

Australia news live: Linda Reynolds 'working on' referral of Brittany Higgins settlement to federal corruption watchdog



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Highlight: Follow the day's news liveNational anti-corruption commission receives 44 referrals on first day of operationGet our morning and afternoon news emails, free app or daily news podcast

Body

block-time published-time 8.07am BST

Struggling to catch up on everything that's happened today? My colleague Antoun Issa has got you covered:

Related: [Afternoon Update: **Australia** responds to England's Ashes hysteria; house prices up again; and scientists generate electricity from humidity](#)

block-time published-time 7.57am BST

This Monday, First Dog on the Moon takes on the latest cricket scandal.

Related: [Was it in the spirit of the game? A NATION CRIES WHITHER CRICKET?! | First Dog on the Moon](#)

block-time published-time 7.44am BST

Activists arrested at defence housing site in Darwin

The Environment Centre of the Northern Territory says activists were arrested today at the site of proposed clearing for a defence housing development at Lee Point in Darwin.

About 100 people have been protesting against imminent clearing at the site after the modified development proposal received approval from the environment minister, Tanya Plibersek, last month.

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Plibsersek approved a varied proposal that she said would protect more habitat for the endangered Gouldian finch around a waterhole. But residents who have been campaigning against the project say old growth trees used by the bird would still be cleared under the plan.

You can read more about the background to this story here:

Related: [Tanya Plibersek approves habitat clearing in Darwin despite risk to endangered bird](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.58am BST

block-time published-time 7.09am BST

Linda Reynolds to refer Brittany Higgins settlement to Nacc

Liberals senator Linda Reynolds has confirmed she still intends to refer the commonwealth's settlement with her former staffer, Brittany Higgins, to the National Anti-Corruption Commission. The Nacc has [had 44 referrals online already](#) – but this isn't among them, at least not yet.

On Monday, Reynolds told Guardian **[Australia](#)**:

I am working on the referral with my lawyer and will be submitting it early this month.

In December, Higgins [settled a personal injury claim](#) against the government for an undisclosed amount. The amount had been reported as high as \$3m, but Higgins has said it was substantially lower.

In June the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, was asked about the potential referral and said it was "entirely inappropriate action by the prime minister, or any other politician for that matter, to try to direct the anti-corruption commission into what to do".

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.26am BST

block-time published-time 6.57am BST

Former deputy mayor in Sydney found guilty of fraud

A bankrupt former deputy mayor of a [Sydney](#) council has been found guilty of fraud offences after forging the signatures of his ex-lawyer and sister.

Salim Mehajer, 37, forged his former solicitor Zali Burrows' signature on two separate documents, one of which claimed to witness a statutory declaration from his sister, Zenha Osman, whose signature he also forged, a [New South Wales](#) district court jury decided after deliberating for just over four hours.

Mehajer was found guilty of four counts of making or using false documents to obtain a financial advantage on Friday.

Read the full story here:

Related: [Former deputy mayor Salim Mehajer found guilty of fraud offences after forging signatures](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 7.01am BST

block-time published-time 6.35am BST

Nacc receives 44 online referalls on first day

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The [National Anti-Corruption Commission](#) (Nacc) has hit the ground running, with commissioner Paul Brereton revealing by 5pm Sunday it had already received 44 referrals online.

At its opening ceremony in Canberra on Monday, Brereton promised "we will listen to you", referring to the fact that "anyone can refer corruption issues to the commission", as well as its ability to commence investigations of its own motions.

These mark two contrasts with the integrity commission [proposed, but never legislated, by the Coalition government](#).

Brereton said the Nacc was "obviously aware of a number of matters which have been mentioned in the media and elsewhere as potential subjects for investigation".

Read the full story here:

Related: [Australia's national anti-corruption commission receives 44 referrals on first day of operation](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.45am BST

block-time published-time 6.20am BST

Matildas squad for Women's World Cup revealed

Matildas coach Tony Gustavsson has opted to roll the dice by selecting several players under injury clouds, including Kyah Simon and Alanna Kennedy, in his final squad for this month's Women's World Cup.

Matilda Kyah Simon Photograph: Mark Baker/AP

Gustavsson on Monday revealed the list of 23 players he will take into camp ahead of the tournament on home soil, having cut six from a provisional squad that was put through its paces at an intensive training camp on the Gold Coast for the past two weeks.

Read the full story here:

Related: [Kyah Simon makes Matildas' 2023 Women's World Cup squad](#)

And check out the team lineup in pictures, here:

Related: [Women's World Cup 2023: Tony Gustavsson's Australia squad – in pictures](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.58am BST

block-time published-time 6.10am BST

Third man charged over alleged Sydney kidnapping in January

A third man has been charged over his alleged role in a Sydney kidnapping which left a Sydney man with a severed finger, AAP reports. Police say a 26-year-old man and a 24-year-old woman were walking towards a car park at Fairfield in Sydney's south-west in January when they were grabbed by two men wearing balaclavas. Police allege they were forced into a vehicle, held hostage, tortured and the man's finger was chopped off.

After two days, according to police, the couple escaped from a location in Swan Bay before calling a family member who contacted police. Police today arrested a 25-year-old man. He was charged on two counts of being an accessory to the kidnapping with the intent to ransom, participating in a criminal group contributing to criminal activity and concealing a serious indictable offence. He will appear in Fairfield local court on Tuesday. Police charged two men over the alleged kidnapping in April and they remain before the courts.

