

Remarks at 'R U OK? Day' Breakfast

PRIME MINISTER:

Well good morning. It's great to be here with Andrew Wallace who is standing in for Julian Leeser, who together with Mike Kelly are Co-Chairs of the Friendship Group. I acknowledge Greg Hunt, the Minister for Health and Sport, Bill Shorten, Julie Collins the Shadow Minister for Ageing and Mental Health, Murray Bleach, the Chairman Suicide Prevention Australia, Mike Connaghan – Chairman of RUOK? and Mike and I were reflecting on how many decades it is since we first met and worked together in advertising but there it is. You're looking very youthful. That's what happens if you don't go into politics.

And of course Professor Batterham is our guest speaker this morning – and so many other leaders in health and in suicide prevention, and of course all my Parliamentary colleagues here as well.

Now we're all united here behind Suicide Prevention Day and R U OK? Day. Suicide Prevention Day was on Sunday and R U OK? Day is later this week.

Each year, around one in every five Australians experience mental illness and in 2015, more than 3,000 took their own life.

Now, suicide is about people, it's about families, not numbers. But the statistics confront us all and call on us to do much better.

I am firmly of the view that our reluctance to talk about mental health issues – whether you call it a stigma or a taboo – has been a very real barrier to addressing this issue. You can't deal with a problem that you do not acknowledge.

So we have started to talk about suicide and mental health and in an open and honest way, as we have not done in the past.

Now my own electorate of Wentworth includes one of the most beautiful yet tragic places in Australia, The Gap. It is a place where many, many Australians take their lives. A part of The Gap story until he died in 2012 was an extraordinary man called Don Ritchie who was an old sailor and also very tall, I might add.

For the best part of half a century, he lived near The Gap and when he would go for walks and he saw somebody there – anxious, perhaps standing on the wrong side of the fence – he would talk to them.

He would say: "Are you OK? How are you going? Do you want to have a chat? Do you want to come in and have a cup of tea?" He would gently lure them back from the brink by doing no more than showing that he cared for them.

That is why 'R U OK? Day?' is so important. Because what it is all about, is showing that we do care. Four letters 'R U O K' import so much. They send a message of love, they send a message of care. Critically important and what

could be more Australian than looking out for your mates? Or looking out for people you don't even know? Looking out for somebody who seems anxious, worried, or someone at work that isn't quite themselves. It is a caring and a loving question. And it raises very prominently this issue of awareness, to the forefront.

At Gap Park for example, as the local Member, I've pushed for more funding and support for suicide prevention. Since 2010 there has been implemented a 'Gap Master Plan' and I want to acknowledge the support that Julia Gillard provided as Prime Minister to support the local government, the Woollahra Council, towards that funding.

It was a series of measures of signs, telephones, obviously of cameras so that the police can keep an eye on what's going on there and also a very innovative design in defences that are hard to get over, but easier to get back over, if you know what I mean.

So all of this makes a difference and since 2010 the local police tell me there has been a significant increase in the number of successful interventions at The Gap. But still, far, far too many people die there and in many other places around Australia.

Now, we're working better to understand the factors that have contributed to rising suicide rates and to support communities to respond to their own unique circumstances.

We're committed to reducing suicide rates through regional trials, research and building the evidence base with flexible models that address regional needs and work in our local communities.

This includes the implementation of 12 regional suicide prevention trial sites in Townsville, the Kimberley and Darwin and other places. Digital innovation trials and ten lead sites to trial different care models. All looking to see what actually works.

We're also investing a great deal more in mental health and making services more effective, accessible and tailored to local needs.

Since 2016, we've invested an additional \$367.5 million in mental health and suicide prevention support.

That includes a \$194.5 million election package towards building a modern 21st century mental health system and our \$173 million in new funding in the 2017-18 Budget and \$58.6 million to expand mental health and suicide prevention services for current and ex-serving ADF members and their families.

So we're putting existing resources to work. But you know, the most important resource is you, is all of us. You know my very good friend and a good friend of all of yours, I know, Ian Hickie has got a great concept. He talks about the 'mental wealth of nations', sort of elaborating from Adam Smith.

The truth is that mental health is enormously costly, in every respect.

