

# PRESS CONFERENCE: BRISBANE

## TRANSCRIPT

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Brisbane

Prime Minister, Premier of Queensland

*Cross River Rail project; investment in infrastructure; Scott Morrison's secret appointment to portfolios; health funding; 2032 Olympics; visit to Torres Strait;*

*Voice to Parliament; Prime Minister Marape*

*E&OE*

**ANNASTACIA PALASZCZUK, PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND:** Well, it is great to have the Prime Minister in town. And a lot has been said about Cross River Rail, but unless you get underneath and see exactly what's happening, you can see it is a transformational project. 7,000 jobs over the life of the project, over 2,600 people at the moment currently being employed on the project over 15 different sites. And, of course, as the vast nation that we are, this will be a transformational project, especially leading into the Olympics. It'll be a beautiful walkway to the Gabba Stadium. But this project is transformational and going to leave a lasting legacy for many, many years to come. It is great to have the Prime Minister. And I will hand over to Albo to talk to you.

**ANTHONY ALBANESE, PRIME MINISTER:** Thanks very much, Premier. It's great to be joined by yourself, the Deputy Premier and Minister Bailey as well as my colleague, the Member for Moreton, Graham Perrett. Because this is a project that shows us what good government looks like. It looks like this. An infrastructure project that will transform Brisbane, that will boost productivity, that's creating in excess of directly over 7,000 jobs at this project. There are currently over 2,500 Queenslanders work on this project. And I look back at lost opportunities and what happens when you change government. Because when Campbell Newman was elected, and then Tony Abbott was elected, this project was put on the shelf, the necessary project to drive productivity and growth throughout Southeast Queensland. Because this project increases the capacity of the entire network. But the Queensland Government by itself, it must be said, no Federal money in this project, has gone on with the job as Labor governments do, of being concerned about creating jobs, in this case for Queenslanders and for Australians. So, whilst Coalition leaders create jobs for themselves, this project is an example of creating jobs for Queensland. And that's why I'm here today and why I'm spending a few days back in Queensland again. Tomorrow, I'll be in the Torres Strait. And on Friday, I'll be in Rockhampton in the lead-up to the Jobs and Skills Summit. This is an example, as well, where projects that receive federal funding in future will receive a guarantee of ten per cent of the workforce being apprentices, making sure that we train Australians for those jobs, that were skill-up our workforce. So, I want to work very closely with the Palaszczuk Government on infrastructure projects, particularly in

the lead-up to the Olympics. It's a great opportunity for the whole of Queensland, and indeed for Australia, to showcase what we can do for the world, both on the field, in the pool and on the track, but also in the infrastructure area, in creating a world-class event that Australia can do better than anywhere else in the world. And I look forward to watching the developments over coming years.

I do want to say as well that the Jobs and Skills Summit is taking place. We are having our forums today in Canberra. There is a forum from disability workers and it is examining the ways in which we can increase employment of people with disabilities and also skill-up people. I spoke to a forum last night. Throughout Australia, we're having regional meetings. We're having meetings aimed at particular sections of the community, talking about how we can expand jobs and skills, how we can live wages. We know that today's figures show a 3.5 per cent decline in real wages with the wage figure of 2.6 compared with the annual inflation rate of 6.1. It's another reminder that wages are going backwards. There was no plan to live wages. We want to work with business, to work with unions, to work with the non-government sector to advance Australia's interests going forward. Happy to take questions.

**JOURNALIST:** Scott Morrison appointed himself into five additional portfolios and the fact that didn't even tell most of the Ministers because he did not need to exercise the powers, what are your thoughts? And do you have any further information on what instructions were made and to whom and as to why the documentation wasn't published?

**PRIME MINISTER:** The first rule of power-grab club is don't talk about power-grab club. And Scott Morrison broke that rule today. Scott Morrison was evasive, he was defensive, he was passive aggressive and, of course, he was self-serving. So, at least he was true to himself today. What we saw was all of his characters on full display. Blaming everybody else, not accepting any responsibility, saying, for example, that somehow when he said he was taking the decision on the resources as Resources Minister, when he said, 'I'm making this decision as Prime Minister', everyone should have known at that point in time, somehow that he had sworn himself in as the Resources Minister, in order to make that decision. His extraordinary comments that he said, where he gave a press conference and said that he made the conscious decision to not tell his Cabinet colleagues that he had also occupied their space as Treasurer, as Finance Minister, as Industry, Science, Energy and Resources Minister, as Home Affairs Minister, that somehow he didn't want it to be misinterpreted. Which is why he didn't tell anyone. The fact is there was at least three documents provided. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, I wrote to them today, asking in the public interest, after questions have been raised with the Department, and with myself at yesterday's press conference, that it be released. The documentation of appointment, signed by the Governor-General. Those documents have now been released. Why there wasn't any statement made at the time is incomprehensible to me. It is a Government not being transparent. And this was a Shadow Government. It's one thing to have a shadow ministry. This was a Shadow Government, so that Josh Frydenberg, and