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block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.14am BST

block-time published-time 6.03am BST

Thanks for following along this morning's news with me. Handing over to Steph Convery now, who will roll the blog through the rest of the afternoon.

block-time published-time 5.47am BST

More than 150 jobs lost as Queensland miner folds

More than 150 workers have lost their jobs after Queensland miner Aurora Metals entered voluntary administration, AAP reports.

The move comes after Aurora unsuccessfully attempted an initial public offering in 2022 and then failed to find a buyer on the open market. A 40% decline in the zinc price during the past 10 months has added strain.

Liquidator KordaMentha is overseeing the sale and recapitalisation of the group's mining and processing assets, including zinc, copper, lead, gold and silver production facilities.

Aurora's four underground mines and processing plants in northern Queensland have been placed on care and maintenance, as well as various other prospects in development, the administrator said in a statement.

"The Aurora Metals Group will undoubtedly attract interest given its portfolio of assets and the current environment where battery metals are in strong demand," KordaMentha's Richard Tucker said.

According to its website, the company formerly known as Consolidated Tin Mines has entered voluntary administration three times before: in 2012, 2016 and 2017.

- AAP report

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.55am BST

block-time published-time 5.40am BST

Humpback whale buried in dunes after beaching in northern NSW

A 30-tonne humpback whale has been buried in the dunes behind where it beached and died on Seven Mile beach at Lennox Head on the [New South Wales](#) north coast.

A humpback whale stranded at Lennox Head, near Byron Bay, in northern New South Wales, on Saturday. Photograph: Twitter/DPE Environment and Heritage (inc NPWS)

It became stranded early on Saturday morning and, despite attempts by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to save it, died about 7pm.

There was a ceremony at the request of the Jali local Aboriginal land council.

Read the full story from Josh Taylor here:

Related: [Humpback whale buried in NSW dunes after stranding on Seven Mile beach](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.56am BST

block-time published-time 5.29am BST

Victorian local council meeting moved online to avoid disruptions

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Latrobe city council, in south-eastern Victorian, says it will hold its July meeting online to avoid disruptive public behaviour, AAP reports.

"The decision to move council meetings online is based on several instances of disruptive behaviour by members of the public attending council meetings," a council spokesperson said in a statement.

While council encourages community engagement and values public participation, it is essential to maintain a conducive and respectful environment for all attendees, including councillors, council officers, and community.

The move comes after a number of council meetings being disrupted across Victoria – namely, a protest at a Monash city council meeting against a proposed drag story time event.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.38am BST

block-time published-time 5.18am BST

Eastern **Australia** clocks hottest June on record

Many people will have been glad for a bit of warmth during June, with large parts of eastern **Australia** enjoying relatively balmy conditions.

In fact, it was eastern **Australia**'s hottest June on record by maximum temperatures (with data going back to 1910).

It was also particularly dry for part of the eastern seaboard even if the Big Wet soaked regions of the outback that are [usually dry for this time of year](#).

enltrJune was much drier than usual for much of coastal eastern **Australia**. That Big Wet event made its mark on the interior... pic.twitter.com/6etztFSYP6

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

enltrIn fact, it was the hottest June on record for maximum temperatures for eastern **Australia**...beating 1957. pic.twitter.com/jLNI2B0KJr

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

We may not yet have heard the Bureau of Meteorology talking about an El Niño forming in the Pacific but that declaration is probably not too far off.

And with conditions in the Indian Ocean off **Australia**'s north-west tilting towards relatively low rainfall, don't be surprised if the regions that are relatively warm and dry expand further across the country in coming months.

enltrAnd as for June temperatures, **Australia** was very warm in parts of the east for maximum, mean, and minimum readings. pic.twitter.com/aayrv09THB

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

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 6.13am BST

block-time published-time 5.04am BST

Early voting opens for Fadden byelection in Queensland

Polling day for the byelection in Queensland seat Fadden is two weeks away, with early voting opening today, AAP reports.

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The [resignation](#) of former Liberal minister Stuart Robert has triggered the byelection. Now, Labor is seeking to pull off a win in a safe Liberal seat for the second time, after winning Aston in Victoria in April.

The LNP holds the seat by a margin of 10.6%. Gold Coast councillor Cameron Caldwell is its candidate.

Last week, the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, launched the campaign for Labor's pick, nurse educator Letitia Del Fabbro.

Nationals MP Barnaby Joyce said voters were concerned about the rising cost of living on Seven's Sunrise program this morning:

The people of Fadden are not going to go to the polling booths thinking about Mr Robert - they're going to be thinking about power prices, they're going to be thinking about a government that's more focused on constitutional change than the cost of living," he told Seven's Sunrise on Monday.

Labor's Tanya Plibersek said it would be a tough election to win:

Of course we are laser focused on [cost of living].

Early voting centres are open in Helensvale and Runaway Bay from today. Six early voting centres will be available from this weekend. 29 will be open on byelection day.

The electoral commission has received 16,345 applications for postal votes.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 5.15am BST

block-time published-time 4.47am BST

Here is the Bureau of Meteorology model pointing to a likely El Niño later this year:

enltrLatest model survey by [@BOM_au](#) shows El Nino remains likely (and a strong one) by later this year)...
pic.twitter.com/GHBP2MMCIV

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

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.52am BST

block-time published-time 4.41am BST

Former Covid-19 quarantine camp in Darwin to become army quarters

A former Covid-19 quarantine camp will become military accommodation for the Australian defence force in the Northern Territory, AAP reports.

The former Centre for National Resilience housed thousands of isolating travellers to [Australia](#) during the pandemic.

It will be repurposed by the Department of Defence, and known as the Defence Accommodation Precinct Darwin under a five-year lease signed by the commonwealth and NT government.