It's costly for individuals who suffer, its costly to their families but it's especially costly when people take their own lives.

So we all have a vested interest in each others' mental health. The most important thing we can do is to look out for each other.

Yes, governments and parliaments and health professionals spend money and trial new approaches and use digital technologies more effectively and we're doing all these things and we'll no doubt do much more in the future.

But you know, just four letters 'R U OK?' can make a difference. Because they represent another four letters, 'L O V E' – love. That's what it's about; showing that love and care for the people with whom you are with, whether they are your families, your friends or your workmates. Reach out to them, ask are you okay, show you care. You could not just change a life, you could save a life.

Thank you very much.

[ENDS]

Radio interview with Eddie McGuire, Luke Darcy and Mick Molloy, Triple M Hot Breakfast Melbourne

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

The Prime Minister of Australia, joining us on Triple M. Plenty of things to talk about; the energy companies, marriage equality, the Korean Peninsula, even the faux-outrage by some people yesterday in a ridiculous situation with the Prime Minister, in a photo at the football with his granddaughter.

But before we get to that, the Prime Minister of Australia has even more serious topics to discuss and that is the hijacking of the pinball machine from Triple M's Hot Breakfast studios up to the Hit Network-

LUKE DARCY:

-it goes straight to the core values of this country I would have thought.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

I can't believe I'm actually saying this, but good morning Malcolm.

PRIME MINISTER:

Good morning Eddie.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

You've got thoughts on this, have you?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well look it's a dreadful decision by management. I'll give them a call myself after this and encourage them to return your pinball machine.

MICK MOLLOY:

Thank you Prime Minister. It means a lot coming from you.

PRIME MINISTER:

I'll request Pinball Wizard too.

[Laughter]

MICK MOLLOY:

We know you normally take the position of big business but we appreciate on this instance you're going in for the rank and file workers, the worker ants, so well done.

PRIME MINISTER:

That's it, don't worry look I'll do my best to get it back for you.

LUKE DARCY:

Prime Minister we loved seeing you at the footy, beautiful shot. You've got a little granddaughter, I think, in your arms.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah little baby Alice.

LUKE DARCY:

Little baby Alice and a glass of beer, just a very nice moment at the football.

MICK MOLLOY:

Nothing more natural in the world.

LUKE DARCY:

Can't believe people are getting outraged by that.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I couldn't either, I don't think many were actually but I think it's in the sort of craziness of social media that you see things like that.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Does that make it hard to actually run the country at times Malcolm, when you do – as you said – the craziness of social media – and then the follow up from traditional media just always looking for clickbait and hysteria?

PRIME MINISTER:

I think you've just got to be yourself Eddie. As long as you're comfortable in your own skin and you're just being yourself, being natural, I think that's all you can do, anything else and you end up being as crazy as some of the trolls on Twitter, if you do anything else.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Well we saw you in your natural habitat, it was – the photo in the paper with your granddaughter Alice is a beauty – but also yesterday, you stepped up and said you were going to be voting 'yes' in the marriage equality referendum or plebiscite.

The ballots arrive tomorrow I understand Prime Minister?

PRIME MINISTER:

They'll be posted tomorrow so people will start getting them. They'll go out, as I understand it, they send out about 600,000 or a bit more every day. So people won't get them all at the same time.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Okay.

PRIME MINISTER:

But I encourage everyone to fill in the survey and return it. I'll be voting 'yes' as will Lucy. So I encourage others to vote 'yes' and I've been a strong supporter of legalising same sex marriage for many, many years now so.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Can you take us through your rationale? Particularly for those who are a bit on the fence and also a bit worried about traditional marriage type?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well let me deal with that first point – second point about traditional marriage.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Yep.

PRIME MINISTER:

Look Eddie, the enemy, the things that threaten marriages are lack of commitment. I mean marriage is all about commitment, so what threatens marriage? It's neglect, it's abandonment, it's adultery, it's basically losing that commitment -it's a lack of commitment.

So if two gay people down the road, who are living together decide to get married, how does that threaten my nearly 38-year-old marriage to Lucy? Of course it doesn't.

If lack of commitment is the problem, then people showing commitment should be a positive, it actually would encourage other people to do the same.

