

# Joint Press Conference with The Honorable Michael R. Pence, Vice President of the United States of America

## **PRIME MINISTER:**

Vice President, it has been a great honour to welcome you to Australia. This is the earliest visit to Australia of any Vice President in a new administration, and your commitment to our Alliance, your commitment to the region, the commitment of the Trump Administration to the security and the stability, the maintenance of the rule of law in our region, in the Indo-Pacific is one that we welcome, we are delighted that you're here.

And it has been great too, as we discussed earlier, for Lucy and I to welcome you and Karen and your daughters with our family, or many of them, two out of our three grandchildren. And we observed earlier Karen was showing great ability in nursing baby Alice. Hope that all augurs well.

We've had a very productive discussion this morning. We have the strongest and the closest ties between our two nations, at every level.

Vice President Pence's visit is an opportunity for both our nations emphatically to reaffirm those ties, and our deep commitment to the Alliance.

The Alliance is as important today as it was more than 60 years ago, indeed as it has been for the 99 years that since Australian and American troops went into battle together.

It will be 100 years from the Battle of Hamel next year in 2018. And through all of that time, the people of the United States understand that they have no stronger, no more committed, no more loyal partner, ally, than Australia.

In every major conflict for 99 years we have stood side-by-side in freedom's cause.

And this year is also the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea, when American and Australian naval forces turned back the Japanese invaders.

And then went on to turn them back again and again and keep Australia and our region free. We have stood side-by-side in freedom's cause through all of those years and today brave men and women of the Australian Defence Forces and their American allies, and our partners, are fighting together with the common goal of utterly destroying ISIS in the field in the Middle East. That is our commitment. In that theatre of war and around the world, we are in absolute lock step, totally united with a common purpose and a resolute intent to destroy the threat of terrorism and to destroy it in the field and to combat it around the world, whether at home or abroad. Our freedom depends

on it and we are committed to it and again, today, as 99 years ago, as 75 years ago, in all of those conflicts we have stood side-by-side because we are united by values. A commitment to freedom, democracy and the rule of law – our two great nations, we share so much but above all, we share, and Mr Vice President, you know you come here on the eve of Anzac Day where we honour the sacrifice of thousands of Australians, over 100,000 Australians who paid the supreme sacrifice to keep us free and they have done that again and again side-by-side in mateship, an Australian term but well understood across the Pacific, in mateship, 100 years of mateship, side-by-side with our American allies.

Mr Vice President, we also stand with you and with President Trump in condemning the behavior, the criminal, abhorrent use of chemical weapons in Syria by President Assad's regime. We welcomed and endorsed and supported the quick and calibrated and proportionate response of the United States in answer to that shocking crime.

And here in our region we have spent a lot of time this morning talking about the threat from North Korea. This reckless and dangerous regime puts the peace, the stability, the prosperity of our region at risk. And we endorse and indeed have echoed and made directly the calls to China to step up, to take responsibility, because China has a leverage, an ability to influence North Korea that far exceeds any others – with their economy, the North Korean economy is entirely dependent on China.

So as I have said earlier this week, the eyes of the world are on Beijing and we seek leadership from China to join the leadership shown by the United States, Japan and Australia and other nations around the world committed to peace. We call on China to make that stronger commitment to ensure that North Korea stops this reckless and dangerous conduct.

We are very very heartened by your visit Mr Vice President. The United States commitment to our region has underpinned the prosperity of the last 40 years. We would not have seen the extraordinary lifting out of poverty of billions of people in our region had it not been for the peace and the stability, the Pax Americana if you like that has been delivered by that continuing American commitment.

And your presence, so early in the administration, and of the Secretary of State and of the Defense Secretary, and as you've confirmed on your visit, the commitment of President Trump to attend the East Asia Summit, all of this sends a strong commitment, a strong message that the United States is committed to our region, committed to the peace and stability upon which so much depends in every nation.

We've also discussed matters economic.

The United States is, by some considerable margin, Australia's largest source of foreign investment. And the United States is also the leading destination for Australian foreign investment.

