

Govt u-turn on plans to axe school lunches is another 'humiliation' – Moran

“Theresa May was worried that she would go down in history as the lunch snatcher. Dropping these plans is just another humiliating climb down, in what seems to becoming a long list for the Prime Minister.

Worrying rise in nurses leaving the profession

Commenting, Lib Dem health spokesperson and former health minister Norman Lamb said:

Press Conference with the Attorney-General, Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, The Hon. Peter Dutton MP and Minister for Justice, The Hon. Michael Keenan MP

PRIME MINISTER:

Today I am announcing the most significant reform of Australia’s national intelligence and domestic security arrangements – and their oversight – in more than forty years.

Australia is facing complex and rapidly evolving security challenges.

Our security environment is being shaped by changes in our region and beyond involving the relationships between and actions of key states.

It is being shaped by the very real threat of home-grown terrorism that has increased with the spread of global Islamist terrorism, and by the growth in activity by criminals who continue to test our borders.

It is shaped by new and emerging technologies that complicate the work of security agencies and make the job of keeping Australians safe and secure ever more challenging.

In confronting these threats, Australia has been well served by our intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies – as well as by the Australian Defence Force.

And by the determination of the my Government to ensure our agencies have the resources, both financial and legal to keep Australians secure.

I want to acknowledge the dedication and professionalism of our security, intelligence, police and defence forces.

When it comes to our nation's security, we must stay ahead of the threats against us. There is no room for complacency. There is no room for set and forget.

That is why last year, I commissioned a comprehensive review of the Australian Intelligence Community to test the assumptions and identify improvements in our existing arrangements.

The review was conducted by the former Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Professor Michael L'Estrange, the former Deputy Secretary of the Department of Defence and Director of the Australian Signals Directorate, Mr Stephen Merchant.

And those two gentleman were ably advised by Sir Iain Lobban, the former Director General of the UK's GCHQ, which is the British counterpart as you know, to the Australian Signals Directorate.

I thank them for their work on a landmark report in the history of Australia's intelligence and security community.

An unclassified version of the report will be released today and the government's response to the matters not dealt with me by this morning will be released following further consideration of those recommendations by the government.

Now this very valuable report offers a comprehensive overview of the nation's intelligence community, concluding that our agencies are highly capable and staffed by very skilled and dedicated officers.

It has made many important recommendations to transform our highly capable agencies into a world-class intelligence community – to ensure, as the review says, that “the whole is greater than the sum of the parts”.

The Government accepts the principles of the reviewers' recommendations as providing a sound basis to ensure Australia remains ahead of the threats.

The scope of the recommendations covers all aspects of our intelligence community, including changes to its structure, capability, coordination and oversight, including the establishment of an Office of National Intelligence to ensure more effective coordination of Australia's intelligence effort.

This is a lesson that we have learnt from the UK is that having a central policy making process leads to better operational outcomes. The new Office of National Intelligence will coordinate this central intelligence policy and coordination function.

All of our Five Eyes partners have established a single point of coordination for reasons the report makes very clear – Australia doing the same will ensure even better collaboration with our Five Eyes partners.

It also recommends and we accept this recommendation the transformation of the Australian Signals Directorate into a statutory authority within the Defence portfolio.

And it also makes recommendations to changes to legislation and oversight arrangements to reflect the increasing demands placed on our agencies by Australia's security environment.

We will also accept recommendations to further boost the nation's cyber security. In recognition that the Australian Cyber Security Centre must have a whole of economy focus, I will appoint my Cyber Security Special Adviser as the Head of the Australian Cyber Security Centre. And we will establish an Australian Cyber Security Centre 24/7 capability to respond to serious cyber incidents. This capability will better meet the needs of the community and the government in relation to rapidly emerging cyber events and we've seen some examples of that very recently.

Now given the scope of recommendations, I have asked the Secretary of my Department to establish a taskforce to manage implementation of the changes and to consider them in detail.

I anticipate the reforms being implemented progressively and to be completed through the course of 2018.

The review has highlighted important considerations for how Australia handles its domestic security arrangements, including our very complex security environment becoming more so, the threats that we face are multi-dimensional, the lines between organised criminals and terrorists are blurred, contemporary threats drive the need for our agencies to work closer together.

For the past decade, as security challenges have become more difficult, successive Governments have strengthened cooperation between domestic agencies on an ad hoc basis.

A lot of good work has been done, notably the Coalition's own Operation Sovereign Borders which have kept the people smugglers' boats at bay for nearly three years.

