

Doorstop with Melissa Price MP, Member for Durack

PRIME MINISTER:

Well thank you Melissa and you're doing an amazing job as the federal Member, what a passionate advocate for the Kimberley and all of her vast electorate.

We've had a very good visit here in Broome and indeed right across Western Australia. A very warm reception, lots of discussions with people in every circumstance, as many of you have seen, whether it's in a café or in the street, or indeed in a pub, school children, right across the state, talking about the issues that are of vital importance.

Our commitment is to do everything we can – and we are – to ensure that West Australians and indeed all Australians, that the kids we've met, and indeed all Australian kids, have the great opportunities to realise their dreams. Providing the support, the security and the opportunity that they deserve. Backing business, backing enterprise, supporting them. That is our mission, everything we do is focussed on ensuring those young children we've met, whether the young kids who came to meet us here yesterday or the little babies we were talking with in the playground here just a moment ago, everything we do is focussed on them and ensuring they have a secure Australia, a safe Australia and one where there are opportunities for them, great opportunities, greater than their parents had, to realise their dreams.

Now I'll just make an observation about security. You would have seen the press conference from the Deputy Police Commissioners today. I want to thank and congratulate our intelligence, security and police services for their outstanding work in disrupting the terrorist plot to bring down an aeroplane. Charges have now been laid. This is an example of the seamless cooperation we have on the intelligence and security side and a reminder of why we are relentless in our determination to keep Australians safe.

There is no place for 'set and forget'. No place for complacency. All the time, we are improving our laws, resources, the way in which we integrate and cooperate on security. That's why we're establishing a Department of Home Affairs, to make that cooperation even more seamless, always determined to keep Australians safe today and in the future. That security that we are committed to ensuring is what enables all of us, in particular these young kids to enjoy the opportunities our country has to offer.

Security and opportunity are fundamental. That's what we're committed to and that's what we're delivering.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister can we get your reaction to the leak of the transcript between you and President Trump and the dialogue suggests that the US did not have to

take any of the people in Manus Island and they could reject them all through their vetting process if they wanted to?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well let me make a couple of points. Firstly I want to thank President Trump for honouring the deal, the arrangement that we entered into with the Obama Administration. I want to thank him for that. As you know, I always stand up for Australia's interests in every environment, that's my commitment as Prime Minister and Australians expect that and that's what I do.

JOURNALISTS:

But the Government consistently said it wasn't a quid pro quo arrangement with the US to take refugees or people from the US, but that doesn't seem to be the case given the transcript that's been released? Have you been –

PRIME MINISTER:

I'm not going to comment on the leak of this supposed transcript, let me just say that the nature of our relationship with the United States in this area is one of mutual assistance. So we help the Americans, they help us, it's in the context of a very big relationship of mutual support.

JOURNALIST:

Does it disturb you that you can't have a private conversation with the President of the United States?

PRIME MINISTER:

It's always better when these conversations remain confidential, but I haven't got any further comments to make on it. It was, as I said, a courteous, frank conversation. As President Trump said, we're both adults and we've had a, I stand up for Australia's interests, he stands up for America's interests. We have a warm relationship, you've seen that with our meeting in New York. You've seen that with our meetings in Hamburg at the G20. So we have a good relationship between the President and myself. But above all, the relationship between Australia and the United States is very deep, very enduring and one of mutual support in every field, and has been and I believe always will be.

JOURNALIST:

In New York you agreed with the President when he said it was fake news by the lying media, that the conversation was difficult. Do you regret agreeing with him now?

PRIME MINISTER:

I'm not going to do any more commentary. The discussion was a frank one, as the President said, between adults. We've both had plenty of experience in frank discussions and I want to thank the President for committing to

continuing to honour the deal on refugee resettlement that we entered into with the Obama Administration. I might just add – just further to a question Sarah asked – is that it has always been subject to American vetting procedures, that's always been part of the arrangement. Those procedures from their Department of Homeland Security are ongoing.

JOURNALIST:

What will happen to the people that the US don't take?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, again we are focussed on resettling refugees. We've got an arrangement with the United States and we're looking forward to that vetting process being completed.

JOURNALIST:

Will you be less frank in future knowing that these conversations could be leaked?

PRIME MINISTER:

I think it's very important for leaders to be frank when they're speaking to each other, but I think Australians can see that I stand up for them, for Australia's interest to defend our national interest.

JOURNALIST:

Can you tell us what type of people we are accepting from the US under this deal? You've suggested in the conversation that the US might be giving us some unattractive type of person who they don't want in America. So who are we taking?

PRIME MINISTER:

Again Sarah, the arrangements – in fact they were I think announced quite some time ago when I was at the UN – where we've agreed to work with the US in resettling some South American refugees. Look, the fundamental point is this; we are a generous, compassionate nation. We have a big humanitarian programme. Per capita we are one of the largest receivers of refugees through the humanitarian programmes. That is a fact.