In 2015, Australian investment in the United States was worth \$594 billion –

representing almost double what it was in 2005, while the United States' investment in Australia has almost tripled since then and now represents about \$860 billion.

We have a very successful Free Trade Agreement. Bilateral trade has grown from \$41 billion to \$70 billion since the Australia-United States Free Trade Agreement entered into force in that year 2005.

The US is Australia's second largest trading partner.

We'll continue this close cooperation on trade and investment, and we had a very good discussion too about President Trump's commitment to reduce company tax and tax generally in the United States. We too recognise that reducing business taxes is vital to deliver stronger economic growth. Businesses that can retain more of their profits for investment will grow, they'll hire more employees – investment, employment are driven by lower business taxes. And we applaud the commitment of President Trump to that. And we are grateful for your update on those plans.

We will continue to work more closely together in every field. The relationship is a very deep, it is a very intimate one. It is carried by millions of Australians and Americans over a century and more. We have a shared destiny. We always have. We grow closer together, built on those ties – defence, common strategic goals, shared values, stronger economic relationship and above all those connections of family that extend across the Pacific.

It is a close relationship, it is a family relationship and our family gathering this morning underpinned the nature of this very deep friendship.

Mr Vice President – I thank you very much for visiting Australia. We've had a very good meeting with the Foreign Minister this morning, following on her meetings with you in Washington. You'll meet more of our ministers today, including the Deputy Prime Minister and the Trade Minister. We have a very deep commitment to growing and strengthening this relationship – so important to our region, so important to our world, so important for the security and the prosperity, the opportunity for both our peoples.

Welcome, Mr Vice President.

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

Prime Minister Turnbull, thank you so much for those gracious words, for the hospitality you've shown me and my family upon our arrival in Australia today.

The warm welcome that you and the Australian people have given us is something that we will cherish for the rest of our lives.

I am honoured to be in Australia today, to offer greetings from the President of the United States, President Donald Trump.

As I spoke to the President this morning. Mr Prime Minister, he wanted me to

offer his best wishes to you and his congratulations on your strong leadership for the Commonwealth.

Mr Prime Minister, with the strong encouragement of your administration, only two days ago, as you mentioned, it was my privilege to announce that President Trump will attend the APEC, the Leaders' Summit, the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Summit in Vietnam and the Philippines this November.

I trust that my visit here today on my very first trip to the Asia Pacific as Vice President of the United States, and the President's plans to travel to this region this fall are a strong sign of our enduring commitment to the historic Alliance between the people of the United States of America and the people of Australia.

As I told Prime Minister Turnbull today, Australia is and always will be one of America's closest allies and truest friends. We are partners in security, we are partners in prosperity and together we are bound by our historic Alliance.

Under President Trump I can assure you that the United States is committed to strengthening our bond for the benefit of all our people and for the benefit of the world.

The relationship between our nations stretches back for generations, as the Prime Minister just said. From the Coral Sea to Kandahar, our friendship has been forged in the fires of sacrifice.

It is very humbling for me to say that only three days from now on April 25th, Australia will commemorate Anzac Day to honour those brave Australians and New Zealanders who gave their lives in defence of freedom, often times shoulder-to-shoulder with Americans.

The sons and daughters of both of our lands have fought together in every major conflict for the past 100 years. From World Wars One and Two to Korea to Vietnam and most recently in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, our grandparents, our parents and now our children have served together, sacrificed together and have defended our freedom and all that we hold dear.

That represents the foundation of an unshakeable bond between America and Australia.

Even now our citizens serve together in Afghanistan in the fight against ISIS and around the world we are deepening our defence collaboration. As the Prime Minister Turnbull and I discussed today we will continue to deepen our defence and security collaboration in the days ahead.

The historic United States-Australia Alliance is more vital than ever to regional security and prosperity.

In recent years we've dramatically stepped up our intelligence sharing, increased our emphasis on shared cyber capabilities, we've conducted and will continue to conduct joint military exercises to ensure our readiness, including the Talisman Saber later this year.

