

National election, local matters (for West Berkshire part of constituency)

West Berkshire has needed better funding for schools and for social care, like Wokingham Borough.

I have taken up the issue of why West Berkshire and Wokingham have been at the low end of the table for the amount of money per pupil and for the payments for social care relative to the population. The government did increase its social care payments recently, but will need to do so again for our local area.

I was part of the Fairer funding group that lobbied the government to increase the per pupil sums for our schools. Some better funded schools elsewhere in the country receive more than twice as much for each pupil, which makes the gap too large. The government has agreed to narrow the gap and give fairer grants to West Berkshire and Wokingham. I am pressing for improvements over the proposed formula.

I wish to work with West Berkshire Council on proper funding of local services. I also wish to continue to help on matters like flooding and transport, where the Council needs help or has to work in partnership with the national government and quangos.

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Radio interview with David and Will, 5AA Breakfast

HOST:

He'll be in Adelaide and he's with us on 5AA Breakfast now, Prime Minister good morning.

PRIME MINISTER:

Good morning, good to be with you.

HOST:

Thanks for your time PM. Now your presence here today is it a recognition in part that you needed to quickly get to Adelaide to extinguish the local perception that we've missed out on infrastructure spending in last week's

budget?

PRIME MINISTER:

I'm here with Marise Payne, and Christopher Pyne to release the Naval Ship Building Plan. It is the largest investment in our defence capability in peacetime. The largest in [inaudible] terms at any time. And it is the largest commitment of federal investment in any one state. So this is a massive commitment into the future of South Australia, the provision of 5,000 jobs as you know. That's in construction alone. Then another 10,000 in sustainment, the vast bulk of which will be here in South Australia where the major ships are all going to be built, the frigates, the submarines and the first two Offshore Patrol Vessels. So it's a very big commitment.

HOST:

Are you clear Prime Minister, when you say the vast majority of which will be in South Australia, are you clear on what proportion of the money expended will be spent here in South Australia? Because the state government is suggesting it could be as little as between ten and 15 per cent.

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh well, that is absurd. The ships are going to be constructed here, but of course there is a supply chain throughout Australia. But the actual construction of the frigates and the submarines and as I said, the first two of the offshore patrol vessels, will be here in South Australia at Osborne, where I'm just about to go.

HOST:

Can I just ask you bluntly Prime Minister, do you think that we are whingers here in South Australia?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, no. You know the reality is that every state is ambitious, every state, every city, every community wants to do well and that's great. What I can say to you is that in terms of our commitment, my government's commitment to South Australia, as you can see from the naval ship building plan, we have a massive investment here. As you know, as you just said, it's a \$90 billion investment in total. It is going to drive the type of advanced manufacturing, highly technologically skilled jobs and occupations that we need to secure the future for our kids and grandkids. Here in South Australia, as I always say, the future is not somewhere else, it's right here. It's here because of my government's commitment to naval shipbuilding, to the Defence Industry Plan, which of course is in stark contrast to the neglect of the Labor Party which did not commission one ship, one naval ship, from one Australian yard, in six years of Government.

HOST:

The reason I asked you that question that way is that there was a lot of

negativity here last week when it did feel to some people locally that the vast bulk, indeed all of the infrastructure money that was announced was being expended in states other than ours. Do you think though that South Australia would do better to take a much more front-foot approach and start trying to carve out its own future, rather than engaging in this constant: "What can Canberra do for us?" stuff that seems to be the vibe of politics here locally.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well again, I'll leave you to do the local commentary David. But the reality is we are making a massive commitment. The whole naval shipbuilding plan dwarfs everything else of course and it is a massive commitment. But in terms of transport infrastructure, there's \$3.1 billion committed there. There's \$1.6 billion for the North South Corridor, we've committed money to the Flinders Rail Link, we've committed money to the Oaklands Crossing. We have a \$10 billion rail plan which South Australian projects could be eligible for, but obviously they have to get their business case and proposal together.

But you know in terms of the long term future of this state and this city, the revival of shipbuilding, the end of the boom-and-bust phenomenon that we've seen, the commitment to continuous naval ship building is truly revolutionary. That is going to secure Adelaide's future as a high-tech, advanced manufacturing hub at the very cutting edge of technology, for generations to come.