However, we have to send the clearest possible message to the people smugglers; if you try to come here with a people smuggler by boat, you won't get in.

That is why we've been able to stop the boats.

That is a fundamental foundation of our success as an immigration nation, as a multicultural society for Australians to know that their government and their government alone, determines who comes into our country.

JOURNALIST:

Does our refugee program favour Christians in the Middle East?

PRIME MINISTER:

The program, the 12,000 additional refugees that we took in from the conflict zone was focussed on – and avowedly so – quite openly focussed on persecuted minorities and the bulk of those are in fact Christians. But there is also of course Yazidis as well, there are also Muslims, but the majority are in fact Christians.

JOURNALIST:

Just finally can I ask you about the CBA AUSTRAC allegations? Are you concerned about what has been reported today and could these officials potentially be disqualified under new laws that you've flagged for misconduct?

PRIME MINISTER:

Court proceedings are underway and I just want to say that everyone has to obey the law including big banks, the biggest companies. AUSTRAC is on the job. They're holding the bank to account. They're taking legal proceedings and I shouldn't make anymore comment beyond what has been announced. But you can see that the regulator is very focused on ensuring that the laws against money laundering and so forth are enforced.

JOURNALIST:

Sorry, local question?

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh good, a local question.

JOURNALIST:

Australia granting money to the World Bank for Indonesia to create new Bali's. What is your commitment to tourism in the Kimberley?

PRIME MINISTER:

We have a very strong commitment to tourism in the Kimberley. In fact, we were talking about it yesterday and Melissa can add to this but the very substantial investment, around \$50 million into the new road.

MELISSA PRICE MP:

Which is the Cape Leveque Road.

PRIME MINISTER:

Cape Leveque Road, yeah. It's about 60 kilometres – is that right?

MELISSA PRICE MP:

That's right.

JOURNALIST:

Some people see it as just encouraging more tourists to fly over Broome on their way to Indonesia.

PRIME MINISTER:

We are focused on tourism in Australia and we're making substantial investments into tourism infrastructure like the Cape Leveque Road here in the Kimberley. In fact, we've just come from a meeting with the deputy president of the shire and the chief executive talking about other opportunities for infrastructure that support tourism and of course other parts of industry – pastoral, resources and so forth, here in the Kimberley.

JOURNALIST:

Kimberley people want cheaper air flights and they see the federal government could relax some of the regulations that would allow other players, international players to compete in the domestic market to get away from the duopoly. Would you be able to do that to help the Kimberley?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well look I've listened to that, I've heard that and Melissa and I will be talking about that when we are back in Canberra next week.

But I can assure you this has been a very valuable visit for me because I've done lots of talking to you of course, but I've done also lots of listening and that is very important.

JOURNALIST:

Will the rest of the Kimberley see you – that's one question we're getting – other places in the Kimberley?

PRIME MINISTER:

Will I be back again? I'll be back in Western Australia, yes I'll be back in Western Australia several times before the years end, absolutely.

JOURNALIST:

For the Liberal State Conference?

PRIME MINISTER:

I will be back, don't worry. It's been a great visit and I want to thank everyone for the very warm welcome I've had here in Broome and right across this great state. Thank you Melissa.

MELISSA PRICE MP:

Thank you, my pleasure.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thanks a lot.

[ENDS]

Aviation Security Measures Update

The threat posed by the recent plot to bring down an aeroplane has been disrupted and contained.

As a result, the Director-General of Security has lowered the terror threat level posed to Australia's aviation industry.

Travellers will see progressive adjustments to airport security over the next 24 hours.

This includes a return to normal arrival times at airports for check-in, as advised by your airline.

The recent heightened security measures have obviously inconvenienced many members of the travelling public and we thank those impacted for their understanding. We are advised that the delays should now be reduced.

Nevertheless, as a precaution, some of the additional security measures will stay in place. Some of these measures will be obvious, some will not, but Australians should remain reassured that public safety is the absolute priority.

The Government already requires a range of security measures to keep Australians safe while travelling, including:

- Screening of passengers and luggage.
- Hardened cockpit doors to prevent unauthorised access to the cockpit.
- Ensuring cabin crew are trained for handling suspect passenger behaviour and responding to security threats, incidents and breaches.
- Plainclothes in-flight security officers, and
- Passenger and baggage screening and reconciliation, to ensure unauthorised items are not placed on an aircraft.

It is important to note Australia's aviation security was not compromised at any time during the terrorist plot.

The Government and its agencies will continue to work closely with industry

partners to ensure transport security arrangements reflect the current national security environment.