As the Prime Minister and I discussed, together our nations will continue to uphold a rules based system that is the foundation of peace and prosperity in the Asia Pacific.

In the South China Sea, and throughout the region, we will defend the fundamental freedoms of navigation and over flight and ensure the unimpeded flow of lawful commerce and promote peaceful diplomatic dialogue to address issues of regional and global concern.

And as the Prime Minister and I just reaffirmed, under President Trump's leadership, and yours, the United States and Australia will continue to stand firm and stand strong to confront the most urgent and dangerous threat to peace and security in the Asia Pacific – the regime in North Korea.

While all options are on the table, let me assure you the United States will continue to work closely with Australia, our other allies in the region, and with China to bring economic and the diplomatic pressure to bear on the regime in Pyongyang until they abandon their nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

Mr Prime Minister, know that President Trump and I are truly grateful, truly grateful to you for calling on China even this week to play an even more active and constructive role in addressing the North Korean threat.

Now the President and I have, in his words, great confidence that China will properly deal with North Korea, and I know you share that hope.

But as President Trump made clear just a few days ago, if China is unable to deal with North Korea, the United States and our allies will.

The United States and Australia face this threat and every other one together because we know that our security is the foundation of our prosperity.

And today Prime Minister Turnbull and I discussed ways for us to promote renewed prosperity for our people. We are already building on a sturdy foundation, the US-Australia Free Trade Agreement is a case study in success. And while we can still make additional progress, it is a model for what a mutually beneficial trade agreement can be.

Today the United States is far and away Australia's largest economic partner – not just in the region but all across the world. Our economic relationship is worth a stunning \$1.5 trillion. And our two-way investment has grown by 50 per cent in just the last three years alone. And we still have room to grow. Today the Prime Minister and I discussed the need to break down barriers and encourage the kind of policies that will encourage even more trade and investment, more innovation and more opportunities for both our peoples.

We are confident that working together will build on our strong foundation in a way that will be beneficial to the people of America and the people the Australia.

Beyond our commercial partnership, the President and I are confident that this historic Alliance between the United States and Australia will grow even

stronger in the years ahead.

Nowhere is our enduring commitment to each other, and to our shared future more evident than in the topic that the Prime Minister just addressed so eloquently and so passionately – the global fight against terror.

The people of the United States will never forget that Australia invoked our ANZUS security treaty for the first and only time following the September 11 terrorist attacks which claimed the lives of nearly 3,000 innocent people including 11 Australians.

The support that Australia showed America in our darkest hour will never be forgotten.

Australia, like the United States has not been spared. The four lone wolf terror attacks over the past 31 months were all inspired by this global cancer.

People of Australia can rest assured, under President Trump's leadership, and under your capable leadership in Australia, we will not rest, we will not relent until together we drive this evil from the face of the earth.

As I close, let me simply say it is an honour to be here on behalf of President Donald Trump. To say simply from our hearts, the historic Alliance between the United States and Australia is inviolate, it is immutable, and it is a beacon that shines throughout the Asia Pacific and inspires the wider world.

Our shared history, our shared values bind us together and as we look toward what lies ahead, it is always heartening to stand beside a friend and I do so today.

Prime Minister Turnbull, know that under President Donald Trump the historic Alliance between the United States and Australia will grow stronger, our people will grow closer, enhancing our security and our prosperity for generations to come.

And so we go forward with faith, with faith in our historic Alliance, with faith in our shared values, and faith that the best days for America and for Australia are yet to come.

Thank you Mr Prime Minister, it is an honour to be with you today.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well, thank you Mr Vice President for those eloquent words – heartfelt, passionate, committed. Thank you so much.

Now, we have some questions and I believe the first is from Marija Jovanovic.

**MARIJA JOVANOVIC:**

Very well said Prime Minister.

(Laughter)

Marija Jovanovic from SBS News. This question is actually for both of you, if I may? Look, does Australia have an increased role to play in helping moderate the North Korea threat? If so, what is that role and could it indeed be a military one down the track?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well thank you. We work very closely with our ally and our friends in the region. I mean, the global community is committed to the end of this reckless and dangerous conduct and the challenge now is obviously for China because they have, as I have said, and this is not a political point, this is a statement of fact, China has the greatest leverage over North Korea. There is no question about that.