HOST:

Prime Minister, before we turn our attention to the budget, how concerned are you about a report in the Washington Post today that US President Donald Trump shared classified information with Russian officials about Islamic State that he hasn't even seen fit to share with allies including Australia?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well look, I can't comment, I won't comment on issues about classified information for obvious reasons. So I'll leave that to the commentators and maintain my normal circumspection and discretion on matters of that kind, if you don't mind.

HOST:

(Laughter)

Can we ask, you had to wait around forever when you caught up with Donald Trump, he was tied up celebrating the death of Obamacare.

PRIME MINISTER:

No, that's not quite true. He was in Washington, I was in New York.

HOST:

What's the guy like to deal with? What's he like to deal with?

PRIME MINISTER:

No, he was very warm. He was very warm and welcoming, as I said the reception was more family than formal. We got on very well. It was a wonderful event and a wonderful commemoration and appropriate of the Battle of the Coral Sea and great to welcome and honour the veterans, both Australians and Americans who were in their nineties who turned the tide of war in the Pacific when they were teenagers.

HOST:

Let me have another crack Prime Minister; are you confident that the US is fulfilling its obligations as an Australian ally, and you're being told all you need to when it comes to intelligence sharing?

PRIME MINISTER:

I have great confidence in our Alliance. It is the bedrock of our national security. It was reinforced, yet again, when President Trump and I met on the *Intrepid* in New York just a few days ago.

HOST:

So on the specifics of the federal budget, the headline-grabbing measure, the centrepiece of it Mr Turnbull was the \$6 billion bank levy. Just in terms of the Government's ability to make sure that the banks don't sneakily pass this on to the average punter, you were saying and Scott Morrison was saying last week the ACCC is sort of turbo-charged, consumer watchdog ready to pounce on any wrongdoing by the banks. Yet yesterday, you were urging consumers to shop around, which seemed to be an admission that banks might try.

PRIME MINISTER:

No, no, no look the banks are free to price their products as they wish but you've got to remember, this is a 0.06 per cent levy. So it is much smaller for example, than a typical interest rate movement which is typically 25 basis points. So it is a large amount of money in aggregate, but relative to the banks business, relative to their profits, it is much smaller.

Now the banks will clearly be monitored by the ACCC in terms of what they claim it's costing and what they claim its impact will be. But they are more than capable of bearing this cost, because they are – as we know – the most profitable banks in the world. I'm not criticising them for that I'm just saying that they are, that's a fact, and they do benefit, the big banks do benefit mightily from the support and security from our financial system and system of regulation. So it is fair, given that we need to bring the budget back into balance for them to make this contribution to that.

Now you know, I don't raise taxes with any joy or pleasure, quite the contrary, but we have cut spending as far as we are able in terms of the Senate. We have to deal with the Senate and the Parliament that the people

elected. So what we're seeking to do here, is to bring the budget back into balance and we owe that for our children and grandchildren just as we are securing their future with our investment in the ADF's capabilities and our commitment to our Defence Industry Plan. Just as we're securing their future with our investments in infrastructure and defending schools funding.

Now I might just say, Mr Shorten is in Adelaide today visiting a school whose funding will increase under our Education Policy by \$3 million over the next decade. Increasing every year. So people can look that up on the web, on the Education Department's website, he's going to the Cowandilla Primary school and they can see all of the numbers there. Our system of school funding, which again secures the future, is transparent, it's equitable, it's needs-based just as David Gonski recommended. It's not part of a whole series of secret deals, as Mr Shorten did those years ago.

HOST:

Just quickly and finally Mr Turnbull, your response to the call by the former Treasury boss – now working for the NAB obviously – Ken Henry who said that there should be an open public inquiry into the banks levy on account of what he thinks will be the negative impact that it has on the nation's economy.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I can understand Mr Henry doesn't want the bank to have to pay the tax. But the tax will come into operation on the 1st of July there will be plenty of opportunity for the Parliament to discuss it.

We've got Senate Estimates next week where it will no doubt be the subject of questioning. You know, Dr Henry understands the process very well but he should also understand as a former Secretary of the Treasury that my obligation and my responsibility as Prime Minister, is to ensure that the budget is brought back into balance. That is what we are doing. We are doing that very emphatically and as you know by 2021 we will have a surplus of \$7.4 billion.