The public should have confidence in our security and law enforcement agencies and in Australia's comprehensive and strong aviation security.

Keeping Australians safe remains the number one priority of the Turnbull Government.

Press Conference with Minister for Justice Hon. Michael Keenan MP

PRIME MINISTER:

Good morning. I'm here with the Minister for Justice to announce that based on advice from our intelligence and security agencies, with whom we have been in close discussion today – as we have every day over the last week – the advice we have, is that the threat to aviation from the plot that was uncovered to bring down a plane has been disrupted and contained, thanks to the hard work of our security and intelligence agencies.

Consequent on that, the Director-General of ASIO has advised that the threat to aviation will be restored to the level it was a week ago. It was raised as you know, last week following the discovery of this plot, but it has now been restored to the level it was before.

Now, what will happen at the airports is that there will be continued enhanced security measures. Some of them will be obvious to travelers. Some will not. We have outstanding security measures at our airports. But they are going to continue to be enhanced, but they will be modified in a way that will cause less delays to the travelling public. I want to thank Australians for their forbearance in having to have faced delays and having to arrive at the airport earlier than they normally would.

Now, the people should continue to arrive for their flights in accordance with the directions of their airlines, which currently at the moment are to arrive two hours before domestic flights and three hours before international flights. In other words, an hour earlier than you normally would. We expect those arrival times to be altered by the airlines, to be restored to the ones that have been in place before these changes were made, consequent on discovery of the plot.

But please, follow the advice of your airline. That advice will follow from the airlines over the next 24 hours and subsequently. But remember, different airlines have different arrangements in terms of how long you have to be there before your flight leaves. So, check with your airline.

This has been a very successful exercise by the police and the intelligence services. We have to give them credit. They are the best in the world. They've uncovered this plot, they have disrupted it and they have contained it.

We will be always vigilant in protecting the safety of Australians. There is no place for 'set and forget'. Every day, my Government and our agencies are focused on keeping Australians safe. We are constantly doing that, constantly seeking to improve the protection we can offer.

Now in terms of the investigation that is continuing, as you know. The police have uncovered very substantial evidence. The Commissioner, the Federal Police Commissioner Andrew Colvin, has advised me that the investigation efforts are proceeding very successfully in terms of the gathering of evidence, and that I should expect and Australians should expect, charges to be laid in due course. But that is, of course, a matter for the police.

So, I'll ask Michael to make a few remarks and then we're happy to take some questions.

THE HON. MICHAEL KEENAN – MINISTER FOR JUSTICE:

Thank you, Prime Minister. It's good to be with you here in Perth and as you said in your remarks, we are very lucky in Australia to be protected by excellent agencies, both law enforcement and intelligence, who have again disrupted something from happening here on Australian soil.

This is the 13th time in the past three years that our agencies have done this. The reason that they have been so successful, part of the reason that they have been so successful, is they have been backed 110 per cent by this Government.

We've worked with them to work out what they need to deal with the way the terrorism threat has evolved in Australia.

We've worked with them to make sure that they have new powers so they can act earlier, because you need to police terrorism in a different way than you police other crime types.

We've worked with them to give them the resources, enormous investments in the capability of all of our agencies; the Australian Federal Police, ASIO, the ACIC, AUSTRAC, all of our agencies have received significant extra investments to make sure that they have what they need to keep the Australian people safe.

Now, we will continue to work with them. Obviously every time we disrupt an operation like this, we learn lessons. We will continue to work with our agencies to ensure that they have the powers and the resources that they need to do this job. The Government's laser-like focus will remain on ensuring that Australia is as well-equipped as anywhere in the world to deal with the significantly deteriorating security environment that we find ourselves in.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, there have been calls for domestic ID checks and also for greater screening of staff at airports. Do you believe that any of those additional measures are necessary?

PRIME MINISTER:

We have all of the measures of security at our airports and right through our nation, constantly under review. As I said, there is no place for 'set and forget'. We have very strong security measures at our airports, both in terms of airport staff and of course in terms of checking baggage, both baggage that goes into the hold and baggage that is carry-on baggage. Those measures are very strong. They will be, they have been enhanced and they will continue to be enhanced. But we are very focused too on ensuring that we look after, respect as well, respect the convenience of the travelling public as well.

So, there will be continuing enhanced measures at the airport. As I said, some of them will be obvious, some of them not so obvious to travelers. In terms of the time before a flight, which is obviously a very important point for people to know – how soon do I have to get to the airport before the flight? – continue for the time being to arrive two hours before a domestic flight, three hours before an international flight. But you should expect that requirement will be moving back to the arrangements that were in place a week ago by the airlines. But take advice from the airlines.

JOURNALIST:

How do you have enhanced security measures and reduce the waiting, you know, the delays? How can you have both?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, through technology and good management and good practice.

