

# Remarks – Meeting with The Honorable Michael R. Pence, Vice President of the United States of America

## **PRIME MINISTER:**

Vice President, welcome.

We've had a great discussion and prior to that our families got together and had a good morning tea and enjoyed meeting your wife and your daughters. I know that Karen enjoyed meeting our grandchildren. It was a very warm family event. Welcome.

We are very honoured that you are visiting us, here so early in the term of the Trump Administration. This is the earliest visit by a vice president in the term of a new administration in history.

We recognise that that means more than ever your commitment to our Alliance – an alliance 60 years standing, but an alliance that began in truth nearly a century ago when Australian and American troops went into battle together in the First World War.

Since then, as you know, as the President and I have discussed, Australia has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States in every major conflict in 99 years of our great nations' momentous history.

But we have a lot of history to reflect on – 75 years since the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Milne Bay in Kokoda – those battles where the Japanese advance on Australia was turned, where the Japanese were turned back for the first time. Australians and Americans fought in those momentous conflicts that determined the fate of our nations.

Again, today, we are fighting side-by-side in the Middle East – Anzacs, Americans standing up for our shared values, for freedom and democracy.

That's what binds us together.

That history and our commitment today when our Alliance is more important than ever.

Mr Vice President, welcome. We have a lot to discuss in the here and now and in the history, on which we reflect.

## **VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:**

Thank you Mr Prime Minister and to the Foreign Minister, and to your entire staff, thank you for your warm welcome to Australia.

I bring greetings this morning from the President of the United States. I

spoke to him first thing and he wanted me to pass along his very best regards to you.

And the President wanted me to be here, early in this Administration to reaffirm the strong and historic Alliance between the United States of America and Australia.

As you mentioned this very hour we had soldiers fighting as they have for now more than a century, shoulder-to-shoulder in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In my season of service to the Congress of the United States, I visited down-range to see American troops and I scarcely remember a time that I didn't see the Australian Flag flying as a part of the coalition forces. We honour them.

And my presence here today, at the President's direction is about a reaffirmation of the strong ties in both our security and prosperity.

I couldn't be more grateful for the opportunity to spend time with you privately. My wife was extremely impressed with your grandchildren. She doesn't have any yet!

(Laughter)

**PRIME MINISTER:**

But she nursed little Alice so wonderfully, Daisy said she's welcome to take over babysitting anytime.

(Laughter)

She's certainly very enthusiastic.

**FOREIGN MINISTER:**

There's a new exchange programme.

(Laughter)

**VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:**

But we are just so grateful. The warmth of the welcome of our little family reflects the warmth and the feelings between the people of the United States and the people of Australia. I bring you those good wishes from the President and the American people and I look very much forward to our discussion today.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Thank you so much.

**[ENDS]**

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# Interview with Miranda Devine, The Daily Telegraph

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Good morning I'm Miranda Devine and welcome to The Daily Telegraph's first ever Facebook live interview with the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, coming live to you on The Daily Telegraph website.

Good morning Prime Minister.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Good morning, isn't this exciting?

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Isn't this exciting? We're making history here.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

We are indeed.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

And this is your very first interview with a mainstream media outlet.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

On this one?

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

On Facebook live.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Yes, yes it is indeed, yeah it is.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

And streaming live to we hope millions of people from your beautiful office in downtown Sydney, I mean is this a sort of a tech-head Malcolm Turnbull innovation to go do announcements more and more on Facebook?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well I think you've got to use every channel, I think Facebook and other online platforms are a very powerful. More and more people are consuming much if not most of their media from their smartphone. You know the smartphone is an extraordinary revolution. You know, if you think the first one, the first

iPhone came out in 2007 so that's only ten years ago and now you've got literally billions of smartphones around the world. There's 400 million in India alone.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

But does this give you an opportunity to bypass the mainstream media like Donald Trump does when he talks about fake news, he goes straight to the people, is this your strategy?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well my strategy is to communicate to 24 million Australians as often and effectively as I can and you've got to use the platforms that they use. So it's not a question of mainstream versus new media, it's all of the above.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

So speaking of Donald Trump, his Vice President Mike Pence is coming to Sydney and obviously no coincidence that this comes at a time when North Korea is threatening the world. What capabilities do we have to withstand an attack because Jim Molan who, former General, says that Australia within a year North Korea will be able to hit Australia with missiles. Do we have enough defence strategies?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well we certainly have a very tight alliance with the United States and everything we do in this region, defending Australia, is done in large with the United States.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Is that what we're relying on them to protect us?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well of course, our defence is part of an alliance so we defend Australia, we have our own very substantial Defence Force as you know and of course our investment in our Defence Force is the greatest in peace time and we are expanding the capabilities of the Australian Defence Force particularly of course notably the naval ship building program.