All new spending has been offset by savings, we've inherited a lot of entrenched deficit from the Labor years and we are addressing that and bringing the budget back into balance as is our responsibility.

HOST:

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, thank you very much for joining us on 5AA Breakfast.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thanks very much.

[ENDS]

[Death toll from truck-bus crash rises to 12](#)



Photo taken on May 15, 2017 shows the wreck of a bus damaged in traffic accident on a national highway in Yingtan City, east China's Jiangxi Province. [Photo/Xinhua]

The death toll from a truck-bus crash in east China's Jiangxi Province Monday has risen to 12, local authorities said Tuesday.

Two people, including the bus driver, died at hospital after medical treatment failed. Another six were still being treated.

The accident happened at around 5:25 p.m. Monday on a national highway in Yingtan City when a truck collided head-on with a bus, according to the city's publicity department. A total of 30 people sustained minor injuries.

The bus was severely damaged.

A video recorded at the site showed passengers standing in rain and a woman screaming to her phone, shouting that "people on the bus are covered in blood" and she "can't wake them up."

More than 300 medical workers were involved in the emergency treatment. In addition, more than 120 locals have donated 40,000 ml of blood.

The truck driver has been detained, and an investigation is under way.

Radio interview with Selina Green, ABC South East Radio

SELINA GREEN:

Welcome to Mt Gambier and thank you very much for making time to come in.

PRIME MINISTER:

It's great to be here.

SELINA GREEN:

Now this might seem like an obvious question, but what brings you to Mt Gambier at this time?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I'm here with Tony and we've been meeting people, his constituents here in Mt Gambier. We've been to the Headspace, and had a very good discussion there about mental health services here, we'll have a Politics in the Pub later. Now we're here with you, so this is all about engaging with the local community and with Tony's constituents.

We've met with school captains from about half a dozen local high schools.

MR TONY PASIN MP, MEMBER FOR BARKER:

All the Mt Gambier high schools and Penola High and Millicent High as well. So it's great to connect with those future leaders.

SELINA GREEN:

As you mentioned, you did tour the Headspace facility here which has been doing some fantastic work in our local community. I know it is greatly appreciated. The future of Headspace hasn't always been completely certain, is funding for this program safe?

PRIME MINISTER:

It's absolutely certain now I can assure you. We're expanding it nationally. The funding for this service is committed, as indeed there are two other Headspace in Barker, one at Murray Bridge and one at Berri. That's right. We've committed to ten more Headspace as part of our big mental health programme.

So mental health is a key priority of my government and I like echoing Ian Hickie, Professor Ian Hickie you probably know or have heard, likes to talk

about the 'mental wealth of nations' and the mental wealth of Australia. We all have a vested interest in every other Australian's mental health. That's why it's very important to have these very community-oriented services like Headspace, which can collaborate with volunteers. We met with –

MR TONY PASIN MP, MEMBER FOR BARKER:

Nel Jans at the Junction. Just such a hero in our community.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, what a fantastic love and leadership she's showing. So you can see the way that's reaching out and building up the strength, the mental wealth if you like, of Mt Gambier.

MR TONY PASIN MP, MEMBER FOR BARKER:

The important thing Selina in that space is we toured the new facility. So Headspace has been operating from an interim facility for some time in Mt Gambier and I'm so proud they're moving into their own, standalone facility on Commercial Street East.

It'll be a home for people under the age of 24 who are in need of a bit of a hand. They'll know where to go. This will become, if you like, a home for mental wellness for young people in our community.

SELINA GREEN:

We know Headspace locally here is expanding into the area of tele-health and utilizing that. I understand you're quite impressed by the work they're doing in terms of tele-health.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yep.

SELINA GREEN:

Of course the thing with tele-health is that it can only work provided there is good access to fast internet, to reliable internet. What are we doing about ensuring we have that coverage for people in regional areas like ours?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I was very impressed, as was Tony, that they said bandwidth had not been a problem. They said the services had been so far, it had been very high quality. But the position as you know with the NBN rollout, is that you have about 67,000 premises ready for service out of 86,000 in Barker. So the rollout is nearly 80 per cent complete. It will be nationally, it will be about 50 per cent complete by June 30, is the company's estimation.