The first cohort of about 1300 people is expected to arrive in July. They will take part in Exercise Talisman Sabre, improving the combat readiness and operations between the Australian Defence Force, US military and other allies.

"The Centre for National Resilience was there for [Australia](#) in the beginning, during and the conclusion of the Covid-19 pandemic," the NT chief minister, Natasha Fyles, said.

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"Repurposing [it] as a defence accommodation precinct allows defence to more readily host visiting forces and services in the Territory."

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.47am BST

block-time published-time 4.30am BST

Australia to burn if El Niño returns as predicted

There is yet to be an official declaration, but the Bureau of Meteorology enacted an alert for El Niño conditions bringing warmer-than-expected weather last week, and scientists are tipping it could be "the strongest El Niño ever measured", AAP reports.

An El Niño would leave the east of **Australia** particularly vulnerable, where hot and dry conditions increase the risk of drought, heatwaves and bushfires. The Great Barrier Reef would also be at greater risk of mass coral bleaching.

Greg Mullins, internationally recognised expert bushfires and natural disaster response, predicts an above-normal fire season.

"We're set for a bad year," Mullins told a Climate Council media briefing today.

"If I was a betting man, I'd say we're going to get big fires this year."

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.33am BST

block-time published-time 4.15am BST

WA premier to talk EVs with Indonesian president

The Western Australian premier, Roger Cook, will travel to Sydney to meet with the Indonesian president, Joko Widodo, to discuss clean energy aspirations, AAP reports.

The discussion is expected to cover development of Indonesia's electric vehicle manufacturing industry, and its transition towards renewable energy.

Indonesia is the world's largest producer of nickel. It is looking to **Australia** for lithium – a key component in electric vehicle batteries.

"Clearly, the Indonesian government are very keen to understand how they can develop their interests around critical minerals in partnership with **Australia** and Western **Australia**," Cook told reporters.

They are very keen to develop their electric vehicle capabilities as well.

All of that stuff requires resources, and WA has those resources in abundance so you can understand why they're keen to discuss those issues with us.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.26am BST

block-time published-time 4.08am BST

Public sector wages cap to be lifted in NSW

The decade-long wages cap for NSW public sector workers will be ditched in two months, AAP reports.

A 4.5% rise offer had been made as part of "in good faith" negotiations with public sector unions, including those representing essential workers, acting premier Prue Car announced.

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"Even with a huge budget black hole", the government has offered teachers, nurses and paramedics the biggest pay rises in more than a decade, she said.

The move comes after a key pledge from Labor before the state election in March.

"This is our commitment to the people of NSW that this will be scrapped in September."

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.15am BST

block-time published-time 4.00am BST

More on housing approvals and loans

Mish Tan, ABS head of finance statistics, said owner-occupiers lifted the value of new loans for houses by 4% in May to \$16.4bn. Those for investors rose even more, up 6.2% to \$8.5bn.

The RBA will probably consider these monthly numbers to be too volatile to read a lot about the state of the economy from them.

They might be more interested in data from CoreLogic's national Home Value Index that showed prices were up 1.1% in June, slightly lower than 1.2% for May. Sydney, the most expensive major city, saw values rise 1.7% last month, bringing the increase since January's nadir to 6.7%.

The RBA had been modelling falling property prices and the implied lower consumer spending that would result in homeowners feeling a little less wealthy.

Markets were rating the chance of another quarter-point rate rise tomorrow to 4.35% as a 40:60 likelihood, [Bloomberg reported](#). Economists were split 14/13, with a pause also narrowly in the ascendancy.

Given last month's RBA rate rise was "finely balanced", tomorrow's decision may be even finer.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.03am BST

block-time published-time 3.52am BST

Housing approvals jump by 20%

The latest numbers on new housing approvals and housing loans point to a recovery of sorts but may not be enough to sway the Reserve Bank's rates decision tomorrow.

According to the ABS, the total number of dwellings approved in May jumped by just over a fifth, more than reversing the 6.8% drop in April.

Dwelling numbers can be volatile, particularly for new units, with approvals of "dwellings excluding houses" leaping almost 60%.

enltrA big jump in unit approvals in May in NSW helped bump up the total dwelling approvals count by about a fifth. (Tally is still about 10% lower than a year ago.) (Source: [@ABSStats](#)) [pic.twitter.com/cavqTaYGfD](#)

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

"This increase reflected a large number of apartment developments approved in New South Wales in May," Daniel Rossi, ABS head of construction statistics, said.

"Approvals for private sector houses remain more subdued, rising 0.9%, following a 3% fall in April."

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NSW posted a 52.9% increase in approvals, with Victoria up 15% and Queensland up a mere 0.9%. Tassie also saw a 41.1% pickup, while WA and SA posted drops.

Data on loans for May painted a similar picture. New loan commitments for housing rose 4.8% for the month and 8.1% for businesses buying property. Personal fixed-term loans were also up 4.3%.

New loan commitments rose about 5% in May (but remain about a fifth lower than a year earlier). (Source: [@ABSStats](#)) pic.twitter.com/p7jkAkvukd

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

block-time updated-time Updated at 4.05am BST

block-time published-time 3.37am BST

Twitter faces lawsuit over alleged non-payment for services

Twitter is facing another lawsuit after the company was accused of failing to pay for services for offices in London, Dublin, Sydney and Singapore.

Sydney-based infrastructure company Facilitate is seeking a collective payment of more than \$1m across the three businesses in alleged owed payments dating back to October, when [Elon Musk](#) bought Twitter.

Facilitate provided sensor installation in London and Dublin and an office fit-out in Singapore, while in [Australia](#), it decommissioned Twitter's Sydney office and temporarily stored its contents, according to case documents obtained by the Guardian.