But the Australian Intelligence Community review itself noted the existence

of a number of ad hoc taskforces which seek to enhance cooperation and coordination between agencies on specific threats.

The challenges the current international security environment poses to the our intelligence agencies, as outlined in the Review, are very similar to those faced by the policy and operational arms of the national security community.

Ad hoc and incremental adjustments to our national security arrangements do not adequately prepare us for the complex security future we face.

In these difficult times, repeated reviews and task forces are not enough. We need to take more decisive action.

We can't take an 'if it ain't broke don't fix it' approach to security arrangements, not least because our adversaries are agile and nimble, constantly adapting and evolving to defeat our defences.

We need more enduring and better integrated arrangements for our domestic and border security. Arrangements that will preserve the operational strengths and independence of our frontline agencies, but improve the strategic policy planning and coordination behind them.

So I have decided to establish a Home Affairs portfolio of Australia's immigration, border protection and domestic security agencies.

The new portfolio will be similar to the United Kingdom's Home Office arrangement – a federation, if you will, of border and security agencies.

Now let me be quite clear – this is not a United States-style Department of Homeland Security. The agencies will retain their current statutory independence, which is such a vital aspect of our Australian system.

The operational agencies will include ASIO, the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Border Force, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre or AUSTRAC and the Office of Transport Security.

They will be supported by a central department that will oversee policy and strategic planning and the coordination of the operational response to the threats we face.

Importantly, ASIO, AFP and the Australian Border Force will all report directly to the Home Affairs Minister. This will ensure that these three important agencies have direct reporting into Cabinet.

The Home Affairs Minister will have two ministers working to him, on the security side and the immigration side.

Michael Keenan, who has been doing an outstanding job as the Justice Minister, will continue to be that important security-focused minister.

The Home Affairs portfolio will be complemented by a move to strengthen the

Attorney-General's oversight of Australia's domestic security and law enforcement agencies, including, by moving the Inspector General of Intelligence and Security and the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor to the Attorney-General's portfolio.

The Government will also review the role of the Attorney-General in the role in ASIO's operations in the work to design and establish the new portfolio to ensure continued and efficient oversight.

Now, I have always believed strongly in the role of the Government's First Law Officer – it will only become more critical as threats continue to evolve and the challenges of dealing with them more complex. So I am determined to ensure effective oversight, now I'm come to some details about that in a moment.

Now we need these reforms not because the system is broken but because our security environment is evolving quickly, it is becoming more complex, it is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. We need a better structure to meet the challenge of the times. And that is why we're adopting a model which is closer to the British Home Office than the large scale American Homeland Security Department.

So I want to stress we are taking the best elements of our intelligence and national security community and making them better.

As terrorists evolve their methods, we have to evolve our responses.

Now this announcement is a result of years of planning and research. It's a result of considered thought and study. It's a result of extensive consultation.

Last week I was in the United Kingdom where I spoke with the Prime Minister, Theresa May and the Home Secretary Amber Rudd about the structure of the UK system.

The Attorney-General and I have held extensive discussions on counterterrorism with our partners in the Five Eyes. George having done so most notably very recently, particularly in the context of cyber security.

The overseas experience is clear – a better coordinated, better integrated counterterrorism structure is of vital importance.

So the reforms I'm announcing today will entrench the cooperation between the agencies, which has helped us thwart 12 terrorist attacks and stop 31 people-smuggling ventures in recent times.

It will take the cooperation further by ensuring more effective strategic planning and coordination of the agencies and identify opportunities for streamlining back office and other support functions. At the same time we will ensure that our operational agencies will remain nimble and focused on front-line tasks.

The establishment of the Home Affairs portfolio is a complex undertaking.

So, I have asked the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection to oversee the development of the government's governance structures, legislative changes and operational planning as the Minister-designate for Home Affairs. And he'll be working closely with my Department and of course, with the Attorney.

I have instructed the head of my Department to have the taskforce being established to implement and respond to the recommendations of the Australian Intelligence Community Review to ensure that the arrangements to create the Home Affairs portfolio are prepared with a unity of purpose and fully coordinated with changes to the intelligence community. The taskforce will develop the necessary governance, legislative and other changes to effect the Government's objectives. And it will ensure that the changes to the intelligence community, and the establishment of a Home Affairs portfolio, are aligned.

The NSC will approve the portfolio implementation plan later this year, with its roll out to be complete by 30 June, next year.

Now throughout this transition period, our operational agencies will continue to report to their current ministers, pending the finalisation of new arrangements.