So we inherited a failed project from the Labor Party, I regret to say, in 2013. But it is now rolling out well and rapidly across the country, as you

can see. I encourage any of your listeners who are interested to go the NBN Co website and you can see the weekly rollout figures, every week.

MR TONY PASIN MP, MEMBER FOR BARKER:

And Selina I was telling the Prime Minister, we celebrated the switch on of Mt Gambier last week, a portion of the town. The balance of the town will be switched on to the FTTN, so fiber to the node network, by the end of June.

SELINA GREEN:

Whenever we do talk about the NBN, we do get listeners who contact us to say, you know, they have struggles getting on to the system, that they are having issues with it. Do you take on board that there are some criticisms of the NBN? That there is some improvement that still needs to happen?

PRIME MINISTER:

Of course, absolutely. The company is very alert to that and they're doing everything they can to improve the user experience. Of course the reason somebody has poor connectivity could be, there are a lot of reasons behind that. The NBN, as I'm sure you know, is a last-mile network, so it goes from the exchange, the point of interconnection to the customer's premises. So what happens behind that, which is the responsibility of the telco -Telstra, Optus, you know, iiNet, TPG, whoever - that's their responsibility. Of course obviously people also often have problems in their own homes with wiring or poor wifi and so forth.

So it can be a bit complex getting your connectivity up to scratch, but generally we're seeing very high levels of satisfaction from the NBN. It's an enormous project you know and as I said, it had failed. In fact, it had completely stopped dead in its tracks in South Australia at the time we came into government in 2013.

SELINA GREEN:

Is there more that we can be doing to grab those telcos, those service providers by the collar and make sure that people are getting that connectivity better?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it's a competitive market. I'd just encourage people to look around and do that. The ACCC is also paying attention to what the telcos are saying in terms of speed, what promises they're making and whether they're doing so accurately. They are actually testing, checking on that to make sure that those promises are consistent with the customer's actual experience.

SELINA GREEN:

When we're talking about connectivity, of course blackspot mobile phone towers. In previous rounds we haven't had a significant number of those here, for the south east parts of South Australia. No new money in the budget for

future blackspot funding beyond round three, which we know has not been announced. What commitment is your government making to getting better coverage for people in regional areas like ours.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well we're yet to roll out round three, but we will continue funding blackspots as you've seen. We've demonstrated our commitment. Again, the Labor Party for six years in government from 2007 to 13, did not spend one cent on mobile blackspots. The Howard government did. Then when we came in, when Tony Abbott came in and then continued by me as PM we have continued to fund mobile phone blackspots.

Now South Australia has not had as many as other states and that is because the state government has not put any money in. So there has not been the co-funding. So the formula that we've used obviously leveraged funding from state governments where it was available and in Western Australia and Victoria in fact, Coalition Governments there put quite a lot of money to work to support the rollout of more blackspots. That's why they ended up getting more because it's a combination of government subsidy, some local governments in some cases – not many – and of course the telcos themselves, you know, paying to roll it out.

SELINA GREEN:

I want to touch on the issue of gas exploration, and we have a state Labor Government obviously here in South Australia, very keen to further push gas exploration. Got the South Australian Liberal Party that has come out very strongly with a policy to ban fracking in our region, should they win the next election. Where do you stand on fracking as a solution to the energy crisis?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I don't want to get too specific about your region, Tony's got a much better understanding of the hydrogeology, the environment here than I do. But I'd say that we do need more gas, there's no question about that. We've seen a lot of issues with both the affordability and reliability of gas supply. You've seen I've had to take some very strong measures to limit the export of gas from the east coast of Australia to ensure the domestic market keeps supplied.

But we do need to get, see more gas in eastern Australia and so I generally, we encourage further development of onshore gas. But it's obviously got to be done in circumstances where it's geologically safe and of course, where it has the social license that comes from the support of the local community and landowners.

MR TONY PASIN MP, MEMBER FOR BARKER:

And that's the issue in this region Selina, the social license hasn't been attained. Of course there are real questions around hydraulic fracture stimulation and in particular the interface with our aquifers that we rely on

so critically for our irrigation effort.