The firm says that after Musk took over Twitter, the social media company did not dispute the invoices but has simply not paid them. Facilitate is seeking damages and costs.

Twitter has not yet filed a defence.

Read the full story here:

Related: [Twitter faces lawsuit over alleged non-payment for office services in four countries](#)

block-time updated-time Updated at 5.08am BST

block-time published-time 3.27am BST

Two men charged over 84kg ketamine importation

Two men have been charged over importing 84kg of ketamine into [Australia](#), hidden in vans on a cargo ship, AAP reports.

The Australian federal police said an international drug syndicate was behind the illicit import worth \$3.36m.

Two men in their late 20s were arrested on Saturday, after border authorities found 79 sealed bags of the white powder inside cavities in two vans that arrived in Melbourne on 15 May.

Police said they substituted the drug with another substance and released the vans. They were collected and driven to a Sydney car dealership.

One vehicle was then allegedly stolen and the fake drugs moved to another vehicle which was driven to Yennora before officers intercepted it and arrested the two men.

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The alleged offenders were charged with attempting to possess commercial quantity of drugs and refused bail at Parramatta local court on Sunday.

"Ketamine is a dangerous sedative known to be used illicitly as a 'date rape' drug," acting commissioner Kate Ferry said in a statement:

Its dissociative effects block sensory brain signals and can cause memory loss, feelings of being detached from one's body and the inability to perceive danger.

ABF assistant commissioner Erin Dale said:

This was, simply put, an outrageous attempt to import a highly dangerous substance that could have caused untold harm if let loose on the community.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 4.07am BST

block-time published-time 3.15am BST

Tasmanian police to conduct water search for missing Belgian hiker

Tasmanian police are planning to conduct a swift water search in the Philosopher Falls area tomorrow as part of the search for missing Belgian woman, Celine Cremer.

Missing Belgian tourist Celine Cremer. Photograph: Supplied by Tasmania police/AAP

In a statement just now, Insp Anthea Maingay said that while the search has involved ground crews, police drones and helicopters, specialist search and rescue rappelling, and all-terrain vehicles, no signs of the hiker have been found since last Tuesday:

Unfortunately no further signs of Celine have been located since her car was found in the Philosopher Falls car park on Tuesday 27 June.

Weather conditions have been challenging, with personnel facing freezing temperatures, snow, rain and strong winds over the past week.

Tomorrow we will utilise more resources to conduct swift water searching in the area.

We're doing this in a bid to find some answers for Celine's family, before we begin to scale back the search.

Last week we received expert medical advice indicating Celine could not have survived the conditions she has been exposed to.

Her car has been in the Philosopher Falls car park since at least Tuesday 20 June and our information indicates it could have been there even earlier.

Our thoughts continue to be with Celine's family and loved ones at this difficult time.

The Philosopher Falls walking track at Waratah remains closed to the public.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.44am BST

block-time published-time 2.57am BST

Here is a look at more of Dylan Golden 's drone footage capturing a whale calf, which looks like a rare albino humpback, off the coast of Guerilla bay, Eurobodalla, in NSW.

block-time published-time 2.46am BST

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Queensland announces 71 affordable housing projects

Some 71 proposals for affordable homes will be considered by the Palaszczuk government, to ease Queensland's social housing shortage, AAP reports.

Queensland housing minister, Meaghan Scanlon, said most of the homes had been proposed for regions outside Brisbane.

Scanlon said:

I'm really pleased to announce 71 projects will now go to the next stage where they'll submit their detailed designs.

Developers will submit detailed proposals for consideration with the construction of successful projects expected to start in 2024.

We'll see works happening as soon as next year on some of these projects.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.26am BST

block-time published-time 2.36am BST

'Serious invasions of privacy': Daryl Maguire's lawyers criticise media tactics after Icac findings

Lawyers for former Wagga Wagga MP Daryl Maguire have issued an unusually worded statement praising his efforts for his old electorate and attacking the media for, among other things, "unsafe u-turns", spooking "valuable horses" and infringing on government-owned rail corridors in their pursuit of him.

It is the first statement from Maguire since the Independent Commission Against Corruption made damning findings of serious corrupt conduct against him and his former partner Gladys Berejiklian.

The statement begins by praising Maguire's efforts for Wagga Wagga, including his pursuit of two grants at the centre of Icac's corruption probe, which he said had been supported by the government.

Let it not be forgotten that during his time representing the people of Wagga and region he worked tirelessly for his constituents. Indeed, he was described in evidence as a dog with a bone, a vociferous advocate for the electorate, or a pain in the arse when it came to getting improvements for the Wagga Electorate [sic].

The final section of the letter begins "Media. !!!!" before criticising journalists for "serious invasions of privacy".

Media. !!! During the past days there have been serious invasions of privacy, not only to Daryl Maguire and his immediate family but alarmingly the stalking of young women going about their daily routine, harassment of employees and intimidation of clients of his business operations. There have been three traffic near collisions caused by media doing unsafe u turns in front of oncoming cars, parking unsafely, speeding, and following young women to their work at 5 am on at least two occasions.

The statement includes the registration of two cars he alleges to be involved in such behaviour. He also alleges drones have spooked horses "raising concerns from agistees".

Further media continue to trespass on government owned rail corridors which again is unsafe and illegal.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.42am BST

block-time published-time 2.26am BST

Rare albino baby humpback spotted off NSW coast

Photographer Dylan Golden captured drone footage of a whale calf, which looks like a rare albino humpback.

