

Interview with Larry Emdur and Kylie Gillies – The Morning Show’s 10th Birthday Celebrations, The Morning Show, Channel Seven

KYLIE GILLIES:

Welcome to the show Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull.

PRIME MINISTER:

Happy Birthday. Good morning.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Thank you.

LARRY EMDUR:

Good morning sir, boss, your honour – it’s a very casual show this one!

[Laughter]

PRIME MINISTER:

Very casual.

LARRY EMDUR:

Want you to know that your mate Christopher Pyne always shakes in his boots when he comes on this show. He knows we ask the hard questions.

PRIME MINISTER:

Right – well hopefully I’m not as timid.

LARRY EMDUR:

Thank for you celebrating with us – first time we’ve had a world leader.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Yes, I do believe that’s the case.

LARRY EMDUR:

We’ve got a couple of things to talk about before we get to the bit where we dance and sing.

PRIME MINISTER:

Very good.

LARRY EMDUR:

The off the record leaks this week – are we expecting a response from Trump? Everybody's heard this – are you expecting a response?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, I think everyone has got a sense of humour. The Mid-Winter Ball, it is a great occasion. It is meant to be off the record but we send each other up, we send ourselves up, my speech was in that tradition. Very affectionate, very light hearted.

LARRY EMDUR:

Very Australian.

PRIME MINISTER:

Very Australian – yeah that's right. Very Australian.

LARRY EMDUR:

I loved it.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Do you mind if we have a listen? We're going to have a little listen. This is what we're talking about.

RECORDING: We're winning in the polls. We are. We are. Not the fake polls. Not the fake polls. They're the ones we're not winning in. We are winning in the real polls. You know, the online polls. They are so easy to win. Did you know? I know that. Did you know that? I kind of know that. I know that. They are so easy to win. I have this Russian guy. Believe me. It's true. It is true.

LARRY EMDUR:

Okay, so the bonus here is, when you finish in politics, you get your own tonight show immediately. That's the key.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it's good to know there is something else to do after politics. Mind you, I think just one audition, I don't think it demonstrates that I'm up for Saturday Night Live yet, do you?

KYLIE GILLIES:

Well I was going to ask you to rate your performance – do you think you do a

good Trump?

PRIME MINISTER:

I've had mixed reviews but look it entertained everyone in the room, helped them raise a lot of money for charity. It was a good night. We were having a laugh. Everyone says politicians are too serious, too scripted. So you've got to lighten up right?

LARRY EMDUR:

That's exactly right.

PRIME MINISTER:

It's Australia.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Are you more upset that it was recorded or that it has been played in the public? Or are you not upset at all?

PRIME MINISTER:

The deal is with the Press Gallery Ball, the deal is that everyone lets their hair down a little bit and you know I'm sure Bill Shorten wouldn't want his speech to be broadcast. Look, everybody is relaxed. From my point of view my remarks, as you can see, I was sending up my own singular performance in opinion polls.

LARRY EMDUR:

Yep.

PRIME MINISTER:

And I was the butt of my own jokes. That is the deal.

LARRY EMDUR:

And it says something about Australia, where we know in Canberra it is a little bit different, or the pressure and spotlight is on but out there in greater Australia, and people watching that this morning, do you think they are possibly loving the larrikinism?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, we are all larrikins. We don't take ourselves too seriously. I mean, what other country has a term of affection 'you old bastard'? I mean, we are unusual.

LARRY EMDUR:

Did you just say that to me? You were looking at me when you said that!

[Laughter]

PRIME MINISTER:

It is a term of affection in Australia.

LARRY EMDUR:

It's not when say it to me, when you call me that it's not a term of affection.

[Laughter]

KYLIE GILLIES:

Yes, I use it quite often.

PRIME MINISTER:

I guess it depends how you say it but as long as you're saying it with a smile on your face. And look, without getting misty eyed about it, we are an extraordinary nation, we are unique and one of the great things about is we don't take ourselves too seriously. We have a great sense of humour. And you know, everyone complains that politicians are too serious and stitched up and reading from scripts and talking points, so I think it is good to just relax and be yourself. And have a laugh!

KYLIE GILLIES:

Do you follow Mr Trump on Twitter? And have you been checking his feed just to see if he's reacted to you?

PRIME MINISTER:

I think the whole world follows him on Twitter.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Okay.

LARRY EMDUR:

Do you – every morning when I wake up now, and I've never been totally devoted to American politics but every morning I just log straight on to check what he's done overnight. Do you do the same?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, I do check Twitter. I don't use Twitter as much as I used to actually – talking seriously about social media for a minute which will, everyone will switch off, but we tend to do more on Facebook and Instagram. I find Facebook has got a broader audience. It is amazing, just to give you an example, with a number of my colleagues, I have done Facebook chats with other Members of Parliament on their Facebook pages and they can, in their

electorate, reach 10-15,000 people.

LARRY EMDUR:

Very powerful yeah.

PRIME MINISTER:

It is very powerful. And you are actually having a direct discussion with the community, so these social media platforms are extremely interesting particularly given how recent they are.

Anyway, back to being lighthearted on your 10th birthday! This is too serious!

[Laughter]

KYLIE GILLIES:

But on that point alarmingly some people, that is the only, the sole source of their news is coming on places like Facebook.

PRIME MINISTER:

Sure, absolutely it is. A friend of mine was teaching journalism students.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Yes.

PRIME MINISTER:

She was taking some time out of the workforce, she just had a baby and so she was just working part-time. She said 'where do you get your news'? And these are young people, 18-19 I guess who wanted to be journalists and they all said Facebook – the whole lot of them.

LARRY EMDUR:

We are getting to the 10th anniversary celebration in a sec but there are a couple of things we have to talk to you about while you're here on the couch relaxed and comfortable.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, sure.

LARRY EMDUR:

It has been an alarming few weeks around the world, of course – the recent string of terror attacks in the UK and even at home in Melbourne.

PRIME MINISTER:

And a terrible fire in London just in the last, you know this is heartbreaking. Our condolences to the families and to the victims of that shocking fire.

LARRY EMDUR:

Of course.

PRIME MINISTER:

And we've seen terrible, you know we've seen the London Bridge attack, two beautiful young Australians killed, two other Australians injured. The Manchester Arena attack, a cruel attack on teenagers. And then, of course, the attack in Melbourne where a young Australian was killed.

LARRY EMDUR:

Do you worry about the sort of world that your grandkids will grow up in?

PRIME MINISTER:

I do, I do. And my job as Prime Minister is to do everything I can – and I am doing that – to make sure that the world they grow up in and everyone else's grandchildren grow up in is safer. We do everything we can to keep Australians safe.

And you know, whether it is ensuring that our Australian Defence Force have the capabilities they need to keep us safe. Whether it is ensuring our police, our security services have the laws to enable them to deal with terrorism. Whether it is ensuring that we change the parole laws so that right around the country, we got an agreement to that a week ago, so that for people who have had a connection with terrorism, if they're seeking parole or bail, the presumption is against them. Because you have got to be constantly agile and alert. I mean this is the point I keep on making. You cannot set and forget in this area. You have got to be constantly upgrading your laws. We have made numerous changes to the laws. You know, we have put \$320 million of extra funding into the AFP for their special capabilities in this area. It is vital to be absolutely, constantly vigilant. Complacency, there is no place for it.