There will be no reduction in frontline capacity, focus or operational tempo.

At the same time we are strengthening our security arrangements, we will also strengthen our oversight, accountability and integrity structures by increasing the powers and the remit of the Attorney-General in relation to Australia's intelligence communities and agencies of the new Home Affairs portfolio.

The principles of oversight of our intelligence agencies were core recommendations of the Hope Royal Commissions of the '70s and '80s

Strong oversight and accountability is important for public confidence that our agencies not only safeguard our nation's security, but do so respecting of Australians' rights and liberties.

The Attorney-General will retain his current role in the issue of warrants and ministerial authorisations.

Now I understand that some of those who are concerned about the enhancement of our national security arrangements I am announcing today want to be assured that the civil liberties of Australians are not eroded.

I am determined that the protections and oversight we're establishing today on very strong foundations will remain a fundamental feature of our system. There will be stronger oversight, stronger oversight under these new arrangements.

The AIC review has made some detailed recommendations regarding the oversight of our intelligence agencies and they will as I noted be explored in detail by the work led by my Department.

However, the key institutions charged with overseeing the intelligence agencies will be moved from my portfolio to the Attorney-General's portfolio.

That includes the Inspector General of Intelligence and Security and the Independent National Security Legislation Monitor and these will join existing portfolio bodies such as the Australian Commissioner for Law Enforcement Integrity.

I have also decided that the Commonwealth Ombudsman should be brought into the Attorney-General's enhanced oversight role, remaining as an independent statutory body.

The Ombudsman, as you know, plays a vital role in considering and investigating public complaints about unfair or unreasonable treatment by Government departments and agencies – many of which are involved in these reforms.

Its placement within the Attorney-General's portfolio complements other changes announced today and cements the vital role of the First Law Officer in ensuring Governments act lawfully and justly.

The First Law Officer is the minister for integrity, the minister for oversight and integrity and that role is being reinforced.

Without creating any new unnecessary bureaucratic layers, these reforms ensure a higher level of checks and balances than we have ever had before. It is an important part of our constant effort to get the balance right between security and civil liberties.

Taken together, these changes are the most significant security and oversight reforms, as I said, in four decades.

They reflect the evolving and complex security environment at home and abroad – and the enduring need to stay ahead of them.

They reflect the professionalism of our operational agencies and our determination to ensure that they remain the world's best.

And above all, these reforms reflect my Government's tireless determination to keep Australians safe.

I'll ask the Attorney to add to these remarks and then the two ministers.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

Thank you very much indeed Prime Minister.

These are historic reforms and they have my strong support and I want to thank the Prime Minister for his close engagement of me in the shaping of these reforms.

These reforms are important for two reasons, in particular. There are many reasons why they are good reforms, but there are two that I want to

emphasise.

First of all, they mean that for the first time, Australia will have, as a senior Cabinet Minister, a minister whose exclusive focus is on national security.

For the nearly four years that I have been in the Attorney-General's portfolio, the principle responsibility for national security has lain with the Attorney-General. But of course the Attorney-General has many other responsibilities as well. He's responsible as the principal legal adviser to the Government. He's responsible for the administration of and recruitment to the courts. He's responsible for government information, including the Freedom of Information Act and the Archives Act. He is responsible for very extensive, individual Acts of Parliament, as various as the Family Law Act and the Bankruptcy Act.

What that means is that much though my focus has been on national security, it has not been able to be an exclusive focus. There are always other things within the Attorney-General's portfolio which also occupy my attention.

That issue was ameliorated somewhat two years ago by the appointment of Michael Keenan as the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Counter-Terrorism. But it remained the anomaly that responsibility for national security was shared between a senior Cabinet Minister, who could not give it his exclusive attention, and a junior minister. That is an unsatisfactory situation.

The announcements the Prime Minister has made this morning will correct that anomaly. It will ensure that we have within the Government, as a senior member of the Cabinet, a minister who can give 100 per cent of his time and his attention to national security, both domestic national security and border security.

The complementarities, the synergies between Mr Dutton's new roles are more natural, more obvious and better than the complementarities between the domestic national security function and the other functions within the Attorney-General's portfolio until now.

There is a second reason why I welcome this announcement because, as the Prime Minister has said, it does return or restore the Attorney-General's portfolio to its traditional, orthodox, familiar function as the First Law Officer of the Commonwealth.

That is what the Attorney-General is meant to be.

He or she is meant to be the minister with responsibility for the rule of law.