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It will be the second albino humpback ever seen along **Australia**'s east coast, if it is proven to be one, [ABC reports](#). The [famous Migaloo](#) is the first.

Here are pictures of the whale calf:

A drone image, taken from the coast of Guerilla bay, Eurobodalla, NSW, showing what is believed to be a rare albino Humpback whale calf. Photograph: Dylan Golden images If it is proven to be one, it will be the second albino humpback ever seen along **Australia**'s east coast. Photograph: Dylan Golden images

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.31am BST

block-time published-time 2.18am BST

Eight PwC partners exit or are in process of removal after internal investigation

Eight PwC partners have exited or are in the process of being removed from the partnership, after the company's internal investigation identifies "failure of leadership" and "professional standards breached with respect to misuse of confidential information".

Its conclusions on the handling of confidential Treasury information identified specific examples of the above, and a failure of leadership and governance to adequately address them either at the time or while the matters were under investigation by the TPB or ATO.

A PwC statement reads:

This enabled poor behaviours to persist with no accountability.

These behaviours are not, and never have been, acceptable under PwC's standards.

The PwC statement outlines the status of each exiting partner.

Acting PwC CEO Kristin Stubbins said:

Accountability is critical to improving our culture and based on our investigation to date, it is clear that the conduct of a number of partners fell short of what was expected of them. They are now being held accountable for their misconduct.

While we cannot change the past, we can control our actions today and in the future. Moving forward, the PwC **Australia** management team will continue to take all appropriate steps to improve the firm's culture and standards.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.23am BST

block-time published-time 2.14am BST

Nacc head says significance of alleged corrupt conduct will determine public hearings

In his opening address, commissioner Paul Brereton also discussed the circumstances under which the Nacc will hold public hearings.

He said:

In accordance with the legislation, when the circumstances and the public interest justify an exception to the general rule that they be held in private.

On the one hand, it is not in the public interest to have the reputations of people damaged by allegations which might turn out to be baseless. On the other, there is public interest in being informed of evidence of corrupt conduct

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by or affecting public officials, government departments and politicians; and in public scrutiny of the commission's activities.

The main considerations will be: the significance of the alleged corrupt conduct, the desirability of exposing evidence of it, and the appropriateness of public scrutiny of our activities. Weighed against any unfair prejudice to a person's reputation, safety or wellbeing that might be caused if the hearing were held in public.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.18am BST

block-time published-time 2.08am BST

'We will listen to you': Nacc head

The National Anti-Corruption Commission has held its first sitting, a ceremonial sitting in Canberra presided over by commissioner Paul Brereton, who promised the Australian people that "we will listen to you".

Brereton said the start of the Nacc is "potentially an inflection moment when we can make an enduring difference in the ethics and integrity of the governance of the commonwealth".

Brereton said:

The people of the commonwealth are no longer prepared to tolerate practices, which might once have been the subject of if, not acceptance at least acquiescence. You have clearly expressed the desire for a anti-corruption agency ... the government with a mandate to act on that desire with an agenda to strengthen integrity across the commonwealth, public sector has legislated to establish this independent commission.

Brereton made clear that the commission will not investigate every matter referred to it, explaining that mistakes and negligent administration may not amount to "serious or systemic" corruption, which is what they are tasked with investigating.

Only a small number of matters will go to full investigation, and these are more likely to be of "current practical relevance" than historic matters. Brereton said he was aware of matters mentioned in the media for potential investigation.

The Nacc will be guided by whether an investigation will "add value, in the public interest", he said, indicating that whether a matter has already been investigated by another agency will be considered.

Inaugural commissioner Paul Brereton during his opening address of the National Anti-Corruption Commission in Canberra. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.47am BST

block-time published-time 1.51am BST

Ten people taken to hospital in stable conditions after Gold Coast high-rise fire

Ten patients have been transported to various Gold Coast hospitals, all in stable conditions, after Queensland ambulance services were called to the scene of a high-rise fire in Surfers Paradise at 7.13 this morning.

All up, 17 people have been treated. The youngest patient was five months old, and the eldest was in their late 80s.

Senior operations supervisor Cary Strong, who attended the scene, said:

We've had a combination of smoke inhalation and also pre-existing medical conditions being exacerbated by those that smoke.

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A young male “unfortunately fell in the fire,” she confirmed. He suffered “a minor trauma” but has been treated and now released back to the care of his parents.

We have assessed the 17, which is very low numbers, which is exceptional. But I'd like to put that down to the fact and praise the public for following all the directions that were given by the emergency services, but more importantly, looking after each other and identifying those that were struggling and needed care and bringing them to our attention. That was all hands on deck.

A Queensland Fire and Rescue spokesperson has told Guardian [**Australia**](#) that their team is going through each floor and the stairwells with a multi-ray, “checking atmospheric monitoring to make sure it is safe with smoke in the building”.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 2.04am BST

block-time published-time 1.43am BST

Nacc receives 44 online referrals on first day

More from Paul Karp sitting in on the National Anti-Corruption Commission's opening ceremony.

Paul Brereton, who heads the new commission, has revealed it has already received 44 online referrals and five requests for phone callbacks.

enltr [#breaking](#) NACC cmr Paul Brereton reveals the new anti corruption body has already received 44 referrals online and had 5 requests for phone callbacks. [#auspol](#) [#auslaw](#)

— Paul Karp (@Paul_Karp) [July 3, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.13am BST

block-time published-time 1.34am BST

Our chief political correspondent, Paul Karp, is sitting in on the new National Anti-Corruption Commissions opening ceremony.

enltrNational Anti Corruption Commission in its first official sitting/opening ceremony. [#auspol](#) [#auslaw](#) pic.twitter.com/wG43vk6ZKo

— Paul Karp (@Paul_Karp) [July 3, 2023](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.14am BST

block-time published-time 1.30am BST

Three Melbourne teens charged after allegedly causing police pursuit

Three young teenagers who allegedly led police on a pursuit across Melbourne's southern suburbs have been charged, AAP reports.