KYLIE GILLIES:

In the wake of the Melbourne attack-

PRIME MINISTER:

Yep.

KYLIE GILLIES:

You came out very strongly about the parole laws. It seemed to me, watching you on that day, that there was something that triggered in you and you come out very strongly. Was there something very personal about that that fired

you up on that date? Because I thought you spoke very strongly and to me from the outside, it looked like there was something, that it was the straw that broke the camel's back. What was it?

PRIME MINISTER:

There is nothing that is more important to me as Prime Minister than protecting the safety of Australians. That is my number one priority. That is the number one priority of my whole government.

The killer, the terrorist, was out on parole, he had a long history of violence. He was a very violent man and he had a very considerable and very well-known, publicly known association with terrorism. He had been charged, as you know, on a terrorist offence. He had been acquitted. He had trained with terrorists in Somalia. He should never have been on parole. He should never have been on parole.

LARRY EMDUR:

We just heard you run through the list of changes and focus, and you've got to stay nimble, you've got to stay agile. Are you confident that with all of those moving parts that we are safe and we will remain safe in what we have always called 'the lucky country'?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well there are no guarantees Larry. You have to keep on doing everything you can to protect us. So how do you protect ourselves against terrorism? Well, we are destroying ISIL and Daesh in the Middle East and destroying their so-called caliphate. You know that is very important. I have changed the laws to give our forces there the capacity, the legal ability to target the terrorist, whatever they are doing. Whether they are holding a gun or a knife, or whether they are you know plotting in a bunker somewhere, you know recruiting or raising money. So we have done that, we have given them the resources with our partners to destroy them in the field. And we're winning. They are being rolled back.

At the same time, we have to resist their propaganda in the West and we have to work with, particularly with leaders in the Muslim communities, both internationally and locally, who stand up and say these terrorists, these extremists do not speak for us, they are blasphemers, they're criminals, they're maniacs and they've got to reject them and so they are very important partners.

LARRY EMDUR:

Yes.

PRIME MINISTER:

And also of course, we need the physical means, and the intelligence means to keep us safe.

LARRY EMDUR:

So many layers to it.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, it is, yeah – it is very complex, but the overriding commitment is constant vigilance, never set and forget, never be complacent, always do everything to keep Australians safe.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Okay. Shall we move on to something a little lighter?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes, yes, that's right, very good.

KYLIE GILLIES:

We have been looking back at the past ten years – this being our 10th birthday of the show. We've had a few laughs at our hairstyles and fashion trends. We have dug up some old pictures of you, Prime Minister. We're going to show you – here is an oldie but a goodie!

PRIME MINISTER:

Well that is more than 10 years!

[Laughter]

KYLIE GILLIES:

Where is this? How old are you here do you reckon?

PRIME MINISTER:

I would say I would be in my late 20s, probably late 20s.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Looks like a law-

PRIME MINISTER:

I think maybe 30? Maybe 30 was then I was a lawyer. Yes, that's when I was – I was pretty porky in those days.

KYLIE GILLIES:

No! I wouldn't-

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh yeah, no, I would've been then about, I would have been then at least 10

kilos heavier than I am now I would think. But again that would be probably late 30s.

KYLIE GILLIES:

But you're saying porky – I'm seeing the dimple? Who knew the Prime Minister had a dimple?

PRIME MINISTER:

Do you see it? Do you like that?

KYLIE GILLIES:

Yeah!

PRIME MINISTER:

Now I can tell you when that is – that is about 31 years ago because that is with little Daisy when she was a baby and [inaudible] the dog.

KYLIE GILLIES:

She's a mum now herself isn't she?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah. She's a very strict schoolteacher I'm told because some of the girls she teach say to me 'Oh you know you're Mrs Turnbull-Brown's father?' And I go 'Yes'. And they say, 'Oh, she's very strict!'

[Laughter]

So that's good. But she's got two kids. She's got a little boy and a little girl.

LARRY EMDUR:

You know what I love about that shot where you said you were porky? You were wearing the flannelette shirt and guys all over Australia know that the flannelette shirt covers anything.

[Laughter]

It's up to 12 kilo of camouflage easy.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Yeah, good.

LARRY EMDUR:

Now one of the many things that people admire about you is your partnership with wife Lucy. What is the secret to a fantastic long-term marriage, given

that your life has been in the spotlight for so long?

PRIME MINISTER:

Okay, this is the advice I give to young people when they get married, invest in your relationships, spend time with your wife or your husband. It's very easy, particularly when your children arrive, people get busy at work, it is very easy for the family time to get squeezed out. You've got to really focus on that. I mean Lucy and I, we got married pretty young by modern standards. You know, Lucy was 21 and I was a few years older. She was only a few days short, she was about a week short of being 22 so she often says she should have waited 10 days, she could've said she got married at 22.

[Laughter]

LARRY EMDUR:

Yeah right.

KYLIE GILLIES:

That's funny – that's exactly what I did.

PRIME MINISTER:

Did you?

KYLIE GILLIES:

I waited two days until I turned 22 because I didn't want to get married when I was 21.

PRIME MINISTER:

Isn't that sweet.

KYLIE GILLIES:

I share that with Lucy.

LARRY EMDUR:

You've got a lot in common.

KYLIE GILLIES:

No, it was really important to me.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, I always used to say, I asked Lucy to marry me pretty much I asked Lucy to marry me as soon as I met her.

KYLIE GILLIES:

You knew straight away.

PRIME MINISTER:

I did actually and she always said: "We'll wait 'til we grow up".

[Laughter]

I'm not sure whether we did. But the important thing is – being slightly serious – both of our parents had been divorced and we were really focused, even as you know young people in our early 20s, focused on ensuring that our marriage would be a strong and enduring one. We recognised that we should always make that commitment to be with each other and we're each other's best friends. I mean, I have a stronger sense of 'me and Lucy', than I have just of I have of 'me'. You know we are very, very tight little partnership.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Team. A, team.

PRIME MINISTER:

That's right.

LARRY EMDUR:

Once those big gates close, who is the boss?

PRIME MINISTER:

Ah – well again it's like a partnership, you know? We don't – You couldn't say anyone, either, is the boss. We literally work as a very tight partnership. We know each other so well, we sort of know what the other wants. I mean there are other areas, as in most marriages, where one person knows more, is accepted as the in-house expert.

LARRY EMDUR:

Have you ever –

PRIME MINISTER:

I am the tech butler in our house, so fixing devices and things like that.

LARRY EMDUR:

Have you ever been able to say, when she asks you to take the recycling out, have you ever been able to say: "I don't have to do that, I'm the Prime Minister"?

PRIME MINISTER:

Are you kidding?

[Laughter]

KYLIE GILLIES:

We call you Prime Minister, what do your three grandchildren call you?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, the ones in Australia call me Baba.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Baba?

PRIME MINISTER:

Baba – well I don't know, when Jack was the first one along, the first grandchild gets to name the grandparents. He calls me Baba and they call Lucy Gaga. So it's Baba and Gaga. And then our granddaughter who lives in Singapore, Isla who is our son's daughter, whose mum is Chinese, she calls me Yé-Ye, which is the Chinese word for father's father. Because Baba is the Chinese word for father. So Alex is Baba, Isla calls Alex Baba and me Yé-Ye.