Mathias Cormann, and Karen Andrews and others, weren't even told, nor were the secretaries of departments like Treasury and Home Affairs. So, when the incident occurred on May 21, where you had that release of the text messages about the arrival of a boat, Karen Andrews, who had got the phone call, according to her, from Scott Morrison, asking for a release to be made in breach of what had been the government policy, including under Minister Morrison when he had responsibility for that, at no stage did we know that Minister Morrison had in fact been appointed as Minister for Home Affairs as well. Now, it's one thing for his ministerial colleagues to not be told, and I noticed in the part of the press conference I watched, and I watched most of it before we began the event here today, Mr Morrison spoke about apologising to his ministerial colleagues for how they felt, not that he had done anything wrong, he had accepted no responsibility. How about an apology to the Australian people? The Australian people went to an election not knowing that any of this had occurred, not knowing that there was a Shadow Government operating in darkness, without transparency. A clear misleading of the Parliament, whereby parliamentarians and ministers are held to account for areas in which they have responsibility. We asked questions about PEP-11 specifically in the House of Representatives. And at no stage did Minister Pitt or Prime Minister Morrison at the time say, 'Well, actually, that was a decision made by Minister Morrison, not as Prime Minister, but as Minister for Resources'.

**JOURNALIST:** Do you think the actions were legal and in the national interest? Has there have been any more consideration about a review or an informal investigation?

**PRIME MINISTER:** I have asked for an opinion from the Solicitor-General. The question for Mr Morrison is - what advice did he get from the Solicitor-General before he made these decisions? We know that he made a request of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Prime Minister and Cabinet Department provided a brief for him to sign, he then signed off on a letter to the Governor-General and the Governor-General made the appointments upon the recommendation of the Government of the day. We will receive that advice, I'm advised, on Monday. That will be considered advice from the Solicitor-General. And that is appropriate. Because there are reasons why there's checks and balances in our democratic system. The reason why you have one minister who is responsible for making decisions about resources, or about environment, or about immigration, and by being sworn in, of course, to the Home Affairs portfolio, it also confuses that role, potentially, as well. The legal implications for this will be considered by the Solicitor-General. That advice will come to the Government and we'll make decisions about a way forward based upon that. But this only came about, be very clear, this came about, be very clear, this came about because Scott Morrison was getting a biography written of him, with a couple of journalists who published this on Saturday, and then bit by bit, information came out. And yesterday morning, Scott Morrison on 2GB said he couldn't recall any additional appointments beyond the three that have been released. He couldn't remember the fact he had been appointed to administer the Treasury portfolio? And the Home Affairs portfolio? I mean, give me a break. This is a guy who, and a Government, with Peter Dutton

sitting there, and yesterday, Peter Dutton said very clearly that basically, everybody should just move on. It was nothing to see here. 'We just had a Shadow Government operate, but ask me questions about something else, please'. He sat there in the Cabinet as well when Scott Morrison appointed himself as the sole member of a Cabinet committee simply so that he could avoid scrutiny in any meetings that he had with other Ministers, he could say they were co-opted onto that committee of one. It's a farce. This was a slippery slope that Scott Morrison went down, that Peter Dutton and the rest of his Cabinet went along with, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, for four years. For four years, this guy stood at press conferences and said, for example, in the United States, the issue of invites to the White House was just gossip, when he knew it wasn't gossip, it was fact.

**JOURNALIST:** Would an investigation be able to reveal if Mr Morrison used the powers of the Minister other than the PEP-11 project?

**PRIME MINISTER:** I have asked for advice about that. But quite clearly, given the fact that Mr Morrison wasn't even transparent yesterday morning on 2GB, then I don't think it's possible to take what he has said at face value. So, we've asked for advice. We await that advice.

**JOURNALIST:** Julian Hill has asked for the resignation of the Governor-General, is that the position of the wider Caucus?