Police say the teens – two aged 13 and another aged 14 – were seen travelling in an allegedly stolen vehicle on the Monash Freeway in Chadstone on Sunday morning.

It was monitored across multiple suburbs until it stopped in Notting Hill just after 3.30pm.

The teens allegedly fled the scene on foot and were arrested a short time later in Clayton.

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A 13-year-old boy from Doveton was charged with theft of motor vehicle and committing an indictable offence while on bail.

A 13-year-old boy from Hampton Park has been charged with aggravated exposure of an emergency services worker to risk by driving, reckless conduct endangering life, theft of motor vehicle, unlicensed driving and dangerous driving while being pursued by police.

A 14-year-old boy from Dandenong was charged with theft of motor vehicle.

They've been bailed to appear at a children's court at a later date.

– AAP report

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.35am BST

block-time published-time 1.20am BST

Mother of Steven Nixon found out son died via Facebook

Dr Raelene Nixon was told her son Steven Nixon had died via Facebook, after Queensland police took hours to confirm his death in custody.

Nixon says:

He died in one of the most violent, atrocious ways that any 27-year-old could die.

enltr"choke this cunt out" - a Queensland police officer was heard saying as they tried to arrest an Aboriginal man in 2021. They did. And he died at the scene. <https://t.co/cTThS9yxSt>

— Antoun Issa (@antissa) [July 2, 2023](#)

You can read the full feature by our Indigenous affairs editor, Lorena Allam, here:

Related: [Dr Raelene Nixon was told her son had died via Facebook – after Queensland police took hours to confirm his death in custody](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 3.13am BST

block-time published-time 1.11am BST

The prime minister's department defends handling of FoI into Morrison's bushfire texts

The prime minister's department (PM&C), which bears responsibility for processing freedom of information requests sent to the prime minister's office, has had a complaint against the department upheld over its handling of an FoI into the then-prime minister Scott Morrison's text messages around the bushfires at the end of 2019.

At the time, Morrison was on holiday in Hawaii, and once his holiday had been revealed, he defended the trip by saying he was receiving updates on the situation, indicating they'd been texted or sent via message. Guardian [Australia](#) sought messages sent to the prime minister under FoI, sending the request to PM&C.

PM&C interpreted "sent to the prime minister" as a request the department would need to deal with rather than the prime minister's office, despite the request specifying the prime minister directly.

The acting freedom of information commissioner, Toni Pirani, said in a decision released on Friday that the department "did not engage in practices appropriate to advancing the objects of the FoI Act".

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The department defended its handling of the request, saying there were no written guidelines on whether a request should be transferred to the PM's office. Pirani has recommended that the department develop such policies and procedures.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.21am BST

block-time published-time 12.59am BST

Belgian woman still missing in Tasmania

It has now been a week since Belgian woman Celine Cremer was reported missing.

Tasmania Police Search and Rescue, with Tasmania State Emergency Service, conducted further ground searches yesterday. They focused on a track offset search of Butlers Road.

Cremer's white Honda CRV was found in the car park of the Philosopher Falls walking track on 27 June. The Police are investigating Cremer's movements from 17 June.

Tasmania Police Search Controllers have commenced a review of the search areas. The Philosopher Falls walking track at Waratah remains closed to the public.

Guardian Aus have contacted Tasmania Police, inquiring about whether search efforts will continue today.

More to come.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 1.04am BST

block-time published-time 12.50am BST

Wong congratulates Timor-Leste's new prime minister

Foreign minister Penny Wong congratulates Timor-Leste's Xanana Gusmao, who was sworn in as prime minister over the weekend.

enltrCongratulations to Timor-Leste's new Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao and the 9th Constitutional Government. I look forward to working closely with Foreign Minister Bendito Freitas to deepen our already strong bilateral relationship. pic.twitter.com/M4PQJ2bL9r

— Senator Penny Wong (@SenatorWong) [July 2, 2023](#)

Gusmao is a [former guerrilla leader](#) who spearheaded East Timor's drive for independence when Indonesian rule ended in 2002.

He was the first president of the new country – from 2002 to 2007 – and then prime minister for several more years.

He is known as Timor-Leste's ["independence hero"](#).

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.53am BST

block-time published-time 12.41am BST

Temporary visa holders fleeing family violence to receive same payment as Australian citizens

The federal government has increased payments for temporary visa holders fleeing family violence from \$3,000 to \$5,000, bringing it into line with the amount offered to Australian citizens.

Social services minister, Amanda Rishworth, said:

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Along with states and territories we have committed to ending violence against women and children in a generation.

The status of your visa should not determine the payment you receive to support you in leaving a violent situation.

Whether you are an Australian citizen or living here on a temporary visa, we want to support you as you take steps to safety. No one should have to choose between their safety or their financial security.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.47am BST

block-time published-time 12.31am BST

Woman dies in Geelong house fire

A woman has died in a house fire in Geelong, AAP reports.

Emergency services were called to the home at Upper Skene Street, Newtown, after reports of a fire at 2am.

The woman was found dead inside the property.

A crime scene has been established and Victoria Police detectives from the Arson and Explosives Squad and an arson chemist are investigating the cause of the fire.

– AAP report

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.32am BST

block-time published-time 12.21am BST

Australians travelling to France urged to exercise caution

If travelling to France, “exercise a high degree of caution due to the threat of terrorism”.