KYLIE GILLIES:

You need to repeat that later.

LARRY EMDUR:

So Yé-Ye, Baba and Gaga? It's a new Disney Pixar movie coming up for Christmas.

[Laughter]

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, well for Lucy, Gaga is just completely invented. I don't think that's in any language.

LARRY EMDUR:

Do you spoil them? Because we have this vision of you spoiling them.

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh, I don't know if I spoil them. Their parents probably think that we do. We're very fond grandparents, I love them, I mean, I love them. But one of the things I really love about being a grandfather, is that they make you feel young. You see when Jack came along, a little boy, the last time I had had a little boy crawling around and running around was when I was in my 20s, late 20s when Alex was born. And Lucy feels the same way. They are so invigorating, and you know, they are fantastic. We have a lot of fun.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Larry asked if you spoil them, but I reckon when they grow up a bit Baba is going to be good for a loan isn't he? I reckon they'll hit you up.

[Laughter]

PRIME MINISTER:

I'm sure he would be.

LARRY EMDUR:

I reckon grandpa will be okay for a loan.

PRIME MINISTER:

I think most grandparents are a soft touch and I think Lucy and I will be very much a soft touch.

LARRY EMDUR:

Now we know you have some important things to do like run the country, so just before you leave, we just want to give Australia a chance to get to know the real Malcolm Turnbull in a segment we like to call Question Time. It's is a new thing for us.

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh, right!

KYLIE GILLIES:

So we are asking you one quick question, for every year –

PRIME MINISTER:

Well you want a quick answer actually.

LARRY EMDUR:

Yes.

KYLIE GILLIES:

For every year we've been on air. The aim of the game is to answer as quickly as possible. Are you ready? Let's start. The most important quality in a world leader?

PRIME MINISTER:

Integrity.

LARRY EMDUR:

Well that was a much faster answer than we thought!

KYLIE GILLIES:

Just appreciate you haven't had a chance to look at these questions.

LARRY EMDUR:

Hadn't had a look down at the next question, if we come to your house for dinner, with Gaga and Baba, what do we get? What are you cooking for us?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well what am I going to cook for you?

LARRY EMDUR:

Yes.

PRIME MINISTER:

Okay, if I was cooking I'd probably make you a lovely pasta dish and I would make a beautiful passata. I mean look, Larry let's be honest ...

LARRY EMDUR:

You're busy

[Laughter]

PRIME MINISTER:

No – I've got a limited repertoire. I mean I grew up, much of my childhood was brought up by my dad, single dad. So I'm quite domesticated by male standards. You know, I'm a good ironer, I'm a good cleaner and I'm an okay cook, but it is a limited repertoire.

LARRY EMDUR:

Okay so do I get an egg on toast?

PRIME MINISTER:

No, no, I'd make you a nice pasta dish and you know, if we find something in the fridge, there might be some sausage we can put into it or something like that. But you know, if you were coming to dinner Larry, if I were you, you would be wise to suggest that maybe Baba and Gaga do the cooking.

LARRY EMDUR:

Yes, it might be 'baga ganoush'.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, that's right, that's good 'baga ganoush'

KYLIE GILLIES:

I don't reckon you're eating much pasta yourself though these days.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, it's quantity. The way to lose weight is to eat less, it's pretty simple.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Your karaoke song?

PRIME MINISTER:

I don't have one.

KYLIE GILLIES:

You don't have one?

PRIME MINISTER:

No, I'm the worst singer. In fact sometimes, if we're in church or somewhere where we're singing, everyone is singing their hymns, if I do more than do it at a very low level, I'll get a gentle little elbow from Gaga.

[Laughter]

KYLIE GILLIES:

That's okay because Melania Trump does that to Donald too as well. She's been known to.

LARRY EMDUR:

She swats him. The biggest perk of being the Prime Minister of Australia?

PRIME MINISTER:

The biggest perk? Well look, I mean the whole job is just such a wonderful responsibility, because look; I love this country. It's the best country in the world. I believe in its future, I believe our best days are ahead of us, but we've got to do the work to make sure they are. So every day, what I'm doing is trying to ensure that our kids and our grandkids are going to be safe and secure. That's very important. And they are going to have those great opportunities to realise all their dreams and do even more wonderful things than their parents have.

LARRY EMDUR:

So the biggest perk is the opportunity.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, that's it, it really is.

KYLIE GILLIES:

I would have gone 'room service', but that's just me. The biggest punish?

PRIME MINISTER:

You know, it's funny. A lot of people ask questions like that. I actually don't find any of it punishing.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Ribbon cutting, cake cutting?

PRIME MINISTER:

No, I love it, I love getting out, I love being on public transport and walking down the street.

Like we saw some kids yesterday at Parliament. Some little kids who've got a really rare metabolic disorder. Which there is one drug, Vimizim, which is a very, very expensive drug, which essentially cures it. Or, doesn't cure it – but it puts them a position where they can lead a normal life.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Manages it.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah. Now Greg Hunt and I met with the parents and these three little kids, a little boy, called Beau and Colton, and a little girl called Ivy. But you know Beau, you see him on television – little boy and he had a cowboy shirt on, like he's a little cowboy. Now, making that drug available to them, subsidising that, through our health system. I mean that is – you are helping change their lives.

Now the only way you can afford to do it, of course, is managing the Budget properly. So that's why we've had to you know raise some revenue, raise some revenue from the banks and so forth. Had to take tough decisions to manage all the finances. But putting life-saving drugs, whether it is on the PBS or the Life Saving Drugs Program, that's a wonderful thing to do. It's a wonderful opportunity on behalf of all Australians, an exercise in practical love.

KYLIE GILLIES:

That list is long.

PRIME MINISTER:

It is.

LARRY EMDUR:

Donald Trump turns 71 this week. What do you buy the President, the man who has absolutely everything? Do you give him the Pacific Ocean? What? I gave Kylie for her birthday a kangaroo testicle keyring. That was a good gift.

[Laughter]

KYLIE GILLIES:

Sorry Prime Minister.

LARRY EMDUR:

I mean that could work – but what you do get Donald Trump?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well when we went over to see him recently we took over an official gift, as you do, and it was a beautiful timber box to hold a dozen golf balls, so you know he is a big golfer. But it's always hard buying presents, isn't it?

KYLIE GILLIES:

Yes!

LARRY EMDUR:

Well, not for Kylie.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it seems Kylie is definitely convinced that you should stop trying so hard. You know what? Larry, here's the thing, let me give you a bit of advice.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Please, please do.

PRIME MINISTER:

Just ask her what she wants.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Thank you!

PRIME MINISTER:

Just ask her!

LARRY EMDUR:

Now we're going back to marriage advice.

PRIME MINISTER:

Good! It's good marriage advice, ask her what she wants. It works.

LARRY EMDUR:

She can't have that island in Bora Bora, that's what I told her.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, do a budget. You know, realistic parameters, a frame of reference.

LARRY EMDUR:

Thank you. That's great advice.

KYLIE GILLIES:

We've heard you're a bit of an impersonator, we heard the tape earlier. Is there someone you are best at impersonating?

PRIME MINISTER:

I don't actually, no –

KYLIE GILLIES:

Or was that a one off?

PRIME MINISTER:

I don't actually do impersonations. I mean that was not an impersonation. I was speaking on my own behalf, but with perhaps a little bit of light-hearted and affectionate channeling.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Okay a channel.