I mean I know I sound like a very conservative person when I say this, but it's very heartfelt. I sincerely believe we would be a stronger nation if more people were married and fewer were divorced.

Throughout all my life, I've always encouraged, you know the 'singles' to get married, the 'marrieds' to stay married, you know, people who are straying to mend their ways, and those who have been wronged to forgive. I passionately believe in marriage and I think it is the bedrock of society.

So if two gay people who have got a commitment to each other and are living together and are supporting each other through life's ups and downs and tribulations and successes and everything else, why shouldn't we recognise that – the state, the government – recognise that as a marriage?

So it is a question of fairness, but in terms of traditional marriage, if you want to support traditional marriage you should be focused on supporting commitment.

LUKE DARCY:

Prime Minister thanks for that and thanks for sorting out our pinball machine, that means a lot to us. Can you now sort out the energy bill so we can afford to turn it on? Because that's a big issue at the moment, have you got a solution?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it sure is a big issue and we've got a number of solutions. We're working through it as you know. We've got the energy companies to make sure that people are on the right deal. Many people are saving hundreds of dollars a year now because of our initiatives.

We're also taking action to ensure that gas is affordable. Gas prices are coming down, I've taken some pretty heavy-handed action to limit gas exports. So again, that's making up for a mistake in ages past.

And just as you've seen recently, we don't want to have a repeat of the Hazelwood situation, where a big power station has shut down and then there's nothing to put in its place and you get a big increase in prices. So I got

the energy market operator to analyse what the impact on the market is going to be over the next immediate term, medium term, longer term and the closure of another big power station in New South Wales called Liddell in 2022 will result – so they say – in a big gap in baseload power in that year. So we're looking at all the options to plug that gap and the obvious one, the most obvious one, is to keep it running for a few more years and that's what we're talking to the owners about today.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

It would make sense wouldn't it, to just keep things going, but with a plan to the future, with a definite plan to the future to clean things up as we go.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yep.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

But not at the expense of having the energy that's required at this particular moment in time.

PRIME MINISTER:

Eddie you've nailed it, that's exactly what it's all about. I am very committed to ensuring that we meet our international obligations and lower our emissions, we all like clean energy. But you've got to make sure the transition is done responsibly. You look at the longer term plans going out to six years or so into the future, you look at Snowy Hydro 2.0, that's what we're going to build. That's the biggest renewable project built in Australia since Snowy Hydro 1.

But you can't snap your fingers and have, you know, new power generation in place in a few weeks. So this is a complex issue which has been very poorly managed. Now I'm bringing engineering and economics and a very hard-headed, businesslike approach to it, and that's why we will get the outcomes we need, which is affordable and reliable power.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

More strength to your arm on that one Prime Minister, because it seems as you said, finally we have a bit of a plan going forward on this, to get the green energy up but not without having to turn the lights off in the meantime. Good luck with all that.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thanks Eddie.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Enjoy the footy.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah thanks Mick.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

We'll see you in the next couple of weeks, Mick's ready to go, the Tiger Army are waiting for you to come down.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, what's the mood like in Richmond Mick?

MICK MOLLOY:

It's not too bad.

PRIME MINISTER:

You must be excited.

MICK MOLLOY:

Everyone has risen to my level of excitement.

[Laughter]

We're on tenterhooks at the moment, I might see you on the big day sir.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, we'll see.

MICK MOLLOY:

We'll sit together, we'll have a beer.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, we'll have a beer.

MICK MOLLOY:

Done.

PRIME MINISTER:

Good on you, take care.

EDDIE MCGUIRE:

Thanks Malcolm, Malcolm Turnbull.

[ENDS]

Remarks at the bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister of Samoa

PRIME MINISTER: Thank you for being such a magnificent host for the Pacific Islands Forum.

It's been a very successful meeting, you've been such a generous host and I have to say, the Police Band are absolutely incredible.

[Laughter]

They can dance, they can act, they did everything. It was brilliant.

So it's been a great meeting and you've done us proud so thank you very much.

PRIME MINISTER OF SAMOA: Well I am most grateful for your contribution, your ongoing contribution. It's really helped to smooth out rough corners.

[Laughter]

It's a group of 18 members and as we expand, it becomes difficult to control in a sense, so many interests. Of course we are aware the cost continues to build up, but with the stature of the economies of some of our members, it's difficult to do everything that we want.