That is **Australia**'s official travel advice, which changed over the weekend after [riots and clashes with police across France](#).

enltr [@Smartraveller](#) are urging Australians travelling to France to “exercise a high degree of caution” [pic.twitter.com/OQSc3au0lv](#)

— Rafqa Touma (@At_Raf_) [July 2, 2023](#)

“Since 27 June, riots have occurred across France which have turned violent, leading to the destruction of property including vehicles, shops, police stations and schools,” the [Smartraveller site warns](#). “Clashes with police have occurred, resulting in the use of teargas and arrests.”

Smartraveller warns that curfews have been introduced in some cities and public transport may be restricted, and urges being vigilant at night and avoiding demonstrations.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.27am BST

block-time published-time 12.09am BST

What is the new National Anti-Corruption Commission?

Some more detail here on the new national anti-corruption watchdog from AAP.

The integrity commission's job is to stamp out corrupt conduct by commonwealth officials – including ministers, parliamentarians and their staff, public servants, and government contractors.

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It is independent of the government, and anyone can refer a matter. The commission will decide whether or not to investigate. They can also determine what to investigate without a referral.

Paul Brereton heads the new watchdog, who has led an investigation into criminal misconduct on the battlefield by Australian Special Forces in Afghanistan.

He will give an opening speech in Canberra later today when he will set out his approach, priorities and aspirations for the body.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.10am BST

block-time published-time 11.58pm BST

Joyce accuses Greens of politicising new corruption commission on first day

The federal Greens have been accused of politicising the nation's new anti-corruption watchdog, just days after it become operational, AAP reports.

The National Anti-Corruption Commission officially started on 1 July. Senior Nationals MP Barnaby Joyce accused the Greens of politicising the commission after one of its senators made an immediate referral yesterday.

"The Greens have orally started politicising it," he told Seven's Sunrise program.

The thing I would be really careful about it would be weaponising things before elections.

Greens senator Barbara Pocock referred consultancy firm PwC to the commission following revelations staff shared confidential tax information from the Treasury department to drum up new business.

Pocock said the PwC referral arose out of a need for transparency, denying she was politicising the commission.

"Putting in this request to the Naac to investigate corruption within PwC, I think is a very straightforward thing," she told ABC radio.

– AAP report

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.02am BST

block-time published-time 11.49pm BST

'No one is safe': First anti-scam squad launches

The federal government is launching **Australia**'s first anti-scam unit today.

Its "fusion cell" units are designed to squash swindles before they can hit Australians, AAP reports.

The first unit will target investment cons – responsible for around half of the \$1bn in total losses each year. It is made up of experts from government, law enforcement and the private sector, and will operate for six months initially reporting to a new national anti-scams centre.

Assistant treasurer Stephen Jones said Australians lose an average of \$82,000 to investment scams.

The fight against scammers was a team effort and the partnership across government, business, and consumer organisations showed a united front, Jones said.

There is a scandemic.

No one is safe.

Australia news live: Linda Reynolds 'working on' referral of Brittany Higgins settlement to federal corruption watchdog

The top priority of our new national anti-scams centre is to detect and disrupt scammers before they can reach Australians.

block-time updated-time Updated at 11.54pm BST

block-time published-time 11.40pm BST

Wong names new Pacific envoy based in Fiji

The Albanese government has appointed a special envoy for the Pacific in the latest sign of its efforts to deepen ties across the region.

The foreign affairs minister, Penny Wong, announced today the new role for Ewen McDonald, who has been the Canberra-based head of the Office of the Pacific for the past four years.

McDonald will have dual roles: he will be the next high commissioner to Fiji and will also be **Australia**'s first special envoy for the Pacific and regional affairs.

The government is expected to argue that the appointment reflects **Australia**'s commitment to "bring new energy and resources for a stronger Pacific family". McDonald is understood to have been selected based on his network of existing relationships across the region.

Wong and the minister for the Pacific, Pat Conroy, said in a joint statement that the special envoy position would be based in Suva, Fiji, and would focus on supporting Pacific priorities:

It will enhance **Australia**'s ability to respond to collective challenges and strengthen our engagement with regional organisations as a member of the Pacific Islands Forum, whose secretariat is based in Suva.

The Australian government has placed a heavy emphasis on respecting existing regional architecture, notably the Pacific Islands Forum, at a time when China has shown increasing interest in expanding its influence across the region, including in security and policing. The US has been racing to respond to China's efforts, too.

When China signed a security agreement with Solomon Islands last year, **Australia**'s then Labor opposition said it was the biggest foreign policy blunder in the Pacific since the second world war. Since the election, Wong has visited every member of the Pacific Islands Forum and has sought to emphasise **Australia** is listening to the region's wishes.

McDonald said today that he was honoured to be appointed to the roles, adding that he had "great respect for the collective leadership of our region and the institutions that support it".

I'm delighted I will be located in the heart of the Pacific.

block-time published-time 11.32pm BST

First Nations uni student enrolments double in a decade

University enrolments for First Nations students have more than doubled in a decade, new data show.

Universities **Australia** has released its Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025 report.

It shows there were 11,753 enrolments in 2011, and 23,967 in 2021, according to the most recent statistics. However, that is still far below the numbers for non-Aboriginal students. First Nations students made up 2.08% of the enrolments in 2021, but comprise 3.2% of the population.

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UA chief executive Catriona Jackson wants the government to remove barriers to participation by guaranteeing university places to the 75% of Aboriginal people who live in urban areas – currently that support is only available to those living in rural and remote areas.