SELINA GREEN:

Are you in that instance, are you pushing the states that have fracking moratoriums in place to lift those?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well we particularly urged Victoria to do more. I mean Victoria not only has a ban on fracking, they have a ban on conventional gas exploration and development which is as far as I am aware unique in Australia and has no, no possible justification. We understand the issues about fracking but they have a massive onshore gas resources or reserves in Victoria and they have basically put a ban on the development of any of them, by any means. Given that Victoria is such a big, has such strong demand for gas, particularly for industry, it's hard to understand why that Labor Government would do that at the same time of course as big coal fired power station like Hazelwood, is being closed down.

SELINA GREEN:

In a situation where you have a state Liberal Party here in South Australia that seems to have a policy at odds with your own, I mean what do you do in that instance? Do you speak to Steven Marshall about reconsidering his policy?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it's very much a matter for the State Governments. I mean we encourage – our concern, my concern as Prime Minister is that Australians have access to affordable and reliable supplies of gas. Now the management of the environmental considerations is obviously one for state governments. It's necessary to ensure that – in terms of groundwater issues, which is what you're talking about here on the limestone coast – that that's done properly so you've got to get the science right and you've obviously got to make sure the landowners are comfortable with it, and the community is comfortable with it. That's the social license that Tony was just talking about.

But as a general rule, as a general proposition we need more gas. If we don't produce more gas then you know, naturally gas will become more expensive. So you know, it's a supply and demand issue here. We've put some limitations on exports, but equally we're an exporting nation, so we're also looking at linking the big gas resources of Western Australia and the Northern Territory to the east coast so we're looking at the feasibility of building a pipeline to connect the Northern Territory to Moomba, there's already work being done on the plan to build one from the Northern Territory to Mount Isa. But there is no question we do need more gas, it's a very important part of our energy mix.

SELINA GREEN:

Well Prime Minister there are so many topics that we would like to touch on

with you today, but we know that you are as we say, a very fly in fly out, quick visit to Mt Gambier today.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well we're looking forward to talking about the budget tonight, you know that's a very important time in the year when the government sets out its economic agenda, sets out the all of the accounts and we've done that in a very fair way, ensuring that the funding is assured for essential services for schools, you know Medicare, health, National Disability Insurance Scheme and at the same time doing all of that and bringing the budget back into balance in a few years' time.

MR TONY PASIN MP, MEMBER FOR BARKER:

And Selina if I can just say it's fantastic to have the Prime Minister in the region, I extended an invitation to him and he's taken it up, it's a real coup to have him here in the week after the budget.

I did say when I preselected in 2012 I would seek to raise Barker's voice on the national stage and I think we're seeing that personified by the Prime Minister's visit.

SELINA GREEN:

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Member for Barker Tony Pasin, thank you very much both for coming in and making time.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thank you

MR TONY PASIN MP, MEMBER FOR BARKER:

Thank you

[ENDS]

[Environmental protection projects in border areas](#)

China and other countries are working on cross-border environmental protection along the Belt and Road region.

In the Gaoligong Mountains on the China-Myanmar border, a variety of rare species thrive. China has built national and provincial nature reserves there, while Myanmar has two of its own.

The area is prone to forest fires, logging and poaching, particularly in the Nujiang, Baoshan and Dehong areas in Yunnan Province. Such incidents pose threats to both countries, making cross-border environmental protection vital.

In 2015, China and Myanmar established a research lab on biodiversity, to conduct a variety of projects such as field surveys and training. Both sides work together against illegal activities in the region.

“We often meet colleagues from Myanmar,” said Li Zhengbo, deputy head of the Baoshan management bureau of the Gaoligong Mountains National Nature Reserve. Foresters on both sides have reached agreements on putting out forest fires, investigating criminal cases, and building environmental protection awareness.

From 2010 to 2015, Yunnan apprehended 130,000 suspects in regard to forest and wildlife crime in the region, many with the assistance of Myanmar.

As the Belt and Road increases pace, more joint eco-efforts are underway. Research projects on environmental protection have begun between China and Pakistan on the riverflow, landscape and geological disasters.

“We will try to find mechanisms to decrease risks and improve regional cooperation,” said an expert with the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

“The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is an important part of the Belt and Road Initiative, and research on environmental protection will definitely play an important part in the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the corridor,” said Lei Jiaqiang, director of the Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography under the Chinese Academy of Sciences.