community because it is very important that people be able to have these debates respectfully. And I say with respect the idea that Australia is in a position to stop what is happening in that part of the world, all we can do is to raise our voice in the interests of peace and to decry the loss of every innocent life, whether it be Israeli or whether it be Palestinian.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister on the conflict, how concerning is it that Qantas has diverted flights from Perth to London via Singapore?

PRIME MINISTER: Well that is, of course, a decision by Qantas, but it's a sensible decision to prioritise safety. That's something that has occurred. The conflict is meaning that in many areas shipping is having to be diverted as well as some aircraft. These are sensible measures. Safety must always be the first priority. Last one.

JOURNALIST: What is your response to the story in the West today about the 11-year-old boy who's been banned from buying his lunch at the canteen because of a fight between his mum and the PandC? And how do you think that should be resolved?

PRIME MINISTER: Give the kid some lunch. You know, seriously? I did have a read of that and, you know, the kid shouldn't be caught up in this argument. He, I think it's a young boy, is 11 years old. You know, a bit of common sense should apply here and I'm sure that it will. Thank you very much.

EandOE

Payrise for Early Childhood Educators; AUKUS; Cost of Living; Inflation; Fatima Payman; Woodside Browse Project; Visits to WA; Indigenous Affairs; Religious Discrimination; Linda Reynolds; Middle East Conflict; Qantas; Canteen Ban

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