But I think the security is going to be faced with a very big task over the next 12 months in respect of the necessary preparation for the renegotiation of the host country agreement. But overall I think the exchanges have been very lively and fruitful.

PRIME MINISTER: Yeah, thank you for your leadership, the very strong statement that we're making about North Korea shows a real unity of purpose and solidarity to the global community in doing everything that we can to bring that reckless and dangerous regime to its senses.

Press Conference with the Minister for International Development and the Pacific, Senator the Hon. Concetta

Fierravanti-Wells

PRIME MINISTER:

Good afternoon, I'm here with Connie Fierravanti-Wells, the Minister for International Development and the Pacific. As you know we've just spent the morning at the Pacific Islands Forum here talking with the leaders of the island nations that are our neighbours. This is a vitally important part of the world for Australia. It's a vast part of the world of course. It has special challenges in many respects; security challenges, health challenges, development challenges.

We are stepping up our engagement with the Pacific, doing more than ever before, building on some of the great achievements, the leaders are so appreciative of the leadership Australia showed in the RAMSI mission in the Solomon Islands. Underlining the importance of working together closely for security at every level and you've seen the new security Memorandums of Understanding we've signed this morning and of course while Prime Minister Sogavare from the Solomon Islands was in Australia recently, we signed a new bilateral security agreement.

But equally important of course, is economic engagement. We've entered into a new Pacific labour arrangement with a number of the Pacific Islands Forum countries. It's a very specific scheme, it's capped at 2,000 a year, it's focused on regional and rural Australia. It has to be labour market tested, so it's designed to enable workers from the Pacific Islands to come and work in regional Australia, where employers can't find Australian labour to do the work. But you can imagine the benefit it has, and the President of Kiribati spoke about that just a moment ago, because of the training it provides, the experience it provides and of course the income that it provides through the remittances back to their island homes. So building on previous programs, it's a very important part of our engagement.

Also of course there's the matter of pharmaceuticals. Now small countries like this import all of their pharmaceuticals. Very often, they can't be sure about the quality of the pharmaceuticals they're importing. So what we're making available, is the services of the Therapeutic Goods Administration in Australia to test pharmaceuticals which might be, for example, a proposed import of antibiotics. Is it the real deal? Is it what it's represented to be? The TGA back in Australia can give, you know, the highest possible quality and thoroughly objective assessment. So again that's another element of the cooperation we have underway.

But it goes much broader even than the matters covered in the MOU's. Of course, we are in the process of building 19 new Pacific Patrol Boats, which are going to be vitally important of course for island nations to protect their own waters and to protect their waters from illegal fishing.

In addition to that, we're providing aerial surveillance services so that they'll be able to identify where the illegal fishers are and then with the

patrol boats, be able to go interdict them and arrest them, or send them on their way.

So in every respect, we're supporting the capacity and the development of our Pacific Island neighbours. It's manifestly in our national interest as it is in theirs and it's good to be there around the table today with New Zealand and with all of the other Pacific Island nations.

Connie do you want to add to some of those points?

MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PACIFIC:

I do, thank you Prime Minister and it's really good to have you here again this year at the Pacific Islands Forum.

After the defence of Australia the stability, security and prosperity of our region is our highest priority. So therefore as the largest donor, as the largest security partner in the Pacific, the work that we are doing in terms of stepping up, will address right across the spectrum, the issues that are of importance to our Pacific neighbours.

When we talk about security as the Prime Minister indicated, we've had some great successes where as a region we have worked together. But it's those 'small s' security issues; it's the fishing, it's the transnational crime, it's the drug trafficking, it's those things that are now impinging on the daily life of the Pacific where it's really important and where our patrol boats and where our surveillance and where all our other activities are harnessed.

Can I particularly say labour mobility is something that we have worked very hard, our Pacific neighbours are very keen to expand labour mobility. But this is not so much – yes of course working in Australia – but it's the importance of the capacity building that it gives. Because once people have come to Australia, they've worked there for up to three years, their ability to then bring those skills back to their country and in turn, contribute to the economic and political stability of their country is very important.

