

President of Afghanistan's visit to Australia

I am pleased to welcome His Excellency Dr Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Australia from 2-5 April.

This visit, the first to Australia by an Afghan President, reflects the strong bond between our two nations.

Afghanistan and Australia share a solid connection which has been forged over more than a century of shared history and contact between our two peoples.

From the early Afghan cameleers in the 1860s, through to the Australian military effort to free Afghanistan of terrorism, the two nations have long maintained a healthy partnership, built on a foundation of mutual respect.

During this visit, discussions will focus on our ongoing security and development cooperation to help Afghanistan in its efforts to become more prosperous, secure and self-reliant.

In particular, we will seek to enhance partnership between our nations in a number of fields including women's and girls' empowerment, public sector capacity building and agricultural productivity.

I look forward to meeting with President Ghani during this historic visit.

Tax cuts to boost jobs and wages

The government will deliver a tax cut for around 3.2 million small and medium Australian businesses, employing over 6.5 million workers.

Company tax is a tax on workers, a tax on jobs and a tax on wages.

Small and medium Australian businesses with turnovers of less than \$50 million a year will benefit.

This reform will deliver jobs and increase wages. It is an excellent outcome for Australian workers and their families.

Companies with a turnover of less than \$10 million will receive a reduction in their tax rate (to 27.5%) this financial year.

All types of businesses benefit from these changes, including 2.3 million unincorporated businesses.

This reform fully delivers in this term on a key election commitment. But the job is not over – we remain committed to delivering our full plan for economic growth and employment.

Earlier this week we passed the Diverted Profits Tax. By making sure multinational companies pay their fair share of tax, we can ensure the tax paid by small and medium enterprises is as low as possible.

Businesses and the people they employ are not the only beneficiaries of the package that passed the Senate this evening.

The Government will pursue additional measures to put downward pressure on energy prices, building on our existing policies.

Recognising that our energy reforms will take time to fully implement, we will provide a one-off payment of \$75 for single recipients and \$125 for couple recipients of the Aged Pension, the Disability Pension and the Parenting Payment.

The additional measures to tackle power prices include increasing gas supply, including a potential NT-SA pipeline, accelerating solar development, improving price transparency and a Productivity Commission inquiry to complement the ACCC review.

We thank the crossbench for its support. Unfortunately, once again, Labor let down businesses and the people they employ, voting against measures that will increase jobs and generate growth.

It is further evidence of the obvious: Bill Shorten has no plan for jobs and no plan to grow the economy.

[WATCH: Picardo – “It is only fair, proper and right that any trade deal should apply to Gibraltar.”](#)

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[Inflammatory comments like those by Michael Howard will not help Britain get what it needs from Brexit negotiations – Thornberry](#)

Emily Thornberry MP, Labour’s Shadow Foreign Secretary, remarking on former Tory Leader Michael Howard’s comments, said:

“Inflammatory comments like those by Michael Howard will not help Britain get what it needs from these difficult Brexit negotiations. Sadly it’s typical of the botched Tory approach which threatens a bad deal for Britain.

“Labour is clear that the sovereignty of Gibraltar must be protected and that the interests of British citizens in Gibraltar are safeguarded.”

Ends