JOURNALIST:

Will people still be, I mean, for example, will more people be pulled aside?

PRIME MINISTER:

I'm not going to go into –

JOURNALIST:

To have that sort of, explosive screening?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah I know, thank you for that. Again, that's a good question but you'll understand that we are not going to go into the details of the enhanced security measures. But Australians can be reassured that we have very strong security measures at our airports. We have had for a very long time. But we are always improving them.

That's the point that Michael and I have made, is there is no place for 'set and forget'. We are constantly seeking to improve the measures at our airports and everywhere, you know, in terms of detecting, disrupting, preventing, prosecuting people who seek to do us harm.

JOURNALIST:

What can be said of a terror threat where suddenly the terrorist realises that the meat grinder was too heavy for hand luggage?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, I'm not going to comment on operational –

JOURNALIST:

Well they sound like a bunch of dills.

PRIME MINISTER:

I'm not going to be drawn into commentary like that.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister you said you were expecting new charges. You've got a week, is that right? Under AFP legislation to hold them and then beyond that? Do you expect special ASIO powers?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, I won't go into any more detail than I have given you on the matter of the investigation, which is obviously not a great deal. But you will understand from a public safety point of view, from a law enforcement point of view, Michael and I have to be circumspect. We see a lot of speculation in the press but we're not going to comment on it.

JOURNALIST:

But you do expect charges, though?

PRIME MINISTER:

As I said – I will repeat what I said – the Commissioner, Andrew Colvin, has told me that the investigations have proceeded very well in terms of uncovering evidence and they've got very strong evidence. I should expect charges to be laid in due course. That's what I can say to you.

JOURNALIST:

Okay and travelers, the delays will subside?

PRIME MINISTER:

You should expect, travelers should expect to receive advice from their

airlines within the next 24 hours, that the time, arrival times – that's to say arriving at the airport before a flight – will be restored to those that previously applied, which was an hour for domestic, two hours for international.

But some airlines differ. It's very important to recognise this is ultimately a matter for the airlines but that the threat level to the aviation sector has been restored by ASIO to the level it was prior to last week. That is because the plot has been disrupted and it has been contained.

JOURNALIST:

So, it was higher than probable, was it?

PRIME MINISTER:

No, no. The threat level to aviation – the terrorist threat level across Australia is 'probable', you're right. For aviation, it had been prior to last week, at 'possible'. It was raised last week to 'probable' and has now been restored to the previous level.

But look, can I say to you, there is no room for complacency in this area at all. No room for 'set and forget' at all.

You know, one of the reasons my Government is constantly improving the way in which we operate in terms of providing protection for Australians – whether it is ensuring that the ADF is able better to support counter-terrorism operations, whether it is providing the additional legislative powers that enable police to conduct these investigations, whether it is providing the additional resources we did in the Budget to the AFP to support their work – at every level, every day, we are focused on keeping Australians safe.

Australians should be reassured that everything we can do to improve the protection we give Australians, we will do. We are constantly focused on that.

We have the finest security, intelligence, police, defence forces in the world. We provide them every support so they can always be able to do their job even better. That's our commitment.

We're always determined to give them the resources they need, the legal resources, the financial resources, bringing the key domestic security intelligence agencies into the one Department. Everything we can do to enhance cooperation, integration, engagement, the safety of Australians, we're committed to.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, I know you can't go into operational details, but can you tell us how you feel personally reading stories of this group of people potentially wanting to use an unwitting suicide bomber to blow up a plane? How does that make you feel as leader of the country?

PRIME MINISTER:

As the leader of our nation, as Prime Minister of Australia, my first duty is to keep Australians safe. That is the fundamental obligation, the fundamental responsibility of government. There are no guarantees in a dangerous world. We all understand that. But we are focused, always, on protecting Australians.

We feel it keenly.

It is a task that, as Michael said, on which we have a laser-like focus. We are relentless.

We are proud of our successes. We are proud that 13 plots have been disrupted. We're proud of that.

Our agencies are outstanding and we congratulate them and we thank them for their service.

But the threat is constant. It becomes more sophisticated, more challenging, all the time.

So that is why there is no place for 'set and forget'. That is why we are always focused on ensuring we do the job better.

JOURNALIST:

Minister Keenan, 13 terror plots have been disrupted and there will probably be a 14th. That they have been disrupted by existing agencies in the form that they're in, does this say anything about whether we need a Homeland Security Office or whether we don't need a Homeland Security office?

THE HON. MICHAEL KEENAN – MINISTER FOR JUSTICE:

Well Geoff, every member of the Government has constantly reinforced that we have very good arrangements in Australia. But the whole point of what we've done over the past three years with the emergence of ISIL, essentially we've got a supercharged, this radical Islamic ideology, is that we've constantly looked for ways we can improve. That is an ongoing process. We will be doing that next year, the year after that. We will always look to find ways to continue to improve our arrangements.