Jackson said:

Successive governments have tried to close the Indigenous education gap, yet they are still massively underrepresented in our universities.

The attainment rate for Indigenous peoples living in major urban areas is one-third of the rate for non-Indigenous Australians. This is not good enough.

Attending university is one of the greatest opportunities you can have in life, which is why we need to extend that opportunity widely.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.38pm BST

block-time published-time 11.22pm BST

The pace of growth in housing value eases for June

More on the increases in housing value having slowed in the past month, as increased interest rates and economic uncertainty bite the market.

Sydney led the way again, with dwellings increasing in value by 1.7% in the last month, the highest increase across the country, amounting to roughly \$4,262 a week. It was followed by Brisbane at 1.3%, Perth and Adelaide at 0.9% and Melbourne at 0.7%.

CoreLogic's research director, Tim Lawless said that while values were increasing, the pace of growth had eased in June:

A slowdown in the pace of capital gains could be a reflection of a change in sentiment as interest rate expectations revise higher.

Higher interest rates and lower sentiment will likely weigh on the number of active homebuyers, helping to rebalance the disconnect between demand and supply.

Rental conditions are also beginning to ease across the country, with rent increasing by 0.7% nationally in June, the smallest monthly rise since January.

Vacancy rates across the combined capitals have risen from 1.0% earlier this year to 1.1%, but are holding well below the decade average of 2.8%.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.25pm BST

block-time published-time 11.13pm BST

Childcare centres raising fees is in-line with inflation, says early childhood education minister

Minister for early childhood education **Anne Aly** says childcare centres increasing fees pre-emptively will not cancel out the federal government's new childcare subsidies.

Most childcare centres are raising their fees by 6-8%, Aly confirms on ABC RN this morning.

She says:

It's pretty standard for centres to raise their costs around this time of year, in line with CPI.

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It's in-line with inflation and it's pretty average of what the centres are charging around now. This is a very complex and mixed market, it includes NFP, community run, council run and right through to big corporates.

enltr".We know most centres are raising there fees by 6 - 8%.. we've seen [provider Goodstart's] modelling that with that modest increase of 7%, parents are still receiving a substantial benefit from our increase to the childcare subsidy" - **Anne Aly** pt 2

— RN Breakfast (@RNBKbreakfast) [July 2, 2023](#)

But parents say childcare centres pushing up rates as the subsidy kicks in is "crippling," and experts warn early learning centres may seek to capitalise on government's scheme.

You can read the full story from our higher education reporter Caitlin Cassidy here:

Related: ['It's crippling families': parents say childcare centres pushing up rates as Labor's subsidy kicks in](#)

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 11.19pm BST

block-time published-time 11.00pm BST

Sydney leads another house price rise

Australian house prices rose by 1.1% in June, with Sydney leading the charge as every capital city except Hobart saw dwelling values go up.

But the market is still 6% lower than its peak, according to data from CoreLogic's national home value index. The report says median dwelling value is \$45,711 below the \$768,777 recorded in April 2022. Sydney house prices increased 1.7% in June, taking the cumulative recovery to 6.7% since January. Median housing prices rose by roughly \$4,262 a week in Sydney, CoreLogic's research director Tim Lawless said. He said lack of supply was keeping prices up, with the new listings in capital cities down 10% below the previous five year average. The flow of new listings of sales is likely to be subdued during winter, and supply will remain tight over the coming months. In terms of rental prices, the national rental index went up a further 0.7% in June but at a slower rate since January 2023. The annual growth trend for rents across the capital cities was 11.5%. Canberra was the only capital to record a fall in rents in the last year, down 2.8%, with an increase in supply and vacancy rates aiding the drop. Overall rental vacancy rates have gone up a little in the past few months but remain well below average levels, the report states.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 12.21am BST

block-time published-time 10.53pm BST

Indonesia looks to **Australia** for lithium to reach EV goals

While in **Australia**, Indonesia's president Joko Widodo is expected to push for an Indonesia-**Australia** partnership on electric vehicles, looking to **Australia** as a source of lithium, AAP reports.

Australian Strategic Policy Institute analyst Gatra Priyandita said:

The first priority is to marry up Indonesian industry with [**Australia's**] lithium industry.

The lithium goals is for Indonesia to become an EV powerhouse, and there is interest to find lithium partners for collaboration.

block-time updated-timeUpdated at 10.59pm BST

block-time published-time 10.50pm BST

Australia news live: Linda Reynolds 'working on' referral of Brittany Higgins settlement to federal corruption watchdog

Good morning

And welcome to a new week of rolling news coverage.

Let's kick off the day with property market numbers and some diplomacy.

Australian house prices rose by 1.1% in June. Every capital city except Hobart saw dwelling values go up, but the market is still 6% lower than its peak, according to data from CoreLogic's national home value index. Overall rental vacancy rates have gone up a little in the past few months, but remain well below average levels, the report states. More detail from the CoreLogic report to come from Guardian [Australia](#)'s Josh Taylor.

Indonesia's Joko Widodo is kicking off his three-day visit to [Australia](#) today as part of bilateral talks – likely his last as president. He will hold talks with prime minister Anthony Albanese in Sydney, with climate change, economic development, education and regional security issues on the agenda. Widodo's term expires early 2024, and his succeeding president will be dealing with growing tensions in the Indo-Pacific, partly to do with [Australia](#)'s development of the AUKUS security pact with the United States and United Kingdom, AAP reports.

Stick around for the day's news. I'm Rafqa Touma, and I'll be with you for the next few hours. If you see anything you don't want the blog to miss, let me know [@At Raf](#) on Twitter.

Load-Date: July 3, 2023

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