PRIME MINISTER:

Channeling but – no, I've got some friends who are great impersonators, but I am not very good at them.

LARRY EMDUR:

We often think that if we had the power to ban things – the list would be long of things to ban, things like other morning shows on other networks, banned immediately.

PRIME MINISTER:

Sure.

LARRY EMDUR:

What would you ban if you wanted to ban something immediately?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well since we are being humorous, I mean there is a – I won't get back into the serious discussion, look generally, no I can't think of anything I want to ban. What would you like to ban, I mean leaving aside other morning shows?

LARRY EMDUR:

I'd like to ban Kylie from demanding huge presents for her birthday.

KYLIE GILLIES:

No. No, that's not going to work.

PRIME MINISTER:

No, seriously politics is the art of the possible. You've got to be realistic.

LARRY EMDUR:

So is hosting a morning show.

[Laughter]

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, that's right. You shouldn't you know Larry, you set these unrealistic ambitions and you'll always disappoint and then you'll get a sense of failure. So you shouldn't do that. Think of something else that you could ban that's more realistic.

LARRY EMDUR:

I would like to ban other drivers on the road.

PRIME MINISTER:

Oh yeah, sure that'd be easy.

[Laughter]

KYLIE GILLIES:

Finally, we need to know, as we wrap up the questions in quick question time which actually didn't turn out to be that quick.

LARRY EMDUR:

Those one-word answers were great!

PRIME MINISTER:

It's been as disciplined as Question Time. What we need is Tony Smith, the Speaker, where is he? We need him.

KYLIE GILLIES:

With a big gavel!

PRIME MINISTER:

He would have chucked all three of us out.

LARRY EMDUR:

Gone.

PRIME MINISTER:

But then there would be no Morning Show.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Finally, your favorite Morning Show segment ever, in ten years?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, I think it must be this one.

KYLIE GILLIES:

Absolutely.

PRIME MINISTER:

Very relaxed, very relaxed.

LARRY EMDUR:

Because in the morning he's just relaxing on the couch watching TV! Now before you go, this is very special for us. As you know, 10 years of politics is a long time, 10 years on TV is a long, long time and we're glad that you're here, but can you help us officially cut the birthday cake?

PRIME MINISTER

I would love to do that.

[ENDS]

[Interview with Tom Elliott, 3AW](#)

TOM ELLIOTT:

Joining us on the line is the Prime Minister of Australia Malcolm Turnbull.
Mr Turnbull, good afternoon.

PRIME MINISTER:

Good afternoon Tom. Great to be with you.

TOM ELLIOTT:

Is this unusual for three of your ministers to be hauled into court to explain themselves?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it certainly is unusual but it is not unusual for Victorians to express real concern about public safety in their state.

Those three ministers, yes they are ministers in my government, they are Members of Parliament but they are also citizens of Victoria and residents of Victoria and you know, as your listeners do, that there is real concern about law and order and the failure of the state government and the system in Victoria to protect people.

Look, I think it is a matter of the justice system, the legal system in Victoria, the criminal justice system is a matter of real public interest and my ministers are focused on public safety, they are working with me and the rest of our team and our agencies to do everything we can to keep Australians safe and defeat Islamist terrorism.

TOM ELLIOTT:

Will the three ministers appear in court on Friday?

PRIME MINISTER:

I can't answer that. I am sure they would be represented but whether they appear in person, that is a matter for them. I am not sure what arrangements they've made.

TOM ELLIOTT:

It is a civil or a criminal matter that they are asked to confront?

PRIME MINISTER:

Look, it is very unusual but let me just make this point – the courts of justice are not immune from public criticism. The courts cannot be and are not immune from criticism which may extend to robust observations of a particular decision or penalty. Now that is not my words, they are the words of Justice Forrest of the Victorian Supreme Court in a case only last year.

And time and again, our courts, the High Court, every court has defended the rights of Australians to criticise trenchantly, strongly, vigorously the decisions of the courts.

And you know I have to say that I and every member of my government absolutely respects and defends the independence of the judiciary and I would never imagine that public comments or criticism, whether it is by a politician in Parliament or a newspaper columnist or a radio host like yourself would influence a judge in their deliberation.

The independence of our judiciary Tom is secured by the character of our judges – strong, independent, good character, strong character who focus solely on the matters that are relevantly and properly before them and make their decision in good faith and in good conscience based on those matters that are before them.

TOM ELLIOTT:

Yeah but if they can haul three senior ministers of your government, the federal government into the courts – I mean, does that mean if I criticise them which I have done many a time, does that mean I'll be headed into court next?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, Tom, who knows. Look, you know, the criticisms, the concerns that have been expressed about sentencing in Victoria are not new. And of course concerns are expressed about sentencing as you know in every jurisdiction at different times but this is a very unusual case for these ministers to be brought before the court. And I just want to emphasise that we absolutely stand for and respect the independence of the judiciary. But it is, you know the idea that you can protect the independence of the judiciary by prohibiting criticism of the judiciary is just wrong, and that is inconsistent with a long tradition of vigorous debate, robust debate. As Justice Forrest said only last year, robust observations can be made, criticisms can be made – they are made, but judges do their duty. You know let justice be done with the heavens falls they say.

TOM ELLIOTT:

If these ministers, or indeed any other ministers, want to criticise the judiciary here in Victoria, or possibly in other states in the future, will you advise them to do so, to speak their mind?

PRIME MINISTER:

My position Tom is that I stand for an independent judiciary, the rule of law, democracy, freedom, freedom of speech, and in a free society a person is entitled to criticise the conduct of the courts or of a judge. And courts and judges are open to criticism, that's not my words, they're the words of Chief Justice Sir Antony Mason in a case in 1992 in the High Court.

So you know, it's very clear that we are talking about the conduct of the judiciary and judicial decisions people are entitled to criticise them. Obviously, a different standard applies when you are talking about cases that are before a jury.

TOM ELLIOT:

No but this is a general issue –

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes that's right

TOM ELLIOT:

Alright, well on the side in fact, I've already done an interview with Channel Seven News which will be playing tonight. So look, now another thing that's come up – and I'm sure you've heard about this – so you gave, I guess an amusing speech at the Canberra Mid-Winter Ball last night. Somehow it's been leaked, I've listened to a bit of it, you mock yourself and you mock Donald Trump. Are you disappointed that it's been leaked to the media?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well it is a great tradition, you know it's a big charity fundraiser, they raised nearly \$400,000 and it is a good humoured sort of roast really. The Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition give a speech and poke fun at themselves and you know, often other politicians and so forth, but my speech was light-hearted, affectionately light-hearted and off the record.

TOM ELLIOT:

And is it meant to be off the record? It is meant to be off the record.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes of course.

TOM ELLIOT:

Are you disappointed that it's leaked?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes I am, well I am disappointed and I think it's, I guess what that means is that next year at the Mid-Winter Ball I will read selected passages from Budget Paper number 2.

TOM ELLIOT:

Well it will be good.

PRIME MINISTER:

That will pack them in (Laughter).

TOM ELLIOT:

I think it's been leaked by Channel 9 correspondent Laurie Oakes. No? Well

he's spoken about it.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yeah, well I believe so – he's apparently put it on.

TOM ELLIOT:

Will he be invited next year?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I don't think he was there this year, but he has taken it on himself to do that.

But look, listen it's a breach of protocol, it's a breach of faith and all those things, but you know it's light hearted, it's affectionate, good natured and the butt of my jokes was myself.

TOM ELLIOT:

And Donald Trump.

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I wouldn't say that, I think it was more good-natured than that I think. But listen it's fun, you've got to have a laugh, we've got to lighten up. It's stressful business, politics Tom. You've got to be cheerful.

TOM ELLIOT:

Thank you Prime Minister we will let you get back to it. The Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull.

[ENDS]

Doorstop with the Treasurer, the Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Minister for Social Services, the Hon. Christian Porter MP and Assistant Minister for Social Services and Disability Services, the

Hon. Jane Prentice MP and John Della Bosca

PRIME MINISTER:

Good afternoon.

I'm here with the Treasurer, the Minister for Social Services and the Assistant Minister for Disabilities, to talk about the NDIS. We're joined by John Della Bosca and other advocates for disabilities, who have come to Parliament today to ask every member of the House and the Senate to support the increase in the Medicare levy, 0.5 per cent. That will ensure this great national enterprise – this great national enterprise of practical love, of compassion, of community solidarity, of supporting each other and as we have just discussed, with the mothers there with their children, an important exercise in productivity – this deserves to be fully funded.

John and his colleagues have been leading a campaign for years, demanding that the NDIS be fully funded. This budget delivers that. Increasing the Medicare levy by 0.5 per cent from 2019 will ensure that the Commonwealth share of the NDIS is fully funded. It will mean those two little boys will know, when they need the NDIS in the future, it will be paid for. Their mothers will know that. Their parents will know that. Their grandparents will know that. That is the commitment that we make. It is the least we can do.

We speak a lot about compassion, we speak a lot about love and empathy and community in this place, but we have to make sure we can pay for it. So John, thank you for coming here and using your great skills as an advocate, as a political advocate, to get the support we need to ensure this great reform, fully funding the NDIS, is delivered. John, I'd ask you to say a few words?

JOHN DELLA BOSCA:

Thank you very much Prime Minister and thank you for coming this afternoon. Put simply, what we've been doing today, what we intend to do this afternoon and what we will be doing over the next days and weeks and even if it takes months, is to make sure that everybody in this Parliament understands, regardless of the party or faction they're in, that the NDIS, to be successful – and it is already a great success story in terms of the things that the Prime Minister canvassed. To be completely successful, it needs to be truly intergenerational. We need to lock in the funding for the NDIS into the future. We can't leave it to the whim of one Parliament or another, one budget or another. No disrespect intended – one Treasurer or another. It needs to be something that one government, this Government, has said they're prepared to. They've got in the budget to lock in the funding increase and keep it there so that no future government can change those priorities and harm the NDIA's mission.

It happens to be, by the way of course, that if you go back to the

Productivity Commission's original numbers, this proposal matches very nearly exactly the kind of growth that is needed to fund the NDIA into the future. So it would be remiss of us as people who have been campaigning, as every Australian that counts has, for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, to be the best possible scheme it can be. For seven, eight, nine, some of us for ten years, if we didn't take this opportunity to advocate to every Member of Parliament here, senator, Member of Parliament here, that the Medicare levy adjustment, the increase to the Medicare levy must happen, in order to secure a consistent, sustainable funding stream for the NDIS. That's what we're telling everybody. That's what we'll keep telling everybody until we get a result.

Thank you.

TREASURER:

PM, can I will bring this around here, because this is important. This is something that John sent to me not long after I became Treasurer. The answer of the Turnbull Government is yes, this is exactly what we're going to do, John. We are going to fully fund the NDIS. To do that, you need to understand two things. First, you've got to understand that there is a funding gap in the NDIS. Minister Porter has been making that point I think, very well. There is a funding gap. It does have to be filled. If it's not filled families who deal with disabilities will not have the certainty they need.

You have got to have a fair way of filling that gap which is what we've done with the Medicare levy. That's the fair way to do it. Because as Julia Gillard said, everybody puts in because everybody takes out. That is a real fundamental principle of how the Medicare levy works. That's how it should continue to work for the NDIS.

So, we're not playing games with this. It was a pretty simple ask from John; fund the NDIS. That's what we're doing. That's what the budget has achieved and I'm pleased we've been able to answer your question, John, in this way.

We ask the Parliament to say yes, as well, rather than say no.

MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES:

I won't add too much more. It was lovely meeting the delegation here. Young Nathan's mum commented that his chances to have a productive life as an Australian citizen, where life is made meaningful through community engagement and through work, will depend on the NDIS and the intergenerational way in which the NDIS can improve individual lives through the packages focusing on engagement with the community and empowering individuals.

John, thanks for being here today. One thing I would say is that when we came to look at this 0.5 per cent increase in the Medicare levy, understanding what the gap was and where it started in the year 2020, just over \$4 billion and how it grew to a cumulative \$55 billion. The fit between a 0.5% increase in the Medicare levy and the gap was so near to being exact, it was almost

like it was meant to happen. John, I don't know whether you know, but my suspicion is that when the original 0.5% Medicare levy was policy of the Labor Party, they'd always meant to go to 1%. The sense I have got is that they'd always meant to go to 1% but at the last minute they balked because they misunderstood the generosity of the Australian people and misunderstood how the Australian people understand that this is a scheme which if everyone can put in according to their ability to put in, everyone benefits for generations to come in Australia. I don't know, maybe John knows, but that's my suspicion.

ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND DISABILITY SERVICES:

Thank you, Prime Minister. Look, we've been talking about Nicholas and Nathan and the future generations that are going to benefit, but we also met today the mothers who have children in their 30s and 40s, who are now going to be out-living them. Changes have come with medical advances. Those parents – and there's a large cohort out there – are really anxious about what is going to happen to their children, when they die. So the NDIS is life-changing for them and gives them so much comfort in their older age that their children will be looked after if we can properly fund NDIS.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thank you Jane.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, what talks have you held with Mr Shorten on the NDIS? Do you plan to hold any further talks in coming weeks to get this across the line?

PRIME MINISTER:

We have certainly sought, as you know, we sought the support of the Labor Party to this.

What's so disappointing is that all of the logic that stood behind Bill Shorten's advocacy for a 0.5 per cent increase in the NDIS back in 2012, stands today. I mean, it is utterly consistent and I think the point that Christian made about the perfect fit that the extra 0.5 per cent makes to fill the gap, is very well made.

This is very, very clear. The logic that Julia Gillard and Bill Shorten applied those years ago, they should apply today. We know that a majority of his shadow cabinet support it. He should, too.

I think that the case that's being made by John Della Bosca and Ara and Katherine and Kirsten and the other advocates here today is a very powerful one.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister given the tax increase isn't scheduled to start until July 1, 2019, are you quite happy to take this to the next election? Fight this tax

increase at the next election?

PRIME MINISTER:

We're focused on getting it approved by the Parliament now. That's our commitment. We're seeking support for it right now. We are very committed to this. We are committed to fully fund the NDIS.

This is the fair response. It is absolutely consistent with what the Labor Party did in 2012. There is no rational or logical basis for opposing this.

TREASURER:

It is cruel to let this linger. The reason we put it in the budget is because we need the certainty now. Those parents, particularly those older parents, they need the certainty now. They need to know that the levy will be there in 19/20. It's all accounted for, the funds established and they can have that certainty.

So what we want to legislate for now, is certainty. The funds will follow when the bills turn up. It means that we can now focus, Christian and everyone can focus, on delivering the NDIS. That's what we should be focusing on and settling the funding question.

JOURNALIST:

Treasurer, if you were to take up the Labor Party's proposal and only allow the tax increase to hit when you are earning over \$87,000 a year, how much of the \$8 billion in revenue would you lose?

TREASURER:

Well there's two points here Sam. One is that they are not increasing the Medicare levy to fund the NDIS. Chris Bowen has made that crystal clear. He has no intention of sending one cent of their increase in the Medicare levy to fund the NDIS. So the answer to your question is, is there's a \$55.7 billion hole because they're not even interested in acknowledging there is a funding hole.

JOURNALIST:

But what would be revenue impact?

TREASURER:

It doesn't cover it. It misses it by the tens of billions of dollars.

JOURNALIST:

Do you know how much it would be?

TREASURER:

I do – it's \$15 billion over ten years, they're out. It doesn't cover it. But

what is more important is, they are not going to send a cent of the increase in the Medicare levy to fund the NDIS. Not one cent.

It's not going to go to the special account. It's not going to go to support one disabled Australian. It's just a tax increase.

JOURNALIST:

The Productivity Commission has a report out on the NDIS. It said that there is a higher than expected number of children in the scheme, in particular with autism. What will you do to manage that?

PRIME MINISTER:

The Productivity Commission has noted the extraordinary commitment that has been put into the scheme. They've noted the importance of it as this great, great national enterprise, as I said. But I'll ask the Minister to say more about the PC report, or paper I should say.

MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES:

The first several recommendations deal with the global issue, is it on track? The Productivity Commission say two things. Essentially, it is on track and it is on budget. They note that inside the budget that there are upward pressures. One of those is more children than expected are presenting as applicants for the NDIS. They also note that there are a range of downward pressures at the same time. But at the moment we are tracking on budget.

The way in which we've been dealing with the greater than expected number of children presenting is through the early childhood gateway and essentially that is an assessment prior to the age of 6, and the delivery of supports outside but allied and parallel to the NDIS, to try and make sure that as much improvement in every individual child presenting is made, so that the numbers that actually enter at the point at which entry occurs, is lower and more in line with expectations.

But we will find throughout this process, that some actuals will be above and some will be below estimates.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, given the feedback you were getting yesterday from the Party Room, can you save the Finkel plan?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well we had a very good discussion in the Party Room yesterday. The Finkel plan, the Chief Scientist's independent report, which was commissioned by the Council of Australian Governments is a report. Not a report by government, it's a report to governments. In fact it's a report to every government, state, territory and federal. We received it on Friday. We are in a process of considering it.

A very good exposition of it was given to the Party Room by Josh Frydenberg, the Energy Minister. Then we had a question and answer session later in the day, in a very valuable discussion. I can say that there is absolutely broad agreement and consensus that business as usual is not an option.

Of course, we have demonstrated that. We are already taking action. I mean let's not mince words here, we are taking the most decisive action in the gas market by any government. We are literally taking steps to limit exports to ensure that there will be sufficient gas in the domestic market.

Now, it gave me no pleasure to do that, but the alternative was seeing gas prices continue to rise which put pressure, not just on electricity prices, but on households and on industry, and putting tens of thousands of jobs at risk. We are taking steps to ensure that we have a massive increase in hydro generation baseload power, storage power, with Snowy Hydro 2.0, which will add at least 2,000 megawatts to the national grid.

So these are very important steps we're taking so far and we are in the process as, indeed, are the other eight governments involved, we are considering the Chief Scientist's report.

JOURNALIST:

What's your time frame for landing a policy and landing legislation? What are we looking at?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, we will be giving it due consideration. We will obviously be working as quickly as we can, but I just want to –

JOURNALIST:

But what about the timeframe? Don't industry and investors really want some certainty in what it's all about?

PRIME MINISTER:

The answer is yes, industry does need certainty. There's been too much politics, too much ideology, not enough economics, not enough engineering.

Our energy policy and my commitment is to ensure that Australians have affordable, reliable energy, and that we meet our commitments, our international commitments to cut our emissions.

It is a very complex area and it involves every other government. So it has to go through COAG.

JOURNALIST:

But surely you have an aim and a timetable?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well the aim is to get it right. The aim is to get it right. Let me tell you, glib answers and one-liners have been of no assistance in keeping Australian's energy secure and affordable.

What Australians need is wise leadership, not glib leadership. What Australians need is economics and engineering, not ideology and politics. They've had too much of that. All that has done is drive electricity prices up and put reliability at risk.

You know, you heard it before but the example of South Australia is probably the worst, where you have a massive commitment to renewable energy, wind power, with not a thought in the world to how it would be backed-up. Not a thought in the world, to how you would have storage. Nobody was thinking about that. I don't think they were thinking at all. They were thinking about headlines and ideology. Enough is enough.

We need a clear, national plan founded on economics and engineering and we're doing the work to deliver it.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister can you describe for us what might happen this time if you miss the opportunity again, because either on the left or on the right, no compromise is possible. What will happen to the energy system, the electricity system? What will happen to the economy?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well look, Chris, I'm not interested in speculating about lack of success. Our job as a government is to deliver and to lead.

I have provided decisive leadership on energy. I refer you to the speech I gave at the Press Club at the beginning of the year when I talked about the importance of providing storage. I talked about the importance of maintaining coal in the system. I talked about the importance of high efficiency, low-emission coal. I talked about the importance of having an energy solution that is all of the above, that is technology agnostic, that delivers affordable power, secure power and meets our emission reduction commitments.

Now this is complex work, it is a work that needs to be driven and informed by economics and engineering. But Australian families and Australian businesses will know when we have succeeded because they will see downward pressure on electricity and gas prices.

We are already seeing downward pressure on gas prices, thanks to my Government's intervention. And they will see reliable, secure electricity so they won't be seeing the blackouts. It has taken quite a while of politics and ideology from the Labor side of politics, I regret to say, in a partisan note, but it's an objective one. We've seen its taken quite a while to get us to this point where energy is less affordable and less secure than it should be.

We will deal with it, we are dealing with it and we're giving it the due

consideration it deserves. As I said, this is a complex task, it's a hard task.

Glibness is not going to keep the lights on. Glibness is not going to pay the electricity bills.

Thank you all very much.

[ENDS]

Chris Back Retirement

I acknowledge and thank Senator Chris Back for his eight years of dedicated service representing the people of Western Australia.

Senator Back was an indefatigable advocate for the West, particularly ensuring the agricultural, agribusiness and resources sectors had a strong voice in the senate. I thank him for his tireless committee work and representation of rural and regional Australia.

Members and senators are volunteers to parliament while their families are conscripts. Senator Back's decision to put his family first should be commended.

I wish Senator Back and his family the very best for the future.

National Security Statement

PRIME MINISTER: Mr Speaker, the global threat we face from Islamist terrorism has been cruelly brought home to us in the past two weeks with young, innocent Australians murdered in Baghdad, London and Melbourne.

In a relatively short period, we have also seen attacks in Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Jakarta, and – grave concern – growing ISIL activity in the Southern Philippines, with ISIL affiliated terrorist forces besieging a city.