I have made this point to Chinese leaders over a long period of time, in fact before I was Prime Minister. It is self-evident that China has the opportunity and we say the responsibility to bring pressure to bear on North Korea to stop this reckless and dangerous trajectory upon which they are embarked.

Now, we will work closely with the United States as we have, as we always do. At this stage the support that we are providing at the level of diplomacy, and public diplomacy, both private and public diplomacy, is of critical importance and we are quietly confident I would say that China will step up to this challenge and responsibility.

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

For more than a generation there's been a consensus in the world community for a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. In the 1990s, it was the subject of negotiations, and an agreed framework was arrived at and six party talks would follow some time later. The last administration embraced a policy of strategic patience – all along the way, the regime in North Korea answered the treaties of the world community with broken promises and with continued pursuit, headlong pursuit of their nuclear and ballistic missile ambitions.

As President Trump has made clear, and I have made clear as I travel on his behalf throughout this region, the era of strategic patience is over.

Under the President's leadership and working closely with our allies, with Prime Minister Turnbull, and from my meetings with Prime Minister Abe, and with Acting-President Hwang in South Korea and others, the United States is determined to bring economic and diplomatic pressure to bear working with all of our allies and China to ensure that we achieve a nuclear-free Korean peninsula.

All options are on the table and the United States is prepared to do what's necessary in conjunction with our allies, to see to the security of this region and of our own people. But we are hopeful, in fact, in President Trump's words we have great confidence that China with the encouragement of the United States, of our allies, and we are grateful to say with the strong

encouragement of the leadership here in Australia that China will take advantage of the unique position and relationship that it has with North Korea, to bring an end to their nuclear programme and to their ballistic missile programmes.

We call on them to do that.

The President observed recently that China, in a very real sense, is the economic lifeline for North Korea. They've already taken steps which we greatly welcome, intervening in coal shipments and intervening in commercial travel but we believe China can do more and on behalf of the President I am just very grateful that even this week Australia has taken steps to engage with China directly and encourage them to take even more steps to bring that economic and diplomatic pressure to bear.

But make no mistake about it, the United States of America is committed to seeing this way forward, and achieve what has eluded the world community for more a generation and that is to achieve the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Thank you.

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

Justin Sink from Bloomberg.

**JUSTIN SINK:**

Thank you. Prime Minister, I wanted to ask you about trade and if there are specific steps the US has asked you to take or that you will be taking to improve bilateral trade after President Trump pulled out of TPP? I'm also wondering what you see is the best way to improve regional trade after the collapse of that agreement?

And Mr Vice President, I wanted to follow on North Korea but ask specifically about some of the recent statements from the Administration. Earlier this week there was some controversy regarding the timing of the armada that President Trump said that he'd send to the region. It has led to mockery in North Korean and Chinese press, and criticism from the South Korean presidential candidate who said that it potentially undermined your Administration's credibility. Does the lack of rhetorical clarity make your job with allies and partners like China harder? And to that point can I ask you to explain the President's recent statement that China is just now taking some unusual moves towards North Korea?

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Well thank you. In terms of trade we have obviously continuing discussions but at this stage the Australia US Free Trade Agreement is working very, very well.



In terms of trade generally, Australia has been a great beneficiary of free trade and open markets.

(Laughs)

We'll just let that helicopter pass.

We have been a great beneficiary of free trade and open markets. We strongly supported the TPP as being in our national interest.

President Trump has discontinued America's engagement in it. That is his right, absolutely.

Each nation is committed to protecting its economic interests first and foremost, that's the duty each leader has to their own people.

So the United States Government must make its own judgements on that, we look forward to more trade.

President Trump is an international businessman. So he is not, he is hardly, he can hardly be described as somebody who is unused to the benefits of international trade and international commerce. He understands it very well.