That's really what we're giving; we're giving the Pacific the opportunity for increased economic growth, increased stability which is good for the prosperity of the whole Pacific.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thanks Connie.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister does Australia need to be much more ambitious with its emission cuts, given the palpable sense of concern among your Pacific neighbours about the threat of climate change?

PRIME MINISTER:

We had some very good discussions about climate and about renewable technologies. They were very, very interested to hear about the big plans we have for pumped hydro and for storage that supports renewables and I think we will be doing quite a bit of collaborative work together.

One of the other nations there have got ambitions in that regard as well. So it was a very good discussion about climate in a very practical way.

As you know, unlike Blackout Bill who has no plan to keep the lights on, my approach to energy is focussed on engineering and economics. The leaders around the table appreciated that.

As to the level of the emission cuts that we've agreed to, they are high. It is a high ambition that we've set in the Paris Agreement. On a per capita basis it's one of the highest cuts in the OECD.

So we're very comfortable about the level that we've set. Again as I've said, it's a reasonable one, it's comparable to other countries and in fact on a per capita basis – which is really the only relevant comparison – it is one of the highest in the OECD.

JOURNALIST:

Is that enough to bridge the gap then, because one of your fellow leaders just put you on notice to treat climate change as a real and pressing security issue.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well if you're living at sea-level, rising sea levels are a security issue. Yes, we understand that very keenly, I can assure you.

JOURNALIST:

Did any of the nations in the room express any disquiet about Australia's action or inaction?

PRIME MINISTER:

No. On the contrary, they appreciated the work that we're doing and very much appreciated the discussion we had about technology and the way in which we can provide assistance. In fact, I'm going to arrange for the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, which has now a lot of expertise in renewable technologies and in storage that can provide the backup because whether it is in Australia or in the Pacific, the wind doesn't blow all the time and the sun doesn't shine all the time, so how do you back it up? We have a plan for that. Old Blackout Bill has no plan for that or anything else on energy. They're very interested in the very practical, thoughtful approaches we have to technology. I look forward to more cooperation and assistance.

MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PACIFIC:

Can I just add to that? I mean at the last Pacific Islands Forum meeting,

Prime Minister, you announced that we would be increasing our investment in particular on climate change to \$300 million over four years.

We are seeing in our practical day-to-day work that we do in the Pacific, the implementation of that at those very practical things, the water tanks, the sea-surges and dealing with the sea walls. All those practical things that are vitally important in the Pacific.

We've also, as co-chair of the Green Climate Fund we have worked very hard to ensure that our Pacific neighbours have access, that important green climate funding which is about 11 per cent has gone to our Pacific neighbours.

So in very practical ways we are adding and doing those day-to-day things that are vitally important for the lives of Pacific Islanders.

JOURNALIST:

On the labour agreement Prime Minister what issues were raised with you? We just heard from the Leader of Tuvalu who said that it needs to work both ways. My assumption is that there is a concern that those people who go to Australia will perhaps remain and those skills will be taken out of these smaller island nations and not be brought back.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well Connie can add to this, but the basis of the plan is they do go back. So they're on a temporary visa and of course, they acquire skills in Australia and they come back and then can apply them in their own country.

MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PACIFIC:

Yes look, this scheme has been worked out very carefully with our Pacific neighbours. We've workshopped it. The object is to both 'top and tail' so there will be work that we will be doing in country, work that will be done in terms of pastoral care and other things that we will do in Australia.

The object of this is – yes, of course, coming to Australia – but the important thing about the labour mobility scheme are the skills that are required by people to then come back to their country and use those skills to contribute to the economic wellbeing of their country.

That's part of the reason why we're extending it for up to three years, so there's a solid experience that's gained and capacity building. That's really the focus of what this scheme is about; the capacity building to then bring those skills back to the Pacific.

PRIME MINISTER:

I think it's important to remember too that these island nations are nations of seafarers. Part of their culture is people going out and then coming back. Going out far afield and coming back again.

You know, you'll see here in Samoa so many of the leading business people are

Samoans who have gone overseas, worked overseas and then come back here with their skills. So it's a very important part of their economy, as you raised a moment ago, that the people go out to a country like Australia, acquire new skills and experience and perhaps acquire some capital and then come back here and put it to work.