He or she is meant to be the minister that holds other government agencies to account. In particular, when one is considering agencies with intrusive powers, including intelligence agencies, it is extremely important that the Attorney-General's function, as the minister who protects the rule of law within the structures of governance, be respected, and I am grateful for the

fact that that role has been enhanced by the announcement that the Prime Minister has made this morning by the transfer into the Attorney-General's portfolio of a number of the integrity agencies of government, which had hitherto lain elsewhere.

It is also important, as the Prime Minister has mentioned, that the Attorney-General will continue to be the officer who issues ASIO warrants and ministerial authorisations for the operation of the other members of the Australian Intelligence Community. So, that aspect of the Attorney-General's function and engagement with the intelligence community continues.

I think that we will look back on this day as a day when we have turned the page from a set of arrangements which work well, to a set of arrangements which will work even better. They will unburden those officers, those officials who work within our agencies of the awkward arrangement of functions that has been the case hitherto and present them with a much more logical and lineal set of arrangements.

MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER PROTECTION:

Prime Minister, George, Michael – thank you very much everyone for being here today. I want to say thank you very much for the words from the Prime Minister and from the Attorney as well.

A few years ago we said that we would stop the boats, that we would defend our borders and we would restore integrity to our borders; this Government has done that.

We've not only have stopped the boats, but we have turned back boats where it has been safe to do so. We are getting people out of detention centres and we have restored that integrity which, if it is not with that integrity, it is impossible for a government to say that they can ensure national security.

Having made the promise to stop the boats and to make sure that we can keep our borders secure, we make this announcement today with this promise; the Home Affairs portfolio is dedicated to keeping Australians safe, to doing everything that we can to defeat the scourge of terrorism, but beyond that, to work with our agencies in relation to transnational crime, in relation to organised crime, in relation to many other aspects of criminal activity within our country.

So, the dedication of this portfolio, in a similar way that we promised an outcome in the Immigration and Border Protection portfolio, is to make sure that we can do everything within our power to keep Australians safe.

We do that in the construct as described by the Prime Minister today. We get the balance right and we provide support to the agencies who will retain their statutory independence, but will be coordinated in a way that we see in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

We have over a long period of time been discussing how this would work, whether it's best for our environment and the answer is yes. It is the time for this change and it is going to allow us the greatest capacity to keep

Australians safe.

My job is to make sure, along with the other ministers, that we provide every support possible to our agencies, our law enforcement and intelligence agencies to keep Australians safe. That's exactly what we dedicate ourselves to do.

MINISTER FOR JUSTICE:

Thanks Prime Minister, George and Peter. When we came to office in 2013, we didn't realise that we would be facing a national security situation like we have, particularly since 2014 with the emergence of Daesh in the Middle East and that essentially supercharged radical Islamic terrorism and it means the terrorists are behaving in very different ways than before.

The Government has needed to work with our law enforcement and intelligence communities to respond to that to make sure that they had new powers and the resources that they needed to deal with this threat as it now stands.

That's involved very significant reform, eight tranches of legislative reform. The announcement's here today are a continuation of that pattern of reform.

We've worked with our agencies. We work with them to see what they need to deal with this threat and then we act to make sure we are doing everything that we can to keep the Australian people safe.

Whilst a lot of has been driven by the national security imperative, our law enforcement agencies have much more significant responsibilities beyond that as well, particularly dealing with organised crime, drug smuggling, serious criminal activity. We have used the immigration system in particular, in a way that no government has before, to help us with other enforcement priorities.

Bringing all the law enforcement agencies under one ministerial authority, is the way forward.

We can continue to work together to use all of the resources, all the agencies at the disposal of the Commonwealth to enhance our national security arrangements, but also do everything that we can to stamp out other criminal activity as well.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister did the L'Estrange Report specifically recommend the Home Office or did it come from other recommendations?

PRIME MINISTER:

No, the L'Estrange report is focused on the Australian intelligence community and did not cover the Home Office matter. It wasn't within its remit.

JOURNALIST:

Will the Immigration Department be renamed the Home Affairs department?

PRIME MINISTER:

There will be a new Department of Home Affairs, which will include the agencies that I have mentioned and Peter will be the minister and it will include Immigration, Border Protection, AFP, ASIO and so forth.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister you said there would be additional checks and balances, with ASIO's special powers to intercept communication, raid premises, obtain [inaudible] and so on, they will need the Attorney-General's approval, will they also need the Home Affairs Minister's approval? Will this add to the red tape, I suppose, before they can act urgently? And can I ask, will that also mean the Attorney-General, has to weigh the pros and cons –

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, the Attorney-General will be under this arrangement, will be much better able to fulfil the role of First Law Officer and making the judgement to defend the rule of law, as George just described so eloquently, because he will not be the portfolio minister responsible for ASIO.