But he obviously will decide as the Vice President and I were discussing today, he will decide the, how agreements, new trade deals, whether and to what extent they work in America's interest.

That is the sovereign right and in fact the solemn obligation of every nation and every leader.

But at this stage in terms of the bilateral relationship it is proceeding very, very well. It is proceeding apace actually. And the economic engagement and the prosperity that flows from that has been demonstrated over the years since it came into force in 2005.

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

Well first on trade, with great respect to the Prime Minister's view and Australia's view of TPP. The President has made it clear and America has taken steps. The Trans Pacific Partnership is a thing of the past for the United States.

As we move forward with the President's philosophy of an America First foreign policy and trade policy. We will continue to pursue opportunities for expanded commerce, but do so on a bilateral basis.

I trust that my travels alone throughout the Asia Pacific this week give evidence of the fact that this Administration is committed to building both our security and economic relationships with countries all across this region.

We do believe that the bilateral agreement, trade agreement between the United States and Australia is a win-win for our countries. And it is, as I

said earlier we think it's a model agreement for how to encourage investment and encourage trade between nations.

I think in the days ahead, we initiated an economic dialogue that I and the Deputy Prime Minister of Japan will be heading up to begin to explore the possibility of expanded economic relations with Japan.

We had discussions about our Free Trade Agreement while I was in South Korea, but it think you'll continue to see President Trump engaging with nations across this region, but again on a bilateral basis.

With regard to the USS Carl Vinson carrier group. Our expectation is that they will be in the Sea of Japan in position in a matter of days, before the end of this month. That decision was set into motion some time ago.

The one thing that nations, most especially the regime in North Korea should make no mistake about, is that the United States has the resources, the personnel and the presence in this region of the world to see to our interests and to see to the security of those interests and our allies.

I think what the President was referring to with regard to China is encouraging news. In his summit at the Southern White House with President Xi. President Trump engaged President Xi in a candid and respectful discussion about China's engagement with North Korea.

And now the steps we're seeing China take, in many ways unprecedented steps, bringing economic pressure to bear on North Korea, are very welcome. We do believe China can do more.

And as I mentioned, we are very grateful for the clear message that Prime Minister Turnbull's Government and Australia are sending to the Chinese to do just that.

But this is a time when I think you'll continue to see the United States and our allies in the region work together to encourage China to take those steps necessary to bring about a peaceable solution, to achieve a nuclear free Korean peninsula.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Now, Colin Packham

**COLIN PACKHAM:**

Thank you, my question relates to the refugee deal signed last year.

Mr Vice President, in February President Trump said of the refugee deal: "I will study this dumb deal", seemingly contradicting assurances given to Mr Turnbull. In recent weeks we've seen officials from the department of Homeland Security in both detention centres.

Can we infer that President Trump has given the final approval for that deal proceeding? And if so, how many refugees will be resettled in the United

States?

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

Let me make it clear, the United States intends to honour the agreement, subject to the results of the vetting processes that now apply to all refugees considered for admission to the United States of America.

President Trump has made it clear that we will honour the agreement. It doesn't mean that we admire the agreement.

Frankly, looking back on the last administration the President has never been shy about expressing frustration with other international agreements, most notably the so-called nuclear agreement with Iran.

But rest assured, as I confirmed today with the Prime Minister, the United States of America will honour the agreement and actually we have initiated the process of fulfilling that agreement, subject to the results of the vetting processes that now apply to all refugees in the United States.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Thank you, and Mr Vice President, as I said to the President, we thank you for honouring the commitment made by the President's predecessor.

The commitment to honouring that deal is, that agreement, is very important. And it's one that speaks – whatever the reservations of the President are, and we know what they are about the deal – nonetheless it speaks volumes for the commitment, the integrity of President Trump and your Administration sir, to honour that commitment, as you have committed to and indeed as you are doing, so we thank you for that commitment.

That is a, it's been a, that's been a very important commitment and we thank you for restating that today.

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

Well and I would just add, if I may Mr Prime Minister, as this topic came up early in the Administration, Prime Minister Turnbull made a case for the agreement with the President.