JOURNALIST:

Mr Turnbull, there's reports...

PRIME MINISTER:

Hang on, just one at a time, please.

JOURNALIST:

Who will be financially supporting refugees who come off Manus Island when it closes in October? As Prime Minister O'Neil has told us that PNG will be doing that?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well we're continuing to have discussions with the PNG government. As you know, we also have arrangements with the United States, so we're looking forward to a number of those asylum seekers being resettled in the US.

Also you know, we encourage, particularly those that have been found not to have refugee status, we continue to encourage them to return to their country of origin.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, there are reports that people have sold their same-sex marriage surveys on eBay and reports of a scuffle in Brisbane last night between 'yes' and 'no' campaigners. Is that part of the civil debate and discussion you were envisaging?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I encourage all Australians to engage in this debate, as we do in all debates, respectfully. You cannot expect your side of the argument to be respected unless you respect the other side of the argument and the people that put it. There always will be isolated case of people saying unpleasant things in any debate. No criticism intended, but the media does tend to amplify those isolated cases. The vast majority of Australians, the vast majority are respectful and will conduct this debate and form their own views in a very considered and respectful manner.

I encourage all Australians to have their say. As you know, Lucy and I will be voting 'yes', but we respect those many Australians who will vote no. So we respect each other's views, it is that mutual respect which is the foundation of our very successful – I would say the most successful – multicultural society in the world. In the midst of our diversity, is our

great strength.

JOURNALIST:

So you're saying you wouldn't intervene at any level, whether it – no matter how wild this debate gets, brawls on the streets, Chinese pamphlets being sent out to people with awful things on them?

PRIME MINISTER:

I'm not saying that all. I'm not saying that all, you're putting words in my mouth. So, what is your question?

JOURNALIST:

No, I'm just asking you. So, at no level you would intervene? You don't see any case for –

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, if people break the law – you've talked about a scuffle in Brisbane – I would imagine that sort of behaviour likely involved a number of breaches of the Queensland *Crimes Act*. If people are assaulting others, pushing and shoving, those are very basic offences under the criminal law. But I'm only going on what the reports are. We have a set of laws, the rule of law in Australia, which is designed to ensure and protect that mutual respect and that civility and of course the safety of the person in our daily lives.

JOURNALIST:

What bar would you like to see set for safeguard legislation? Would you like to see it comparable at least to that which runs in an election campaign, or perhaps higher, ahead of this postal survey?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I think it's important to step back and look at the history of this. We proposed a compulsory attendance plebiscite and Connie of course is a Senator; she remembers very well how vehemently Labor and the Greens fought against it. They could have had that legislation passed and it would have had all of the protections and procedures from the Electoral Act, so that would apply in a referendum or a Parliamentary election.

About a month ago I think, Senator Cormann the Acting Special Minister of State and of course the Finance Minister, offered Labor to incorporate those provisions for the postal survey. The Labor Party didn't want to cooperate. They didn't want to do anything until they had exhausted their last avenue to stop Australians having their say.

It's only now that the High Court has ruled 7-0 in favour of the Government's postal survey, that the Labor Party now wants to talk. Now, we are, Senator Cormann is handling those discussions but as a matter of principle, of course we would be happy to incorporate the normal Electoral Act provisions insofar

as they're applicable, to apply to this postal survey.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister on energy if I may, have you spoken yet with Delta Electricity about the Liddell power station?

PRIME MINISTER:

I have spoken to them in the past, I haven't spoken to them recently. But I know that they've certainly indicated they would have a look at it, they'd be interested if Liddell was available. I imagine others would too.

Let me be very clear about this, the sheer confusion and muddle-headed approach of Blackout Bill and his environment spokesman, the Member for Port Adelaide, between them, so confused. They are against Liddell staying open, then they're for it.

They say they're standing up for workers' jobs, then they want to close down coal-fired power stations right around the country.

They say they're in favour of affordable and reliable electricity but they're not prepared to do anything to secure it.

Blackout Bill is completely and utterly, he is like a rabbit caught in the spotlights. He does not know what to do.

Now I'll tell you, it's actually pretty straightforward. We are in a situation where we've had a huge amount of renewable energy has come into the system but it doesn't run 24 hours a day. It only works when the sun is shining or the wind is blowing. We understand that. We've seen dispatchable power, like baseload power, go out. We've been told by AEMO that there is a shortage. They're addressing that in the near term and in 2022, if the Liddell power station closes as its owners say it will, then we will have a large shortage of dispatchable power.

Now I'm not a person that's inclined to just wait until the last minute and operate on hope, or say like Blackout Bill does, "Oh that's something we can deal with in 2022". We've got to focus on that now.

That's why I asked AEMO to do the work, because my approach to energy and energy security is based on engineering and economics. So now we know we've got a gap in dispatchable power coming down the track, a large one. So how are we going to address it? One obvious solution is to keep Liddell going for a number of additional years, say up to five years. We're having discussions with the owners about that. They say they don't want to own it after 2022, well, that's fine. They've also indicated they would be prepared to sell it to a responsible party. That's one option, there will no doubt be others.

But Australians should be assured that I am focused on keeping the lights on, making sure energy is reliable and available and that it's affordable.

Look at what we've done with gas. The price of gas has come down since we

announced our tough measures, foreshadowed our tough measures on exports. Look at the people who are paying less on their electricity bills because thanks to the leadership of my Government, Josh Frydenberg and I brought in the heads of the energy companies and we said you've got to get in touch with people who are not on the right scheme and encourage them to do so. Already, we've seen so many cases of people getting \$300, \$400, \$500, \$600-a-year savings. That and so many other measures.

Of course in the longer term, you've got Snowy Hydro 2.0 which will provide the biggest battery in the Southern Hemisphere and actually as it scales up to 4,000 megawatts, it'd be the biggest pumped hydro scheme in the world.

So whether it is in the right now, your bill now, next quarter's bill, we're acting on that. We're dealing with gas. We're dealing with the dispatchable generation gap in 2022. Longer term, we've got Snowy Hydro 2.0. Engineering and economics, that's my approach.

Blackout Bill has no plan. Blackout Bill has no plan to keep the lights on and no plan to help Australian families for the power that they need.

Thanks a lot.

[ENDS]

[Remarks at the MOU Signings – 48th Pacific Islands Forum, Samoa](#)

The Memorandums of Understanding that we're signing today, signify the very close and productive relationships we share and which we develop, including through the PIF.

They will help prepare us to address our shared and contemporary challenges. These MOUs demonstrate my personal commitment and that of my Government, to step up our engagement with the Pacific.

They support our ambition, which I know my fellow leaders here today share, for regional stability and prosperity.

The expanded security partnership MOU's emphasise the importance of working together to combat current security challenges, and we're entering into those today with Nauru and Tuvalu.

The challenges are complex and difficult. They must be addressed in partnership. They're called security partnerships because we recognise that efforts to address the current security challenges we all face must be a common and shared endeavor.

Likewise to ensure our mutual economic growth and prosperity, we need to integrate our economies more closely.

So the Pacific Labour Scheme MOU's we'll sign today will enhance the existing Labour Mobility Programs for citizens from Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu.

Ensuring priority access for our friends in the region who can most benefit from integration with the Australian labour market and economy.

The Pacific Labour Scheme will provide more opportunities for work experience and skills development through regional and rural Australia, and at the same time it will enable us in Australia to effectively address existing labour shortages in our towns and farms. It'll boost our regional activity and bring our economic benefits to our regional economy – so again this is a partnership.

Finally, the MOUs on the Pacific Pharmaceutical Laboratory Testing Program, this is a pilot, it will link PIF countries into our testing regime for medicines. Offering the services of the Therapeutic Goods Administration to lower the cost of drugs and make them safer and more effective and classes of drugs will be able to be presented by Pacific Island countries to our TGA for testing, so that they know that what they're buying, what they're procuring, is what they need and what is being represented.

Our friends in the Pacific face very serious health challenges and rely on imported medicines and these MOUs are a very practical illustration of how we can integrate our systems to address the challenges in the region.

So we're determined to work very closely with our partners in the Pacific Island Forum to ensure that we continue to step up our engagement in very practical and collaborative ways.

We've had some very good discussions since we got together this morning and I want to thank my fellow leaders for being here and joining us in these partnerships.

[ENDS]