We have mourned the loss of four Australians killed in terrorist attacks in the last few weeks.

12 year old Zynab Al-Harbiya was killed in a suicide bombing in Iraq.

Kirsty Boden and Sara Zelenak were murdered in the London Bridge attack which saw two other Australians injured.

And only last week, a violent criminal – known to have had past links to terror groups – murdered Kai Hao, a husband and a father in Melbourne. The killer wounded three police officers as well.

Our deepest sympathies are with the victims and their families.

And we thank the police and security services who rushed to the scene to keep us safe – whether on London Bridge or in a Brighton street. They, together with the men and women of the Australian Defence Force, put their lives on the line to keep us safe.

The Brighton murder was the fifth terror-related attack on our shores in three years.

All of us have asked how such a criminal with such a long and well-known history of violence and terrorism could have been allowed parole.

We are all entitled to feel safe and secure in our own country. And we are all entitled to ask the question – what more must we do? And we must also be resolute. We must be united.

My unrelenting focus is to do everything possible to keep Australians safe and maintain our way of life, our values and our freedom.

We must be clear eyed and recognise that this is the new reality we face.

The national terror threat level remains at Probable and we are not immune from the global impact of the conflicts in the Middle East and the instability around the world.

But we should also be reassured, our law-enforcement agencies, intelligence services and Australian Defence Force are the best in the world – they keep us safe and they enable Australians to do what we always have – enjoy our freedom.

We lead our Australian way of life on our terms and will not buckle or be cowed by this scourge of Islamist terrorism.

Now today, Mr Speaker, I update the House and reassure every Australian on our strategy for taking this challenge head-on.

My number one priority, my government's number one priority is to keep Australians safe.

We face real and growing challenges – from senseless terrorist attacks, hardened fighters returning to our region, to foreign interference in our country.

Islamist terrorists are engaged in a systematic effort to weaken our societies and divide our communities.

We must remain united and remember that our best allies in the war against this extremist scourge are the vast majority of Muslims, leaders and their

communities. At home and abroad we condemn the terrorists and their hate filled ideology and join with us in defeating them.

Now our adversaries' methods and tactics are constantly evolving, and so must we.

That's why we are continually reviewing and adapting our laws and our approach to operations to thwart those who seek to do us harm.

Reacting is not enough. We must, we will, stay ahead of this threat.

Since August 2014, we have invested \$1.5 billion in our law enforcement and security agencies to combat terrorism.

We have passed eight tranches of additional national security legislation.

Last year, for example, we strengthened our control order regime, allowing us to monitor and limit where terrorist suspects can go and with whom they can associate.

Last week the government accepted all of the recommendations relating to the Commonwealth from the Coroner's report on the Lindt Café siege.

And we have already been acting on the recommendations of the joint New South Wales-Commonwealth review undertaken urgently after those terrible events in Martin Place.

Our intelligence agencies, all the arms of government and the community must continue working together to ensure that we stay ahead of this threat.

Since the national terrorism threat level was raised on 12 September 2014 to Probable, we have seen five attacks and 12 disruptions of terrorist plots.

This included one of the most substantial in recent years, a plot to cause mass casualties by exploding devices in central Melbourne near Federation Square just before Christmas last year.

Once again, the combined efforts of our intelligence services and our police, prevented a terrorist atrocity.

We must never become complacent and that's why we are investing an additional \$321 million in specialist capabilities for the Australian Federal Police – the largest single funding boost to the AFP's domestic policing capabilities in over a decade.

And why we continue to address this issue as a bipartisan, national priority.

After I secured the support of the states and territories at the December 2015 COAG, we legislated to enable the continued detention of high-risk terrorist offenders who pose an unacceptable risk to the community after the expiration of their sentences.

Last Friday, we agreed at COAG that states and territories will strengthen

their laws to ensure a presumption against bail and parole being granted to those who have demonstrated support for, or have links to, terrorist activity. The public needs the confidence that their lawmakers, their governments will put their safety first.

A special COAG will further review the nation's laws and practices directed at protecting Australians from violent extremism.

And we continue to work with the states and territories to develop a truly national strategy for protecting crowded places – including sporting stadiums, major events, and civic spaces. And in that work we are working also with local government who are responsible for many if not most of these spaces and of course property owners, owners of malls, sporting stadiums and so forth.

It is a comprehensive effort to ensure that we have the highest standard of protection in these crowded places, places of mass gathering.

Now that strategy was recommended in the review I initiated in June last year after a series of overseas terrorist attacks, vehicle borne attacks and it is one that will constantly evolve and develop in the light of experience, each jurisdiction, each precinct learning from the other.

Since May last year we have also been reviewing how Defence supports our national counter-terrorism arrangements. This review of laws that have not been updated in 16 years will soon be available to government.

And I will also soon receive the review of the Australian Intelligence Community that I tasked last year. This is a regular review and is a critical look at how our world class intelligence agencies and structures must adapt to stay ahead of the threat, anticipate evolving challenges and continue to reassure us of our future security, freedom and opportunities.

I will report back to the House with the Government's response to these initiatives, and seek bipartisan support in the knowledge that we should all be united on public sovereignty, public safety and national sovereignty.

Mr Speaker, we must continue to fight to cut off terrorism at its source and that is why, complementing our relentless pursuit for domestic security, we are contributing to international efforts to fight terrorism.

We have changed the law so the Australian Defence Force is able to target and kill terrorists in the Middle East whether they are fighting on the front line with a gun in their hand, financing in the back office, or recruiting fighters through the malignant Islamist ideology they disperse online.

In Iraq, we have trained 22,000 Iraq Security Forces personnel and our Air Task Group is providing significant air support to the anti-Daesh operations over Iraq and Syria, including over Mosul.

The Coalitions efforts are working.

Daesh or ISIL has lost around 55% of the territory it previously held in Iraq

and Syria. Over four million people have been liberated from Daesh control; 1.5 million displaced people have returned home and 250,000 children have returned to school. Daesh's revenue is at its lowest since 2014, following 2,600 strikes on Daesh-held gas and oil targets and 1,500 strikes on tanker trucks.

In Afghanistan, we are increasing our deployment to 300 ADF personnel to continue to build the local capability to hold territory and deny Islamist terrorists a base of operations.

Now this week Mr Speaker we are introducing legislation to change our visa and citizenship requirements to ensure that new members of our society will embrace our values and positively contribute to our Australian society, regardless of background or religious belief.

I urge the Opposition and all members of this House to support this vital strengthening of our citizenship laws.

We are the most successful multicultural society in the world.

We do not define our national identity as many others do by reference to religion, race or ethnicity but rather by a commitment to a shared set of political values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, equality of men and women, mutual respect.

We must not take that success for granted.

There is no more important title in our democracy than "Australian Citizen".

And we should make no apologies for asking those who seek to join our Australian family to join us as Australian patriots – committed to the values that define us, committed to the values that unite us.

Now our success as a multicultural society is built on strong foundations, which include the confidence of the Australian people that their government and it alone, determines who comes to Australia. Uncontrolled irregular migration flows have posed an existential threat to many countries where as Honourable Members know they have fuelled anxiety and political disorder.

Now our Government has secured Australia's borders – there has not been a successful people smuggling expedition to Australia for 1052 days.