And the decision to go forward, I think can rightly be seen as a reflection of the enormous importance of the historic alliance between the United States and Australia.

And whatever reservations the President may have about the details of agreements reached by the prior administration. We'll honour this agreement, out of respect for that enormously important alliance.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Thank you sir.

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

I get to call on, Andrew Beatty.

**ANDREW BEATTY:**

Yep, correct with AFP.

(Laughter)

Mr Vice President, the Administration is ramping up pressure on North Korea, at the same time you seem to have ruled out talks. I'm wondering what you think the end game is here?

What makes you believe that the regime will give up the weapons systems and weapons that is has that ensure that is perhaps the best guarantee of its own survival?

And for the Prime Minister, did you get any clarity on the US position with regards to South China Sea? Do you think that there's a need for more freedom of navigation operations in the region? Would you consider more joint operations in the region?

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

This is just a very serious time and the President sent me to this region to engage with our allies and to reaffirm the alliances that we enjoy but also to make it very, very clear that the era of strategic partnership, or strategic patience is over.

That the United States of America is determined to work with our allies, and especially with China to achieve the objective of a nuclear free Korean peninsula.

We believe that that can occur peaceably, largely owing to the new engagement of China.

In this regard I think the world is seeing President Trump's leadership in high relief. He is a very real sense like the Prime Minister of Australia, he is a bottom line person that likes to get to the point.

And in his meeting with President Xi, he had a very candid conversation about a broad range of issues.

But on the issue of North Korea, the President made it very clear to President Xi that we were looking to China to step up and use that unique relationship that it has with North Korea to achieve an end to the nuclear ambitions and the ballistic missile ambitions of that regime.

And as I said we're encouraged by the steps that China has taken thus far.

That being said we also wanted to make it clear that all options are on the table. And that the United States is prepared to work with our allies to

ensure the security of our allies in the region and to ensure the security of the people of the United States of America.

Nuclear weapons in the hands of the regime in Pyongyang, with a ballistic missile program and with the potential for intercontinental ballistic missiles represents a threat to the stability and security of this region and potentially a threat to the continental United States.

And continuing on the path that the world has been on with North Korea over the last 25 years is just unacceptable.

But, again we continue to be hopeful and continue to have great confidence that we can finally after a generation achieve a peaceful solution.

And I want to reiterate again the gratitude of the United States of America for the strong support that our ally here in Australia has provided to this effort.

Even this week meeting with high ranking officials from China urging them to do more, to bring economic and diplomatic pressure to bear on China is welcome.

We truly believe that as our allies in the region and China bring that pressure to bear, that there is a chance that we can achieve a historic objective of a nuclear free Korean peninsula by peaceable means.

**PRIME MINISTER:**

Thank you Mr Vice President and we as we have described we share that commitment.

And we are absolutely united in our determination to achieve a nuclear free Korean peninsula.

That has been the goal as the Vice President described, of the global community for many years. The time has come now to realise it.

In turn you asked about the South China Sea, and I just repeat what we have said consistently for many years and that is this: that Australia has no territorial claims in the South China Sea.

We are committed to freedom of navigation and freedom of overflight. Any territorial dispute should be resolved peacefully and in accordance with international law. We call on all parties to refrain from actions that will exacerbate tensions and in particular, we call on all parties to refrain from militarising any features in the South China Sea, any disputed features, in particular in the South China Sea.

The critical thing to understand in our region, as we said at the outset, as both the Vice President and I observed, is the prosperity of everyone in this region, in every nation has been underpinned by decades of peace and stability, supported by the strong commitment by the United States to this region. The maintenance of peace and stability in this region has had as its

sheet anchor the strong commitment of the United States.

And that is why we so welcome the commitment of President Trump's new Administration and as shown by the visit here today and through the region, over the last week of the Vice President.

This is a historic visit and it underlines the importance of the American commitment to our region. The sheet anchor, the foundation, the bedrock of the peace and the stability upon which the security and the prosperity of billions depend.

Thank you all very much.

**[ENDS]**

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## **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)