Plainly, the agencies – you know, if you like, the operational detail of this is going to be worked through very carefully by the task group that I have described, but the object is to ensure that you get exactly as George described. You have an Attorney-General who is the First Law Officer, the minister for integrity, the minister for oversight, the minister for the rule of law. On the other hand, you have the Minister for Home Affairs – in the UK you call the Home Secretary – who is responsible for all of those domestic national securities agencies.

I mean, if you were designing the allocation of these agencies from scratch, you would not have them in the different portfolios they are at the moment. I think we all recognise that.

So, what we are doing is making a rational reordering. It is a historic change but it is one that will enable those agencies whose cooperation, whose intimate cooperation and collaboration is so vital to keep us safe that will be enhanced reporting to one minister.

JOURNALIST:

Sure but Prime Minister is it going to need two approvals? And if they get yes from one and no from another, how does that work? Who takes precedence?

PRIME MINISTER:

George can explain how it works.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL:

It is not at all unfamiliar David, because that's the way it works at the moment in relation to other members of the Australian intelligence community for example, ASIS and the Australian Signals Directorate.

Where there is a request to collect intelligence on an Australian citizen, then the minister with the responsibility for those intelligence agencies makes the request of the Attorney-General. So there is a double – there are two hands, as it were, on the mechanism to ensure that a warrant or an authorisation has the oversight and scrutiny of two ministers and not one.

But to come to the point that you make, this is a very familiar and established process. It is also, by the way, an allgicist of the process that operates in the United Kingdom.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister – Britain of course doesn't have states. Isn't it the case that the biggest cooperation issue in Australia is between the states and the Commonwealth? Isn't it the case this won't actually do anything to address that?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, I mean Britain has a different constitutional structure, that is true. It has, you are right, it is not a federal system, at least not quite the same way that Australia is, but it has regional systems, but these changes are focused on improving and optimising the already outstanding operation of Australia's domestic security agencies.

JOURNALIST:

But it won't fix-

PRIME MINISTER:

Well if you are saying it won't fix all of the challenges of Federation, you are right.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister – could I ask about terrorism? A previous review on CT made the observation that a super agency would be less, not more, responsive as large agencies tend to be less agile, less adaptable and more inward looking. Are you convinced that Minister Dutton's department will be small enough to be nimble?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, I am. In fact, that very review put, the one you are referring to, which is 2015, is that right?

JOURNALIST:

Yes.

PRIME MINISTER:

It actually said the creation of a small, flexible, coordinating Department of Home Affairs reporting to a Minister for Home Affairs could avoid many of the drawbacks associated with a big bureaucracy of the kind, of the US Department of Homeland Security.

I mean, we have a very, very good template in the UK Home Office which has been around for a long time and which we understand very well because of the very close cooperation between Australia and the UK through the Five Eyes and other circumstances.

Look, these agencies work together well now. What this will enable them to do is work together even better.

It will better define the role of the Attorney-General as the minister for the integrity, for the rule of law, the First Law Officer and it will ensure that you have at the Cabinet table a senior minister who is responsible for those agencies that are directly responsible for our domestic national security measures, at the border, the AFP and ASIO and so on.

I think the combination, the reordering is an absolutely logical one. It is, and it is consistent for the practice in most other similar jurisdictions.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister did the heads of the AFP and ASIO ask questions?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, I am not going to go into discussions of that kind. This is my decision. These machinery of government decisions are taken by the Prime Minister, obviously, with a lot of consultation with colleagues and others, but they are a decision of the Prime Minister.

JOURNALIST:

On that point Mr Turnbull, many experts in the security area have said over recent weeks and months that this sort of change is neither necessary or in some cases they have said it is not desirable.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I disagree.

JOURNALIST:

And it has been interpreted as political.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it's not political.

JOURNALIST:

What is your counter argument to those who say primarily this is driven by politics?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well this is driven by operational logic Michelle.

JOURNALIST:

Why don't they see that?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well you've got to ask them.

It is driven by operational logic.

You have a domestic security challenge, which gets greater all the time.

Now, my job as Prime Minister and our jobs as ministers is to keep Australians safe.

We have the best agencies in the world. We want them to work closely together.

You saw yesterday the announcement that I made which will ensure that the Australian Defence Force will be able to work more closely and flexibly with state and territory police forces in counter-terrorist actions.