**PRIME MINISTER:** It's not my position as Prime Minister. I have no intention of undertaking any criticism of the Governor-General. The Governor-General acted in accordance with the recommendations of the Government of the day. The Government of the day has to accept responsibility for this. And the people who were involved in it, directly, have to accept responsibility. If there's any changes that are required or recommended for any future examination of this, and quite clearly, it does need to be examined, it's not in spite of what Peter Dutton thinks is appropriate, it's not just going to move on here. This is fundamentally a trashing of our democratic system. A trashing of the convention and rules that have operated in Australia for 121 years. This is unprecedented. And that is why our democracy is in retreat worldwide. I don't know if people have noticed that. There's people fighting now in Ukraine to protect democracy and a sovereign nation. You have a rise of undemocratic regimes. We cannot be taken for granted. Our democracy is precious. We need to defend it and strengthen it, not undermine it, which is what the former Government has done.

**JOURNALIST:** Do you think there's a place in the Parliament for the Member for Cook?

**PRIME MINISTER:** I think, if I was a voter in Cronulla, or Caringbah, and I heard my local Member say he didn't follow day-to-day politics, then I think I would want something a bit better than that.

**JOURNALIST:** Where will the advice go to from the Solicitor-General on Monday?

**PRIME MINISTER:** I don't second guess. The difference between me and the former Government is that I am running an orderly, proper Government that obeys the rules and conventions of the Westminster parliamentary system. Part of that is issues of taking proper advice. We've asked for advice through the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, from the Solicitor-General. That is an appropriate course to take. And I won't pre-empt that. I will await that advice.

**JOURNALIST:** You talked about the benefits of Cross River Rail. One big sticking point in Queensland has been the cost of it. Is the Federal Government prepared to commit any extra funds to Cross River Rail, or any other infrastructure projects here in Queensland?

**PRIME MINISTER:** We had an agreement in place. We actually had a signed MoU here with the Queensland Government. It began under the former Labor Government, then the Government changed, the Government of Campbell Newman I met with a number of times, and Scott Emerson was the State Minister at the time. We came to an agreement of \$715 million each, and an availability payment going on for a considerable period of time. That was a fair while ago that occurred. More than a decade ago. This is a project that's under way now. But I will have constructive discussions about new projects with Premier Palaszczuk, as I will with other state and territory governments as well. But we'll prioritise as well projects that boost productivity like this one.

**JOURNALIST:** On that, Infrastructure Australia initially said the business case for this project didn't stack up.

**PRIME MINISTER:** That's not right. That is not right. That is not right. Infrastructure Australia had this project as its number one priority on the Infrastructure Australia priority list. Number one. In the entire country. This is a nonsense, just like the three projects in the east coast capitals, that required investment, were all about clogging the centre, if you like. So, in Melbourne, it was the Melbourne Metro project, it was in Sydney it was how to expand the capacity of the City Circle. And they're dealing with that through the Metro project. And here, it's Cross River Rail. It's not just about what is happening here at the station, it's about the entire capacity of the network, and it's why the BCR was so positive for the project. Tony Abbott and the Coalition preferred to fund projects based upon the electoral map rather than based upon productivity boosting infrastructure.

**JOURNALIST:** Can you tell us if you have any plans to meet with people in the Torres Strait, and how that will form any discussions around the referendum?

**PRIME MINISTER:** I met with the Torres Strait Regional Authority there. We'll go to Thursday Island tomorrow. And we'll also have a come one, come all forum there in the afternoon. I want to engage with Australians both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, to consult with them. I gave a substantial speech in Garma. I'm very pleased that, and I thank Premier Palaszczuk for her support, but I thank all the premiers across the political spectrum have indicated their support for recognising Indigenous Australians in our Constitution and having an enshrined Voice to the Parliament. Now it's time to have those consultation mechanisms.

Linda Burney is meeting with state and territory Aboriginal Affairs Ministers in Canberra I think is where the venue is. And she'll be travelling with us tomorrow up to the Torres Strait.

**JOURNALIST:** Premier, BHP has said they have shelved plans for a new coal mine because of the new royalties regime. Treasurer Cameron Dick has rubbished the argument. Do you think this could have been avoided if the Government had consulted with industry or given them the courtesy of a heads-up?

**PREMIER PALASZCZUK:** The Treasurer did consult with the Resources Council about this. Of course, at the moment, the resource companies are making record profits. And what we are doing is we are asking them to pay a little bit more during these boom times. And that is going to the people of Queensland. The people of Queensland own this resource. And this money is being used for our hospitals and our schools. And I think every fair-minded Queenslanders would agree with that.