I think that's what the Australian people would expect from us. That's what we're looking at with the new Home Affairs arrangements; making sure that everyone is joined up and is as coordinated as probable. That's not a criticism of the way we've done things previously, it's just an acknowledgement we've got to constantly find ways that we can improve.

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, the threat of Islamist terrorism is a global one. As I've said many times, nowhere is far away from anywhere else in the age of the internet. Our enemies, those terrorists, those Islamist terrorist organisations are global

and they are connected.

We have to be thoroughly connected – as we are – both domestically, working with federal and state agencies together, as you have been seeing happening in Sydney with this investigation and as it happens right around Australia.

We also have to be more tightly connected and engaged with all of our international partners as well. That's why I made this issue, ensured this issue was a key priority at the G20 in Hamburg.

We have to work, we have to be thoroughly united and connected as we fight and defeat Islamist terrorism, because it is a global threat. It is a global threat to those who love freedom, Australians and like-minded nations around the world.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, you're going to Broome this afternoon.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes.

JOURNALIST:

On a completely different topic, the West Australian Coroner is in the Kimberley today and she's investigating the deaths of 13 young Aboriginal people. Her predecessor did the same thing ten years ago. Do you think that anything can change in that regard or is this something we just have to accept will continue?

PRIME MINISTER:

We never accept, never accept. We never accept young people taking their own lives, like we never accept the abuse of women and children. We never accept substance abuse destroying families and communities and we'll always be working to protect families, to help communities rebuild.

One of the subjects I discussed in the very constructive discussions I had with the Premier last night was how we can work or how our agencies can work more closely together on these challenges. So, I can assure you that we never accept outcomes like that.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, I'll ask you about the Premier after this. On same-sex marriage, what do you make of Warren Entsch's call that the issue be discussed in the Liberal Party Room, not the Joint Party Room? Because he claims he was ambushed two years ago by Tony Abbott?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, these issues can be discussed, any issue can be discussed in the

Liberal Party Room and the Joint Party Room.

JOURNALIST:

He wants it to be specifically though in the Liberal Party Room because he thinks that he got done over last time.

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, we have many discussions in our respective party rooms, in the National Party Room, the Liberal Party Room. But of course, ultimately Coalition policy is determined in the Coalition Party Room.

JOURNALIST:

Just in regards to you meeting last night with the Premier, can we get your thoughts on that? On whether he was putting on a front for the cameras, in relation to his many attacks on you, in relation to the GST issue?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, the meeting was cordial and constructive. It was a very, very friendly, courteous discussion.

JOURNALIST:

He wasn't belligerent?

PRIME MINISTER:

We had a very courteous discussion, as I predicted we would. It was a very constructive one too.

Look, can I just say to you before we wrap up, just on the issue of the GST. As I said on the first public meeting I attended here in Western Australia on this visit, in the Mindarie Pub, where the GST was raised with me by a number of people, it is a very keen issue in Western Australia, I understand that. My colleagues from Western Australia raise it within the Government all the time.

As I said in the Mindarie Pub, WA's share of the GST does not pass the pub test. It didn't pass the test in that pub either, as you'd expect. So, we understand that and we are working. I'm the first Prime Minister working to find a solution, a better, fairer formula that will pass the pub test not just in the Mindarie Pub, or in any other pub in Western Australia, but right around the nation.

So, it's an issue of vital and keen importance to Western Australians. I've discussed it with many Western Australians in the course of my travels here this week, from the Mindarie Pub to, you know, community meetings in Busselton and Albany, to even on the train to Mandurah. So, I've had plenty of discussions about it, and, of course, with the Premier and my colleagues. But we have a number of steps in train, as you know. The Productivity

Commission's analysis of the formula and the process of allocating the GST is very important.

So, it's a big issue, a keen issue. I'm very aware of it and I just want to thank Western Australians for the very warm welcome they've given me here, while I have been here. I look forward to meeting more people in Broome later today and tomorrow.

We've had a very warm Western Australian welcome and I'm delighted with the constructive discussions I've had with the Premier.

Thanks very much.

[ENDS]

Remarks at the opening of the Mitchell Freeway extension

PRIME MINISTER:

Thank you. Thank you all very much and we are on Noongar country and we acknowledge their custodianship of this land for time out of mind and honour their elders past and present here today.

What a great piece of new infrastructure this is. Six kilometers – this is a \$216 million project, with \$173 million provided from the Commonwealth Government as part of our commitment, part of our practical commitment to make up for the unfair distribution of the GST to Western Australia.

This shows that my government, the Coalition Government, the Liberal National Party Government in Canberra recognises that Western Australia has not had a fair deal on the GST and has acted to make up for that.

Now this is part of it but most importantly, what this is going to do is for thousands of people here in Perth, it is going to save them hours and hours out of their lives in congestion and in traffic delays.

It's going to be so important, for Christian and Ian, for your constituents in Pearce and Moore and it's a great testament of course to the leadership that Paul Fletcher and my colleagues have shown in the Federal Government in working with the state government.

The Premier and I had a very cordial and constructive discussion last night about infrastructure and how we want to build more infrastructure in Perth, how we want to do a City Deal that will enable us to do more and build more, use more innovative approaches to financing.

We want to put more dollars to work in infrastructure here in Western Australia and right across Australia because we know that roads like this and rail like that – I actually like being interrupted by a train going past because I'm a great believer in mass transit, so that's good – it underlines the frequency of the service, it is very impressive I might say, minister. So that's good. But we are committed to this, to infrastructure.

This is a great project here. I want to congratulate all the workers and the contractors who have done the work on this, brought it in on time and under budget.

There goes another one of your very fine trains – that's good.

Well done. It's going to ensure that people have more time to spend with their families and less time caught in traffic.

It is a vital part of the infrastructure that this city needs.

It is a sign, a testament, an absolute demonstration of our commitment to putting dollars to work to build more infrastructure in Western Australia in partnership with the state government and doing so in a way that improves the liveability and the amenity of this great city. A great place to live.

We're determined to work with the people of Western Australia, with the Government of Western Australia, to ensure that it becomes an even greater place to live and work – driving economic growth, liveability and of course, all of the amenity that people expect and are entitled to expect in a great city like this.

So I'm delighted to be here. I want to congratulate everybody involved for the great work. The politicians have marshalled the money, the taxpayers have paid their taxes, but ultimately the workers have got in there and done the job and brought it in on time and under budget.

So congratulations. I'm delighted to be here with you all, it's a wonderful project.

Thank you.

[ENDS]

[Radio interview with Geoff Hutchison, ABC Radio Perth](#)

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

I'm delighted to be joined by the Prime Minister of Australia, Malcolm

Turnbull. Mr Turnbull, good morning to you.

PRIME MINISTER:

Good morning Geoff. Great to be with you.

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

Prime Minister, have you done anything to win back the West this week?

PRIME MINISTER:

I'll tell you what I'm doing right now, I'm on the way to open, officially open the extension of the Mitchell Freeway which is extending it six kilometres from Joondalup to Hester Avenue in Clarkson.

That extension which I'll be opening with the Premier was 80 per cent funded by the Commonwealth and the balance from the state and it is a \$216 million project. It is going to relieve congestion. It is going to ensure that people spend less time stuck in traffic and they spend more time with their families. It will enable people, it will open up economic opportunities and all of the benefits that come from improved infrastructure.

So it is a good example of the commitment we have to Western Australia and it is part of our over \$7 billion of commitments to infrastructure in this state.

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

Do you accept that if the West Australian public believe the answer is no to that question? And I appreciate what you've just told us about an important piece of road infrastructure. But do you accept that if the Western Australian public answered that question with: 'No, he has done nothing to win back the West'? that several of the Ministers that have been with you this week will lose their seats and you will lose office?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, Geoff, obviously, if voters are unhappy and vote the other way it has electoral consequences and plainly we're committed to delivering for the people of Western Australia, for the people of Australia.

You asked a question earlier about what is an ordinary Australian. Can I tell you Australians are all extraordinary. The greatest asset of this country, of this state are our people. And their enterprise, their determination, their vision, their courage is what we're doing to enable – every one of our policies, whether it is investing in better infrastructure, whether it is investing here in Perth in the Mitchell Freeway extension or in METRONET, or in any of the projects we're backing around the state and around the nation – all of them are designed to better enable Australians to achieve their dreams, to marshal their enterprise to get on and grow the economy and deliver all of the jobs and opportunities that we need.

Look, I am unashamedly backing Australians' enterprise.

My opponent Mr Shorten and the Labor Party are I would say equally unashamedly determined to tax and regulate business.

Everything they have in their platform is calculated to discourage investment and employment.

Everything we are doing is going in the right direction which is encouraging investment and jobs.

You know, whether it is the announcement we made this week with Michaelia Cash, one of our great Western Australian Ministers about the AHA backing internships and getting young people on welfare into jobs. Isn't that a great thing?

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

With respect I'd like to stay with the GST issue for just a moment. This week you said: 'I'm the first Prime Minister to address this issue'.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I believe that's the case Geoff.

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

Do you think voters could name what it is you've actually done?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it depends how much they follow the news I suppose, Geoff, but I can tell you exactly what I've done – in consultation with the West Australian Premier at the time Colin Barnett – what I proposed was that when Western Australia's share returned to a normal level, and it was expected to get up over 70 per cent by 2019-20 was the estimate at that time, that would be an occasion when we should reset the GST formula so that there is a floor and that was on the basis, because if you did it then then at that particular time no other state would lose.

And look, this is a political challenge, and Colin understood that. We discussed this, I made that proposal, or that commitment at the State Council of the Liberal Party here in WA.

I have pursued it at COAG meetings. I have made the case for Western Australia at COAG meetings, both in front of Colin and in front of your current Premier Mark McGowan.

We now have the Productivity Commission looking at the GST formula and what we are endeavouring to do is to develop a fairer GST formula that gives a distribution of GST that will not only pass the pub test in Western Australia but be seen as fair everywhere else.

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

If the only public take-away from the week is that WA is to lose a further \$1.9 billion because the Australian Bureau of Statistics has noted there are 60,000 fewer people in the state, won't that just confirm this parochial suspicion of ours that political words are completely meaningless? Scott Morrison told Mark McGowan: 'We can't do anything about that, sorry' – won't that be the thing that lingers in the memory of the West Australian public?

PRIME MINISTER:

Geoff, I've got to tell you, just between us and your listeners, there are two, it's like parallel universes. This is what I hear from the media.

I have met with hundreds of Western Australians this week. In Perth, I've met with school students. I've met with their parents. I've met with a 100-year old war veteran. I've been down to Albany. I've been to Busselton. I've been out to Swan View Senior High School. I've been in the pub in Mindarie. And the reception I have had could not have been more warmer or more positive or more welcoming.

And so I listen to you saying how angry people are and how furious they are and how they wish I wasn't coming and so forth – it is a complete parallel universe between what the media is saying and what the people I'm meeting in the real world are saying to me.

Now I recognise there is an unfair distribution of the GST. Yes. I am seeking to resolve it. Yes.

What is the Labor Party doing? What is Bill Shorten doing about it? Nothing. He is attacking me for suggesting that the formula should change.

So the reality is in terms of politics, there is one side of politics federally that is seeking to reform the GST formula so that it is more fair and that is my side.

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

And save its political skin in Western Australia.

PRIME MINISTER:

It is my side of politics – look, again, Geoff, your negativity – look, I know politicians should never complain about the media but I just, you know, your listeners I reckon have a much more positive view if they are like the literally hundreds of people I've met this week.

And I will meet more Western Australians. I'm going up to Broome, of course, so I'm getting right around the state.

I could not have been more warmly welcomed, had more positive discussions than I've had here in WA.

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

Prime Minister, let me then just ask you, because I read this as soon as I came on air.

"Geoff, I'm a 40-year old Liberal supporter in a marginal seat and I would like you to let the Prime Minister know that unless he and the Liberals give a fairer GST distribution to WA, I and many of my friends like me will not vote Liberal."

And you know that recent polling points to the same thing.

Whether it is fair or unfair you will carry this burden of blame. I think the only thing that people might agree this morning is that we live in a parallel universe.

PRIME MINISTER:

I'm not suggesting that people are not concerned about the GST. They are. I'm concerned about it too. But you've got to remember that you have, and I've discussed this, I had a very constructive, very cordial, friendly discussion with the Premier yesterday and you know, one of the challenges that we face and he faces is getting the Labor Party on board because who are the biggest opponents to changes to the GST formula? At the moment, Labor states. South Australia, Queensland, Victoria in particular.

You know, New South Wales, which is the biggest state obviously in population terms and so forth, its Liberal Premier Gladys Berejiklian supports reform to the GST of a kind that would actually result in Western Australia getting a fairer distribution.

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

I do appreciate, I do appreciate that this is very, very complicated.

PRIME MINISTER:

No but Geoff let's just put it this way, you've got one –

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

But your Party has been in power since 2013, Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER:

All of that is true, but you've got one side of politics, the Liberal National side of politics which is seeking to do something about the issue, that recognizes there is a problem and is seeking to find a solution.

You've got another side of politics, the Labor side, which says there's no problem and nothing should change.

Look at Labor on its track record – I mean again, I don't want to disturb this pleasant conversation with some facts – but let's look at this. Under my

Government's school funding reforms, Western Australian schools are going to get, their funding will double over the next ten years. The growth in funding for all schools here – independent, catholic and government – but particularly government schools is going to be very substantial. Now is that a special deal for WA? No it's not. What it is, is the consequence of Western Australia being duded by the last Labor Government, the federal Labor Government under Bill Shorten and Julia Gillard's special deals, they had 27 of them.

Under a fair, national, consistent, needs-based funding model Western Australia does much better, only because it had been left behind by Labor before.

So what you've got, is strong –

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

Mr Turnbull I appreciate that time is very short and we only have you for a few more moments but there are a couple of things that are significant that I do want to ask.

PRIME MINISTER:

Sure.

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

I wonder, can you confirm that Tuesday's party room meeting is going to discuss the possibility of a postal plebiscite?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I don't discuss what is being canvassed in the party room. So I'm sorry, the party room discussions are within the party room.

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

The Australian suggests there might be a secret ballot of Government MPs to decide the issue. The only reason I raise it it's been such a headline-grabbing distraction this week.

PRIME MINISTER:

You know something, it's distracted you and it's distracted a lot of reporters.

But in the course of my visit here, to the best of my recollection, only one person has raised the issue with me out of hundreds.

Now I'm not suggesting it's not an important issue, don't get me wrong. But what I'm saying to you is that it is a very, the issues that West Australians are more concerned about is schools funding, education, infrastructure, GST – as we've been discussing – you know, the growth of the economy, you know,

what are we going to do to pick up economic activity here after the downturn.

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

All of which is true. All of which is true. But you also understand that central to your authority as Prime Minister and your party, is how this issue is dealt with in the party room next Tuesday.

PRIME MINISTER:

And it will be dealt with in the party room. I mean, look, all of this –

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

Tony Abbott is speaking about a, indicative of a lack of leadership and a lack of discipline. So you know these things are issues that need to be addressed.

PRIME MINISTER:

Geoff, you know, I do understand the way the Liberal Party operates. We do have, lots of issues get raised in the party room. Any member of the Liberal Party can raise any matter they like in the party room and they often do. It is a democratic process. We discuss these issues in the party room. And then we make decisions and then they're announced. Now I talk to my colleagues about these issues privately. I talk to them in the Cabinet obviously, talk to them in party room. But those conversations are private conversations. Now I appreciate the media's abiding interest in it.

Just a little thing to reflect on – you know, when Michaelia Cash and I announced this initiative with the AHA to have 10,000 new interns – now these are kids that are on welfare, right, who want to get into a job.

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

Yep.

PRIME MINISTER:

So it's a fantastic program. So the AHA says: 'Right, we're going to get 10,000 of these young people, give them a start, give them an internship, give them some training and hopefully that will result in them getting a job.' So that's beaut. You'd think everyone would say: 'Fantastic, let's hope it is so successful.'

We announced that. The only questions from the media – until I basically shamed them into asking questions on something else – the only questions were on gay marriage. So there is apparently no interest at all.

I pointed out that if you were sitting at home watching that press conference on television, maybe you had one of your kids, wasn't getting started properly, didn't have a job and you were worried about them, you'd be saying: 'Gosh, this is really interesting, I hope this works. Maybe my boy or my girl

could get a start there.' Instead, you've got the journalists talking about something else. So anyway-

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

You're a Prime Minister who needs clear air to talk about the things that matter to you. I guess my last question is, how do you think you're relating to ordinary Australians, as we seek to define who ordinary Australians might be? How do you think you're personally relating to ordinary Australians?

PRIME MINISTER:

I can only tell you that I mix with Australians in many, many environments all over the country – in big cities, in country towns, you know, regional centres, in pubs and you know, in coffee shops on the street, on trains-

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

And people haven't talked about the GST with you this week?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well of course they have. Of course they've talked about the GST. Absolutely. That is—

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

Were they cranky?

PRIME MINISTER:

The concern about the GST in Western Australia, I would say could be summed up this way is that there is a general understanding that there is, if you like, support is given to smaller states with a lower revenue base, like Tasmania and South Australia. People understand that. But they say: '34 per cent, you're kidding me. That is just totally unfair', and I agree with them.

It is a question of, well, you know, clearly it does not pass the pub test.

Now what we need to have is a GST allocation formula that is fair and is seen to be fair right across the nation. That is what we're seeking to do.

It is not an easy political challenge but it needs strong advocacy and of course that needs advocacy from Western Australia, the Western Australian Government within the Labor Party as well.

So again, I want to have an outcome here where we have a revised formula, that whether you're in Western Australia or Tasmania or Queensland, you can say, 'Well, that is fair.' That's what we've got to do because we've plainly got a situation in Western Australia where 30 cents, 34 cents in the dollar is not a fair go and we are the nation of a fair go. We've got to rectify that and I'm working on it, but it is obviously a matter that is politically very complex because of all the vested interests.

Mark McGowan has got the opportunity as Labor Premier of WA to make that case within his own Party as well and I encourage him to do so.

GEOFF HUTCHISON:

Prime Minister I do hope that all our parallel universes coincide

Thank you for your time this morning.

PRIME MINISTER:

They intersect occasionally. Okay, thanks a lot Geoff.

[ENDS]