And when we accept refugees into Australia – and we have one of the most generous humanitarian programs in the world – we take great care with security checks, as we have done with the 12,000 refugees from the Syrian conflict zone. Those checks are only possible if the Government determines which refugees are admitted and if the security of the border is not outsourced to people smugglers.

Now Mr Speaker, adapting to our changing environment has sometimes meant taking tough, even controversial changes.

We have not stood aside while criminals and extremists sought to divide us by

exploiting technology platforms designed to bring us together.

Instead, we have taken the necessary decisions, including establishing a mandatory data retention scheme.

As the global outlook has worsened, the value of these changes is becoming more apparent. Other countries are now looking to our reforms.

Metadata has proven vital in nearly every serious criminal investigation conducted today, from organised crime, child sex offences to counter-espionage, cyber security and counter-terrorism, including all of the 12 major disruptions of terrorist plots since 2014.

The Internet and the digital technologies it has enabled are breaking down national boundaries and distance. Billions of people now have in their pocket a device that potentially connects them to everybody else in the world.

Not so long ago only States and large corporations had megaphones powerful enough to address a nation – now a tweet or a YouTube video can reach millions, if not billions, and do so in seconds.

And reflect on the pace of these changes. The first iPhone was launched in 2007, Facebook, with 1.5 billion accounts worldwide, began in a Harvard dorm in 2004 and it has 200 million accounts in India and 100 million in Indonesia alone.

But these remarkable technologies are also being used by those who seek to do us harm.

We need even stronger co-operation from the big social media and messaging platforms in the fight against terrorism and the extremism which spawns it.

Encryption for example is a vital piece of security for every user of the Internet, protecting all of us as we go about our lives, from shopping, to banking, to chatting online.

However encrypted messaging applications are also used by criminals and terrorists – at the moment much of this traffic is difficult for our security agencies to decrypt, and indeed for our Five Eyes partners as well.

Most of the major platforms of this kind are based in the United States where a strong libertarian tradition resists Government access to private communications as the FBI found when Apple would not help unlock the iPhone of the dead San Bernardino terrorist.

The privacy of a terrorist can never be more important than public safety. Never.

An online civil society is as achievable as an offline one. And the rights and protections of the vast overwhelming majority of Australians must outweigh the rights of those who will do them harm.

And that is truly what balancing the priority of community safety with

individual liberties is all about.

My government is committed to this.

We will not take an 'if it ain't broke we won't fix it' mentality. This government does not simply set and forget. We are at the forefront of efforts to address future threats.

And with this objective, the Attorney-General will be in Canada this month to meet with his Five-Eyes counterparts, and discuss what more can be done among our like-minded nations and with the communications and technology industry, to ensure terrorists and organised criminals are not able to operate with impunity within ungoverned digital spaces online.

Now this is not about creating or exploiting "backdoors" as some privacy advocates continue to say despite constant reassurance from us. It is about collaboration with and assistance from industry in the pursuit of public safety.

Now in recognition that these threats constantly evolve, the Minister assisting me for Cyber Security and I have also set up a taskforce to drive fast action to improve Australia's capability and response to cyber security and cybercrime threats and incidents.

The WannaCry ransomware incident in mid-May was a big wake-up call for everyone. We were fortunate not to have seen the widespread impact experienced in the UK and elsewhere.

So this taskforce will engage broadly with Commonwealth agencies, the private sector, as well as state and territory governments in bringing forward the new ideas we need to build national capacity and capability.

Now Mr Speaker, while there is currently no higher priority than defeating Islamist terrorism, our interests are also directly threatened by attempts by foreign states to compromise the integrity of our democratic institutions and processes.

We should all guard jealously the principles and the values of democracy that we practice here in this place.

Recent events overseas, including influence operations and cyber disinformation campaigns designed to manipulate the US and French elections, have brought the insidious threat of covert foreign interference into very public view.

Now interference and espionage are global realities which have potential to cause immense harm to the security of our people, our economic prosperity and to the integrity of the democratic institutions which sit at the core of our sovereignty.

My Government has already embarked on a significant programme of legislative and policy reform to ensure the Australian people and our national interests are protected from these threats.

We are implementing our comprehensive Cyber Strategy.

We have developed Telecommunications Sector Security Reforms, which will strengthen our telecommunications networks from threats of espionage, sabotage and foreign interference. We aim to pass these reforms in this sitting of Parliament.

We have established the Government's Critical Infrastructure Centre to identify and manage risks of foreign espionage, sabotage and coercion to power networks, water supplies and other assets and systems that are vital to our national wellbeing.

And we are ensuring ASIO and Defence are working closely to ensure our sensitive Defence technologies, including our unprecedented naval shipbuilding investments, are secure from the threats posed by foreign intelligence activity.

We've asked the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters to examine foreign donations as part of its inquiry into all aspects of the 2016 election.

And importantly, at the beginning of last month, I asked the Attorney-General to review our espionage and foreign interference legislation to ensure it is fit for purpose in the current threat environment. This will lead to the most significant counterintelligence reforms since the 1970s.

So we are strengthening the resilience of our democracy and shoring up vulnerabilities. This is action, not words, constantly improving and upgrading our defences. There is no place for complacency, no place for set and forget.

Now in addition to these immediate threats, our regional strategic environment is more uncertain than it's been in 75 years.

Regional concerns over the South China Sea, the DPRK and terrorism, evident in recent attacks in Indonesia, and developments in the Southern Philippines are intensifying.

As I said in my address to the Shangri-La Dialogue a week ago, with the bitter memory of the Bali bombing, I am keenly alert to the risk that the next mass casualty attack on Australian victims could well be in Southeast Asia, where ISIL propaganda has galvanised existing networks of extremists and attracted new recruits.

We have to take responsibility for our own security and prosperity, but we must also recognise we are stronger when we are sharing the burden of collective leadership with trusted partners and friends.

We are helping to build the region's capacity to confront these cross-border challenges, by building operational partnerships, by boosting regional capacity and by increasing the flow of information. At the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit next year, all of this will be a top priority.

Mr Speaker, we do not turn away from the many challenges we face.

Our national attributes, our pride in our security, our diversity, our freedom and the prosperity which they enable, mean we are well-placed to confront these challenges. But we can never be complacent or avoid hard truths.

We must be open to change and lessons from events at home and abroad.

We all have a part to play: Government, business and the community.

The last four years of Coalition Government have seen an uninterrupted program of proactive national security reforms that have been designed in response to the growing global threat environment and not in reaction to catastrophe or criticism.

The Government has a proven track record of getting the balance right between ensuring the safety and security of our nation and its people, and defending the liberties and the personal freedoms that are integral to our way of life.

And the success of the Government has been underpinned by the success of our agencies – the best in the world – which work tirelessly to keep Australians safe.

But there is no room for even a moment's complacent satisfaction.

It is the first duty, the most solemn obligation of government, to keep Australians safe.

And I will not rest, the Government will not rest, in our relentless efforts constantly to improve our defences, our capabilities, our techniques, our technologies.

We must be faster, smarter and more agile than those who seek to do us harm. Set and forget is not an option.

We live in an age of change unprecedented in its scale and pace and our security, and the threats to it, are no exception.

Mr Speaker, my commitment and that of my Government is never to rest as we do all within our power to keep Australians safe, secure and free.