**JOURNALIST:** Premier, the Cross River Rail services to the Gabba for 2032, can you give a guarantee that is the only option at the table for the stadium? Have you received a guarantee of funding from the Prime Minister? And if it does go ahead, what is the future for East Brisbane?

**PREMIER PALASZCZUK:** Look, we have spoken. And the Prime Minister and I will continue to have very good discussions about the commitments of joint funding between the Commonwealth and the State in relation to some venues which are legacy projects, such as the rebuild of the Gabba. It is very important. It is something that I spoke about to the International Olympic Committee. And it is something that we signed up to. In relation to the school, I can understand that there are some preliminary concerns of parents. The Education Minister is engaging with the school and there will be thorough consultation with that school about if that school does need to move.

**JOURNALIST:** Is it likely to be included in any of the plans, in any redevelopment plans, or is that not feasible?

**PREMIER PALASZCZUK:** Look, the consultation process on the Gabba redevelopment hasn't even started. We had some preliminary concept designs. But it is also very exciting because what you see is the underground here will be connected to the Gabba. You will be able to walk across from the train station all the way over to the Gabba, above the road, And it will be a fantastic legacy for Queensland following on from the Olympics.

**JOURNALIST:** Premier, when was the last time you lobbied the Prime Minister for a 50-50 split on general health funding? Are you still advocating for that?

**PREMIER PALASZCZUK:** We always talk collaboratively about health. And you may remember the first meeting we had where we spoke about how important health was, the Prime Minister put money on the table. That is the first time that has happened. And can I say, all premiers and first ministers really enjoyed this constructive dialogue and conversation that we have now with this Prime Minister. It is the best that we have ever had.

**JOURNALIST:** Are you getting a fair deal without that 50-50 funding though?

**PREMIER PALASZCZUK:** We are getting a fair deal. And don't forget too, we have actually put in over nine billion dollars in health infrastructure in our Budget. And of course, there are other issues that I know that the Federal Government is looking at in relation to how we get more trained GPs out to our rural and regional areas, the Medicare rebate scheme is also something that is going to be looked at. So, look, these are issues that we understand that there are pressures on our national health system. But isn't it good news to hear that we're coming off this way? And I do want to publicly thank all of our doctors and nurses, everyone out there who's been dealing with this pandemic for the last two and a half years. They really deserve the public's thanks.

**JOURNALIST:** Premier, how confident are you seeing the NRL Grand Final come here to Queensland?

**PREMIER PALASZCZUK:** You might want to step offside for this one. Look, I really hope, well, Peter V'landys is an honourable man. We have a very good relationship. And I think that he will give serious consideration to the hosting of the Grand Final. And we stand are willing, able to step up if the NRL board deems that to be the case.

**JOURNALIST:** The Queensland Government obviously wants to hold more than one here. But will you be happy if they offer you a deal with just one Grand Final?

**PREMIER PALASZCZUK:** I'd be happy with one, two or three. And the people of Queensland love their footy. And I can guarantee you this, if the final is held here, the Prime Minister will still attend. Just two more. I have to get back to Parliament.

**JOURNALIST:** *(Inaudible)*. Are you advocating the Prime Minister to extend that?

**PREMIER PALASZCZUK:** I think everyone realises that housing is a big issue everywhere. And, look, the Prime Minister's going up to the Torres Strait. The cost of building in some of our rural and remote communities is a big issue. We need the skilled force. That's why we've got the Skills Summit coming up there. It's about empowering our local communities to be able to build things in their own backyards. Thank you. And I'll leave the Prime Minister here with you. I've got Parliament.

**JOURNALIST:** *(Inaudible)*.

**PREMIER PALASZCZUK:** We are talking about the mechanism, the governance mechanism, around that. We will continue those discussions. But you know, can I just say that we delivered a very good Commonwealth Games working collaboratively with the Federal Government. And we actually got things built on time and on budget. And in fact, I think there was a small savings components. So, I'm very confident that working with this Prime Minister, we will deliver the best Olympic Games ever.

**JOURNALIST:** *(Inaudible)*. Is that a matter of concern? What is your response to that?

**PREMIER PALASZCZUK:** I'll have a look at that report. But I will say that former Justice Margaret McMurdo's report is actually looking at women and girls in the criminal justice system. So, we'll be going through that report. It will be coming into Cabinet very soon for our consideration. Thank you, everyone.

**JOURNALIST:** *(Inaudible)*.

**PREMIER PALASZCZUK:** Look, we don't want to see these incidents happening. Young people should be at home. They shouldn't be out on the streets. Look, the police are doing everything that they can and we've got tough laws. And the magistrates have those powers to enforce those laws. Okay, thank you.