But in terms of our, Australia's Defence, it is covered by a series of alliances, the most important of which of course is with the United States. But I'd just say this about North Korea – they currently don't have the ability to deliver a missile that distance to reach Australia and it is vitally important that they are not able to develop it. So the focus of the discussions with Vice President Pence is going to be, one of the key focuses, is how do we maintain the pressure successfully and President Trump has made a good start to this, I believe-

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

How do you think he's handling it?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I think he's made a good start, that the pressure has got to be on North Korea but also on China. China has the leverage. Now North Korea is not a, you know, a compliant client state of China, not a puppet state in the way that so eastern European countries were of the Soviet Union. We understand that, Chinese have their own frustrations with dealing with North Korea, we get that but-

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Do they have the ability to pull him in? Kim Jong-un?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

In our view they do because they have overwhelmingly the economic relationship without, if China is in a position to impose economic sanctions on North Korea which would cause the regime to change course. It's reckless and dangerous conduct is not just a threat to the region, it's a threat to the world.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

And what do you think of Donald Trump all over, I mean do you think you can learn anything from the way he's conducting himself?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well I think, yes, we are all learning a lot from President Trump and he is a remarkable politician. He comes from a completely unique background, a non-political, completely non-political-

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

A bit like you.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well yes, yes he's a business man who's gone into politics but of course I went into politics and I was in politics for quite a long time before I became Prime Minister. He's gone from business to become President of the United States. So it's a very, it's a transition from not being ever having any political experience other than you know having run as a candidate I think or explored running as a candidate.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Is that a bit of an advantage though, like you, to be a bit of an outsider?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well I think it is, yes it can be an advantage, absolutely. Look, I think

the reality is with President Trump is that what you know a lot of people have forecast that he would do things very, very differently but as you know, I said this at the time, the America has enduring national interest. You know there were people that said he was going to turn his back on our region? America was never going to do that, it is every American President you know in their own way will make a strong commitment to our region because it's in America's interest to do so and so what do you see? You've seen the Defense Secretary out here in the region, you've seen the Secretary of State and now you've got the Vice President making the earliest visit of a Vice President in a new administration to the region and to Australia, at least in my recollection. So, so this shows a very strong commitment.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Are you hoping that Mike Pence the US Vice President confirms the Manus Island refugee deal?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well he actually has already done that. He did that before he left in fact. So the process is going on, the American officials have been on the, on Nauru and Manus and they're assessing the applications, so I've got no, I don't, we don't need to be reassured because it was, Vice President was asked about it before he set off on this trip and he confirmed it.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

And Peter Dutton the Immigration Minister has said that the recent Easter time shootings on Manus Island were prompted by some, three asylum seekers taking a local five-year-old boy back to the camp. Why would the Americans want to have people against whom such allegations are made into their country?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well the Americans will assess all of the people that have been, you know that are there for, that seek to go to the United States. I mean they've got their own vetting process and their own assessment process and that's you know, that is really a matter for them.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Now the Budget is coming up, is Scott Morrison really framing housing affordability as the centerpiece of this Budget?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well I've read that in the press but I don't think that's a fair, a fair description. I mean the focus of the Budget is and has to be firstly driving continued strong economic growth. You know that is the tide that we have to ensure lifts all boats.

Now that's complicated business, it involves infrastructure, it involves

energy, ensuring that we have affordable and reliable energy. I was just down in Tasmania making some announcements about putting new, new capacity ensuring Tassie Hydro has more capacity.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Turning Tasmania into a battery?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well you know, you know something? It is already to some extent but it has the opportunity to be much greater. I mean Tasmania is a very interesting place in terms of energy. They've got a big hydro resource, they've actually generated twice as much hydroelectricity as the Snowy Mountains Scheme because they generate baseload and they've got the best wind resource in Australia. They have wind farms which can be utilised by up, more than 40 per cent. Because it's in the Roaring 40s, probably you know when the wind is blowing all the time it's not a lot of fun to be there I guess unless you own a wind farm or you're sailing but it is, so they've got a great resource. And as you get more variable renewable energy into the mix; solar and wind. But solar is just taking off everywhere, what you have is more back up-

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

But it's not reliable, none of this is reliable though is it?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well of course it's not reliable in the sense of being 24/7. That's why you need to have affordable and reliable gas and you know we're doing a lot of work to ensure that that happens. We've already secured a guarantee of gas for peaking power but there is-

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Rod Simms from ACCC has just said that there's a gas crisis looming.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well there is, well, I tell you there is and that's why I've had the gas producers from the east coast in to see me twice now-

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

But it's not working.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, just watch this space.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Oh really, OK.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Watch this space Miranda-

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Like what?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well I'll, let me, I don't want to channel Joh Bjelke-Petersen and say "Don't you worry about that", everyone is entitled to be worried about energy security and nobody more worried about it than the Prime Minister. I am determined to ensure that our domestic market has all of the gas it needs, affordable and reliable gas. Now I'm working with the industry. What's happened is, that basically and this happened under our predecessors-

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

But to make sure they reserve some for domestic use.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

What I will, I'm going to ensure, we're working with the industry, I'm going to ensure that we have adequate gas supplies for the domestic consumption by whether it's you know industry or households, it's absolutely critical.

You cannot tolerate a situation where we are the largest, we'll shortly be the largest exporter of LNG and we don't have enough gas for our own purposes, now that, that's just not acceptable. I've made that very clear to the industry. They know I am very determined, so-

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

And you will punish them if they don't?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

No, I'm not, that's not my job. My job is to protect the interests of Australians and to ensure that Australians have access to affordable, reliable energy and we meet our emissions reduction targets.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

So with the Budget, what's in it for our readers for their hip pockets?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well wait for Budget night.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Electricity prices, tax cuts?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

You'll just have to wait-

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Will it be good for them? For our readers?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Of course it will be, it will be good for your readers-.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

They'll notice it in their hip pocket?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

They will. Your readers will see that the budget is delivering, continuing to deliver stronger economic growth. It's protecting vital services, and it is going to continue to bring our Budget back into balance. Because you know one of the things I know it's often relegated to the finance pages, but throwing a larger and larger burden of debt on the shoulders of our children and grandchildren is not responsible. If we want to ensure that our kids and grandkids have services of the quality that we have, have opportunities of the quality that we have and better, we've got to make sure that we live within our means. Now that's not easy, as you know, because you've got to target-

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Well you inherited a lot of Tony Abbott's problems. Do you think that Tony Abbott is helping the government with his regular media advice?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well look I, I'll look forward to all of my colleagues including members of the backbench talking up the achievements of the Government. And if you think, there's a lot to talk about. I mean we have got through since the election, you know, which obviously was disappointing we would've liked to have won more seats. We've got a one seat majority in the House and we've got nowhere near a majority, we're a minority in the Senate.

But nonetheless we have managed to get through those big industrial reforms, restoring the Australian Building Construction Commission, restoring the rule of law to the construction sector. I mean this, this was written off. We have the childcare reforms through. We've got tax cuts to middle income Australians. And we've secured company tax cuts, so important for our competitiveness in the future. We've secured them for companies and businesses that employ more than half of all Australians who are working. So you know that is just part of what we have done, but we have achieved a lot. Despite the fact, as I said, that we've got a small majority in the House and nowhere near a majority in the Senate.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

You probably don't get that sort of narrative told about you in the media and part of that I guess is because of Tony Abbott. Can you blame him for being angry about you taking his job?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well look I think the important thing is for everybody to, if you're in the government, whatever part of the Party room you're sitting in, whether you're on the front bench or the back bench, everybody has got a commitment to ensuring that the Government does well and the best way to do that is of course, to talk up the Government's achievements. And the, and we are delivering. I mean this is the, I know some of the media, I can't tell you how many press conferences I've had in Canberra where I've had distinguished members of the press gallery who have said "Come on Prime Minister, admit that you don't have the numbers to get this bill through the Senate, admit it. Why are you denying the truth?" And then we get the bill passed. So you see, you just have to work at it, keep at it.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

So do you think if you lost 30 Newspolls in a row which was the metric you set for Tony Abbott; would you step down? What would you do, do you have a contingency plan?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

No, what I am doing is focusing, I'm not focused on that, I'm focused on delivering for the Australian people Miranda, and we are delivering. I mean this is the inconvenient truth that is often overlooked, that so much of the agenda that we took to the election is now law and despite the predictions that it wouldn't be and that's a tribute to the whole team. You know, not just the Ministers and you know the Senators and the, but the whole team. We have got so much of our program through and we will continue to do so.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Now you're taking heat for your new changes to the citizenship laws and the 457 visa, people are saying from the left that its dog whistling and racist.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

What rubbish. I mean what rubbish, I mean seriously who, you know these people that say these things, we should be proud of our Australian values. I mean are we, are we proud to be Australian or not? Are we prepared to stand up for Australia, Australian jobs and Australian values or not? Well I am, I know you are, I know your readers are. So this is, we should be celebrating the fact that we are ensuring that our temporary migration program protects Australian jobs, attracts the best and brightest from the world. Of course, as I said Peter Dutton is in effect head of recruitment, we're trying, we want to get the best and the brightest in the world to fill the skills gaps that need to be filled but we don't want to do that at the risk of

prejudicing Australian jobs.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

And the citizenship rules, you have questions in there about – Do you agree with female genital mutilation? Do you think you should beat your wife?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

They're examples but the questions haven't been settled yet. We are having a discussion about it, which is great, isn't that good, you know I saw even on the ABC they had a VoxBox of people talking about Australian values and most of them agreed with what we're doing but it is important that we talk about it.

If we are passionate patriotic Australians, if we believe in the values that unite us, you see the genius of this country Miranda, is this; we don't define ourselves by reference to a common religion, a common ethnicity, you know a common race, and most countries do one way or another. So what we've got is shared political values.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Our Judeo Christian western culture, that is at the root of our culture-

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well of course it is, that's the foundation of our political system, I mean our whole political system, the parliamentary democracy, freedom, the rule of law, but these values are accessible to everyone, they're not just accessible to Christians and Jews. I mean they're accessible to people of every religion. See that's the genius of Australia.

I am so proud of our nation. We are the most successful multicultural society in the world. And why is that? Because of our values. And that's those values of freedom, equality, a fair go, mutual respect, the rule of law, the equality of men and women. I mean these are, in a sense we share them with other democracies but there is something, and I think you would agree with this, there is something uniquely Australian about our values and our view of the world. Now why should we not put that at the heart of our citizenship process? I think we should.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Absolutely, but again these questions and the necessity for them, they seemed to be framed towards Muslims who are refusing to integrate and that just brings me to my last question. Throughout the world-

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well I disagree with that, I disagree with that.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Do you?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Because the vast majority of Australian Muslims are just as engaged, committed, patriotic as you and me.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Of course, but female genital mutilation and beating your wife, you know being acceptable, those things are unique to fundamentalist Muslims.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I'm not even sure that's entirely true, female genital mutilation is a cultural thing from a number of countries.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

The majority Muslim, African countries.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, it is a shocking practice, it is utterly illegal, it is abhorrent and it has no place in Australia but equally, violence against women and children does not either and you see this is where respect, you know I talk a lot about mutual respect.

Why is respect so important in this context? Disrespecting women doesn't always lead to violence against women, but that's where all violence against women begins. So mutual respect is the foundation of our great success as a multicultural society, now it is a great Australian value; live and let live, fair go, but you can describe it in a lot of different ways but you know we believe in mutual respect and that is a fundamental part of our values.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Cory Bernardi and Pauline Hanson love what you've done with both the 457 visas and the citizenship changes but-

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Just because they support something doesn't mean it's wrong. I mean is that what you're suggesting?

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Of course not no, but it's interesting that you're seen as pivoting towards a more conservative persona then you were originally with. I mean what do you believe, you're seen as a wet, a lefty, a greenie.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Look people might create caricature of politicians-

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

But that's part of your problem is it? That that the right, the conservatives in your Party don't trust you, they don't think you're a true conservative, a true Liberal, they think you're a Labor guy. Labor-lite, you know that criticism-

**PRIME MINISTER:**

At the same time as I'm an arch capitalist. To say that that caricature-

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

But not mutually exclusive.

**PRIME MINISTER**

Is confusing is an understatement.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

A lot of lefts live in Vaucluse.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Let me just finish that, this point about values and citizenship and the way we define our identity as Australians by reference to shared political values, this is something I've been talking and writing about for decades. You remember back in the 90s when we didn't entirely see eye to eye on the Republic debate, this is part of the argument I made then – talking about the fact that we define ourselves by reference to these shared political values. And that, that is a, as indeed as Americans do by the way, so you know, that is the genius of an inclusive society is that it must be founded on mutual respect. But you've got to have values, political values, not in a party political sense, but political values that are accessible to everyone. And you should be proud of them and of course they should be at the centre of your citizenship process and of course people should be able to speak English when they become a citizen.

I mean who are you helping by saying to someone you can become a citizen of Australia without learning English. I mean you're not helping them, because if you want to get ahead in this country whether it's economically or in social engagement, English is the key. We all know that, that's what why we spend a fortune when we bring in humanitarian entrants, you know refugees, ensuring that they get English language instruction.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

One last question Prime Minister, we've seen a rise of nationalism in Europe and America and in Australia with Hansonism. Do you think, a lot of that is to do with immigration and culture? Do you think that western cultures are able to successfully bring in large numbers of Muslims and integrate them successfully?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, the answer to that is that you need to make sure that any migration program is based on good integration. And this is regardless of what the person's religion is. I just say this to you, when I went to the UN last year in Leaders' Week. I gave a speech describing how we were the most successful multicultural society but the foundation of that was that the Australian people understood that we controlled our borders, that we decided who came to Australia, as in John Howard's words, and the circumstance in which they come, how long they stay, we decide which refugees come, we decide which skilled migrants come. The Australian people have to have confidence that their government is running the migration system in their national interest and in nobody else's interest.

Now what's happened in Europe is that they lost control of their borders and that shattered confidence. One European leader after another has said to me, that this you know irregular migration surge of refugees crossing borders and so forth is an existential threat. And so if you want to preserve harmony, if you want to preserve your multicultural society, if you want to preserve the political stability of your nation, you've got to be able to demonstrate that it is the government which the Australian people elect and it alone which determines who comes to Australia.

So strong borders are the foundation, the absolute foundation of our success as a multicultural society and so people on the left who you know criticize that, who want to have porous borders, who want to do what Labor did. I mean don't, you must not forget; we cannot forget that Labor upended John Howard's border protection policies-

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Do you think that they'd do it again?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

I have no doubt they would because their heart is not in it. I mean they, Kevin Rudd went to the 2007 election and said he was going to turn boats around and he would maintain Howard's strong policies. He gave that pledge. I remember. And then he back flipped on all of that. And of course the predictable happened, took a long time and a great effort to set that right but we have to maintain that. And that's why you can't be apologetic about it. You can't sort of be apologetic about strong borders, an immigration system that is run in the interests of Australia. So whether it's temporary migration, and abolishing 457s as we've done this week. Whether it's strong border protection, whether it is ensuring that our citizenship process respects and values and reinforces our Australian values. All of that is part of a stronger Australia.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

And prioritising Christian and Yazidi refugees in the latest intake from Syria as part of that?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well the 12,000 intake from the Syria conflict zone, that was designed, and again I absolutely defend it. I am proud of it in fact, great advocate for it. It is prioritised, persecuted minorities who are in the Middle East, overwhelmingly Christians, I mean the destruction of the Christian communities in Iraq and Syria, in particular in recent times, is one of the great tragedies of our times.

And of course the Yazidis are another smaller minority that have been similarly persecuted. So offering them priority was the object of the policy because at the end of the day the Muslim communities we hope will find a settlement between Sunni and Shia. But, I don't want to sound too pessimistic but there is a very reasonable case to say that the prospects for Christians and other minorities in those countries are not very promising.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Well thank you so much Prime Minister for your time, that's it from us. So you can see this video with the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, in his office, on The Daily Telegraph website from now on.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Thank you.

**MIRANDA DEVINE:**

Thank you.

[ENDS]

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## Happy St George's day

Today we celebrate England's day.

We remember our greatest dramatist and poet, William Shakespeare, who was born and died on or about this day.

I wish you all a happy April 23rd.

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# Labour to give workers a break and bring our four nations together with four new national holidays

Jeremy

Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, will announce Labour's plan to give Britain's workers the break they deserve and bring our four nations together with four new national holidays for the whole of the United Kingdom.

Under Labour's proposals, UK-wide public holidays will be held on St. David's Day (1st March), St Patrick's Day (17th March), St. George's Day (23rd April) and St. Andrew's Day (30th November). With eight public holidays, the UK currently has the fewest of any G20 or EU country.

**Speaking on St George's Day to announce the policy, Jeremy Corbyn, Leader of the Labour Party, will say:**

"For years, Britain's workers haven't had a proper pay rise, with wages for most people still below 2007 levels. After seven years of painful austerity, our workers deserve a break – and under a Labour government, they will have the opportunity of four more days off a year.

"The four nations that make up our great country have rarely been more divided due to the damaging and divisive policies of this Conservative government.

"But where Theresa May divides, Labour will unite our four nations. A Labour government will make St George's Day – England's national day and Shakespeare's birthday – a public holiday, along with St David's Day, St Andrew's Day and St Patrick's Day.

"And we will ask for the support of the governments of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland so that the same four holidays can be enjoyed across the United Kingdom.

"These holidays will be a chance for workers to spend time with their families, in their communities and with their friends. But they will also be a chance to celebrate the national cultures of our proud nations.

"The next Labour government will give workers the break they deserve and bring our country closer together."

**The Leader of Scottish Labour, Kezia Dugdale will say:**

“Scottish Labour believes that together we’re stronger, and that means celebrating what unites us across the four nations of the UK.

“St Andrew’s Day is a proud day of celebration in Scotland, and some workers already get the day off, but Labour would like to see that extended to all workers – not only in Scotland, but across the UK.

“Scotland is home to tens of thousands of people from England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and this policy will encourage the entire country to celebrate the four national days.

“Our country is far too divided as a result of the SNP’s plans for a second independence referendum and the Tories’ plans for a hard Brexit, and only by backing Labour can voters send Nicola Sturgeon and Theresa May a message that together we’re stronger.”

**The Leader of Welsh Labour, Carwyn Jones will say:**

“Welsh Labour has long been in favour of making St David’s day a public holiday in Wales. Today’s pledge would make that a reality for the 1.4 million hardworking people across Wales.”

**Ends**

**Editor’s Notes:**

1. The UK

has the lowest number of public holidays of the major economies – 8 compared with a G20 average of 12. Four extra holidays would take us to the G20 average.

2. St

Andrew’s Day is a public holiday in Scotland, where the issue is devolved, as is St Patrick’s Day in Northern Ireland. Labour’s proposal would be to seek the support of the governments of the three devolved administrations for four public holidays, but the decision whether to go ahead in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland would be theirs.

3. Estimates

of the economic impact of public holidays (including by the DCMS) are contradictory, varying between a net benefit and net cost. There is no definitive measure. There is also evidence of productivity and wellbeing benefits, and the evidence of costs are that they are of delayed rather than lost output.

[http://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/economic-affairs/Economic Outlook/cEAC270312ev1.pdf](http://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/economic-affairs/Economic_Outlook/cEAC270312ev1.pdf)

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## Submersible Jiaolong tested ahead of S. China Sea dive



Jiaolong submersible goes through a dive simulation in Sanya, Hainan Province, on April 22. [Photo/Xinhua]

Jiaolong, China's manned submersible, went through a dive simulation in Sanya, Hainan Province on Saturday to prepare for a deep descent in the South China Sea.

The submersible stayed underwater for 18 minutes in Saturday's drill before returning to Xiangyanghong 09, the mother ship, completing tasks including underwater training for its crew.

Zhang Weijia, who participated, said she was very excited entering the submersible for the first time to learn about its facilities, practical operation and emergency escape.

Jiaolong's South China Sea dive is part of the second stage of China's 38th ocean scientific expedition. The expedition will last for about four months.

The drill was necessary for testing equipment and personnel, said Wu Changbin, general commander of the second stage of the expedition. Currently the Jiaolong's "technological status" is stable and the cooperation among various departments is smooth, Wu said.

Jiaolong completed a deep-sea operation in the northwestern Indian Ocean earlier this year in the mission's first stage. It will also conduct surveys in the Yap Trench and the Mariana Trench in the third stage.

Named after a mythical dragon, Jiaolong reached its deepest depth of 7,062 meters in the Mariana Trench in June 2012.