What I am doing at every stage, every day is seeking to ensure that our professional security services can do their job even better at keeping Australians safe.

That is what this is all about. It is not about politics. It is about safety – Australians' public safety.

The arrangements that I have announced are ones that are logical, they're rational, they make operational sense and they will enable Peter Dutton as the Minister for Home Affairs to be able to have the responsibility for those key agencies that are defending, preserving, protecting our national security at home.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister – will any of this require a vote in Parliament or any amendment to legislation? Will Labor get a briefing?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes – the answer is Labor will get a full briefing on both the intelligence community review and on the announcement I have made.

Labor will get a full briefing, of course.

We always seek to have bipartisanship on national security matters. So that is what we will be seeking.

The creation of a Home Office, if you like, on the UK model is one that has been considered on many occasions in the past. It is a familiar proposal because it is so logical. It stands out as a logical reform. What I am doing now is making sure that it happens.

JOURNALIST:

Does the ASIO Act need changing? Does the AFP Act need changing?

PRIME MINISTER:

There will be some legislative changes, but that will all go through with the detailed work that my department will be working on.

JOURNALIST:

Based on the rights of the people –

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes.

JOURNALIST:

It's not going to [inaudible] at the Press Club a couple of months ago, Dennis Richardson did say that if you're imposing another bureaucratic step on the issuing of ASIO warrants that would not be a good idea. Does it mean, does this new double-headed structure mean that the Attorney-General needs to be briefed on operations in continuous fashion as well as the new homeland security minister, so does ASIO now have a dual track with two ministers that it has got to keep informed and does ASIO support those arrangements?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, the oversight of the Attorney-General is vitally important and it will be enhanced by the fact that the Attorney-General will not be also the portfolio minister for ASIO.

I can assure you that this will enhance both the oversight and the operational capability of ASIO and if there are any details or issues that arise from this, obviously we will work through them in a pragmatic way. But I can assure you my focus is on both protecting the security of Australians and ensuring that the rule of law prevails and the oversight prevails.

JOURNALIST:

Is there a timeframe for the swearing in of Mr Dutton and does it allow for a wider Cabinet reshuffle?

PRIME MINISTER:

There are no other changes. This is not a reshuffle or any changes. These arrangements will be worked through over the next several months and will become operational I would think early in the New Year.

There is a lot of detailed work that has got to be gone through and so everything, all of the ministers, all of the portfolios, all of the officials will continue in their current responsibilities while the details of the transition are worked through.

It is complex and it is not something that can be just worked up in a backroom and then announced in one hit. So there is a lot of work that has been done already. A lot of preparatory work has been done but now it is important to make the announcement so that people understand what we are doing, the direction in which we are heading and then the further work will continue over the next several months.

So, thank you all very much, indeed, and I am sorry I have kept you out in the cold for so long.

Thanks.

[ENDS]

Friends of Wighton event this Saturday

From Sheena Wellington :

**Bruce Davies – The Other Great American Songbook
Wighton Heritage Centre, Central Library
Saturday 22nd July at 11am (doors open 10.30am)**



Bruce Davies, award winning singer/songwriter, whose rich voice and guitar style has won him friends on three continents, is delighted to present this celebration of songs and stories that shaped an inspired him!

Expect to hear the songs of Bob Dylan; Tom Paxton; Peter, Paul & Mary; Judy Collin; Phil Ochs; Joan Baez; John Denver; Gordon Lightfoot and many more.

Admission £5. Tea/coffee available for a small donation.

'China's Jack the Ripper' stands trial



Police detained suspected serial killer Gao Chengyong in the city of Baiyin, Gansu Province, on August 26, 2016. [Photo/thepaper.cn]

A high-profile criminal case has been heard at the Baiyin Municipal Intermediate People's Court in Gansu Province on Tuesday.

Alleged serial killer Gao Chengyong, detained in the city of Baiyin last year, is on trial for intentional killing, rape, robbery and desecrating a human corpse.

If convicted, the 53-year old Gao could face the death penalty. A verdict is expected later this week.

Gao Chengyong is accused of raping and murdering 11 people from 1988 to 2002. He was arrested in August, 2016, after a lengthy investigation in the city of Baiyin, where 9 of the 11 killings took place.

Prosecutors have alleged Gao would target young women dressed in red, then follow them home, where he would subsequently rape and kill them, normally by cutting their throats. The victims' bodies were also mutilated after their deaths, leading to the killer being dubbed 'China's Jack the Ripper' in Chinese media.