**JOURNALIST:** Is the 50-50 health funding off the table?

**PRIME MINISTER:** Well, the Premier has indicated that the first National Cabinet meeting we had I extended the funding for health at a substantial cost of around about \$900 million dollars of additional funding. At that time also, what we said was that we'd look at wasn't just about the money, it was also about the structure of our health system. One of the problems that emergency departments have is that people in aged care end up in ED because there's no nurses in our nursing homes. And that is just one example of a problem which is there. The other problem is, of course, access to GPs. People go to hospital because they can't get access to a bulk billing GP. That's why we're setting up urgent care clinics, 50 of them around the country, that will bulk bill. That is about taking pressure off of emergency departments in our hospital networks. So, there's a range of spending that we've got, in addition to that \$750 million on primary healthcare that we'll do over three years, worked out in conjunction with the Royal Australian College as well as the AMA. My Government is very committed to strengthening Medicare. We will work cooperatively with state and territory governments working those issues through.

**JOURNALIST:** Mr Morrison...

**PRIME MINISTER:** I dealt with that issue. I'm also not the Energy Minister, the Resources Minister, the Treasurer, the Finance Minister, the Home Affairs Minister, the Science Minister. Did I leave anything out? The Health Minister, as well. I'm just the 31st. Prime Minister. But go ahead, please.

**JOURNALIST:** You mentioned that you had watched Scott Morrison's press conference.

**PRIME MINISTER:** Some. I couldn't watch it all.

**JOURNALIST:** Is it in your view that he does not yet grasp the unprecedented nature of what he has done?

**PRIME MINISTER:** It is very clear that he doesn't. One of the things that I heard him say, and it struck me as just extraordinary, I wrote it down. 'Only I could understand the weight of responsibility of what was happening in the pandemic'. I reckon that people who are nurses, people who are working in aged care, people who were working in emergency services, and retail workers, those who lost loved ones, those who had affected directly by the pandemic, I reckon they knew the weight of what



was occurring in this country, not just Scott Morrison. And I found that in that one sentence, it said everything about how this atrocious appalling undermining of democracy happened, because for Scott Morrison, it was always about him. And that statement, I just found absolutely extraordinary. He also said that Australia was a great democracy. Well, he treated it as anything but that. He failed. As I said, it's one thing what he didn't tell other departments, ministers, etc. But he didn't tell the Australian people what was going on with the structure of their Government, their Government. No one owns the Government. It's owned by the Australian people. That's the way democracies work.

**JOURNALIST:** *(Inaudible)*.

**PRIME MINISTER:** Well, the head of the Home Affairs Department has said that he didn't. He didn't know, as did the Minister for Home Affairs, as well. That, of course, is the national security portfolio. But people did know that he established a committee, a Cabinet committee, of one. People did know that a range of things that he said over his period as Prime Minister simply were not true. Simply were not true. You had a circumstance whereby the issue of going on leave, I went on leave last week, I told people I was going on leave. Richard Marles was acting as Prime Minister, you might recall, people didn't even know who was the Acting Prime Minister during that time, because this was a Government that was addicted to secrecy, that didn't feel like it had to be accountable to the Australian people. I might take just one more.

**JOURNALIST:** *(Inaudible)*.

**PRIME MINISTER:** Yes, there's not a date been finalised for that. There's not a date been finalised. He hadn't been elected as Prime Minister at that time, you might recall. So, I have been in contact with Prime Minister Marape and congratulated him on his election. It wasn't possible to finalise the details. But I look forward to visiting PNG when it is possible, when it's organised. But as well, there is a rugby league game taking place in this great city of Brisbane in September as well. And I have issued an invitation to Prime Minister Marape to attend the PM's XIII Game.

**JOURNALIST:** What issues are you going up to the Torres Strait to find out?

**PRIME MINISTER:** Well, no, well, I'm visiting the Torres Strait, not PNG. And I'll be talking to the Torres Strait Islanders about the issue of the Voice, but also other issues as well. I think that it's important that the Australian Prime Minister talk with people in every region of Australia, and that we're accountable for that. And that's why I'm visiting, along with Senator Nita Green, who of course is based in Far North Queensland, and as well with Linda Burney. And I look forward to constructive dialogue. I was a member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee of the Parliament that conducted an inquiry into a greater autonomy for Torres Strait Islanders. And some of that report laid dormant, unfortunately. But there's a range of suggestions. I look forward to constructive dialogue while I'm up there. Thanks very much.

PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA