



The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

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EO&E...

PRIME MINISTER: Good afternoon, I'm joined by the Minister for Education and the Attorney-General as well. He'll be making some announcements on some critical areas as a result of some of the decisions we've been taking and the work that is being done. But before I do that, I'd just like to run through a few things. 10 weeks ago, this week, ahead of the rest of the world, Australia listed the coronavirus as a disease with pandemic potential under our Biosecurity Act, following the outbreak of coronavirus in Wuhan, China. We stood up our incident response centre at that time and I visited on the 22nd of January. Some of you joined me there on that day. We set up quarantine facilities soon after that, on Christmas Island and ultimately, later in the Northern Territory and we repatriated families and individuals from Wuhan, China, who had been affected by that initial outbreak area. The expert medical panel was stood up and has met every day since the 31st of January. On the 1st of February, we started closing the borders to visitors coming from mainland China. And we were one of the first countries in the world, indeed, to do so. The Chinese-Australian community did an amazing job in those early days of the spread of the coronavirus. They have been an early example to the rest of the country as the broader implications are now being experienced and the measures that have been taken. They showed all Australians back then how to do this. And I want to thank them very, very much for the example that they set in those early phases, containing and limiting the spread of the virus that had come from China in those early days was incredibly important and has put Australia in the position that we have been in now for these many weeks, where we have been able to get ahead of this, more so than many other countries around the world.

Five weeks ago - a fortnight before the World Health organisation - we called out the coronavirus as a pandemic and we activated the emergency response plan on that basis, further border closures and measures were announced and implemented. Three weeks ago our first economic package was released and that has now been scaled up, as you know, just in terms of fiscal measures of the Commonwealth to some \$200 billion, with the Reserve Bank and the Australian Office of Financial Management adding a further \$105 billion to that total through their support of liquidity in financial markets. The National Cabinet was formed soon after that and started to put in place the many social distancing and other restrictions and they've been upgraded ever since.

Today, emergency powers are in place across all the states and territories and at a Commonwealth level with a very clear message when it comes to the measures we need to have in place, to continue to save

lives and to save livelihoods. Stay at home unless you're out there exercising, getting medical care, you are going to work or education, these are important, or getting things that you need at the shops. These measures are being implemented as was agreed by the National Cabinet, by the states and territories with the enforcement arrangements that they believe are necessary to ensure that those social distancing and other restrictions are effectively implemented in their states and territories, according to the circumstances in their states and territories. And as we know over these last couple of weeks, and particularly in this last week, this is getting very, very real for Australians as they continue to adapt and change their daily lives to what it is going to be like for us, for many months ahead.

We are one of the few, if only, countries that have been talking about the coronavirus pandemic as being one that we are going to have to live with for at least the next six months. I've been very clear about that for a very simple reason. I really want Australians to understand that we need to be in this for that haul. It will be months. We need to make changes that we can live with and that we can implement day after day, week after week, month after month. And so making your changes to your daily lives and how you do things and the other changes that have been put in place, we have sought at all times to make them sustainable, to make them scalable, because this gives us the opportunity as this happens to prepare more and more and to strengthen the position we're in so we can get more ICU beds in place, so we can get more PPE, that personal protection equipment, that we can get more ventilators and then we can even better prepare our community for the changes and impacts that will come.

We are slowing the spread, that is happening and that is saving lives and it is saving livelihoods. And again, I thank Australians for their support. The rate of growth, as we've seen, particularly over the course of this week, has fallen to; on a daily basis, single digit numbers, and that's welcome, but it's still not enough. And in particular, we're watching those community transmission numbers very carefully as are the states and territories most affected.

Over these many weeks, there have been announcements on aged care, health systems, domestic violence support, emergency relief, private hospitals. Many responses, unprecedented responses. It's creating a new normal in Australia during this virus. A new baseline as we fight the virus and we fight the economic threats that it poses.

Today, we are making further announcements. Childcare and early childhood education is critical, particularly for those Australians who rely on it so they can go to work every day, particularly those who are working in such critical areas. And as I said, critical areas aren't just the obvious ones. It's not just the doctors or the nurses who are at the hospitals. It's the cleaners at the hospitals as well. It's the people driving trucks to get food out to supermarkets and ensure the supplies continue to run. If you have a job in this economy, then that's an essential job, in my view, in terms of the running of the economy, and it's important that all those parents who have children, that they get access to childcare and that those facilities will be there for them in the many months ahead.

The Education Minister will take you through the specifics, but what we will be doing is we'll be ensuring for those parents who are still in that position where they're needing that childcare, it will be free and we'll be putting in place support arrangements to the childcare facilities, some 13,000 of them, to ensure that they'll be able to remain open and be there for those parents to ensure that they can do what they need to do each day, just like it's essential that those schools that are out there, that they can take the children they need to take each day from those same parents so we can continue running Australia each and every day.

In addition to the issues that we've been addressing in the childcare area, which are the Education Minister will go into in more detail. Now, the Attorney-General has been working closely with the union movement. I spoke to Sally McManus again this morning and I want to thank her for her engagement in what is a very difficult time. They understand that, and I thank them for the way they've engaged in that discussion. There are, there are no blues teams or red teams or, there are no more unions or bosses. There are just Australians now, that's all that matters. An Australian national interest and all Australians working together. And I thank all of those that are coming together in that spirit. And that will be very important as we move to put in place the arrangements we are for this JobKeeper program and the many things that relate to that. And so the Attorney-General has also been working with Fair Work and others to ensure some very constructive and flexible arrangements have been put in place to help us get through this.

Parliament will return next week on Wednesday to pass the measures that we've recently announced. I'm meeting with my senior leadership tonight with the opposition, there has already been briefings that have taken place with the opposition. They've been putting forward their views and we're working through that. The drafting is taking place each and every day until very late in the evening.

But we now need to make the changes that have been made, work. That is so important. There is a new normal here in Australia and it is one that we now need to get used to and settle into for that haul over the next 6 months. That is something that will go against the grain for so many, but we adapt. We can change the way we live, but it doesn't change who we are and what I have seen from Australians in so many cases is exactly that sort of attitude. While we have to be isolated, we can still remain connected and Australians are finding innovative ways to achieve that and I think that is tremendous. Because through all of this, we must always maintain who we are as a people, our character, our principles, our values - and to live them out. We are a strong society. We are a Liberal Democratic society and, as I said in the House, we will demonstrate to the world here in Australia how such societies can deal with these sorts of challenges our way, the Australian way.

So stay positive, Australia. Stay connected, stay strong. We will get through this together.

Dan.

THE HON. DAN TEHAN MP, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Thanks. PM And as you have said, we want all parents who have to work through the coronavirus pandemic to be able to make sure that their children are getting the care that they expect and they want their children to be getting. So that's why we'll be moving to a different childcare system as of Sunday night.

It will be a system which will mean parents will get their children cared for for free. What we will be doing is turning off the old system and going to a new system which will provide that relief to parents. And can I say to all those parents, what we want to do by doing this is ensure that your childcare centre will remain open so that you know where you normally take your child to get cared, that that will be there for you so that you're not looking to have to go to a new centre, that you're not, you do you do not have the worry and the concern about trying to look for new care for your children.

The way it will work is that we will look at what 50 per cent of the fees, up to the rate cap, were in the fortnight before the 2nd of March. And we will pay you that amount on a fortnightly basis. We will also make sure that it is calibrated with JobKeeper. Now, 60 per cent of the wages, 60 per cent of the costs of a child care centre are the wages. So with JobKeeper, we are helping support the sector to the tune of

over a billion dollars. With this payment, we will be helping the sector to the tune of \$1.6 billion dollars. And this will enable the sector to make sure that they remain open and are providing this care for parents for free.

Now, there are some conditions that we're asking, if the sector are to receive these payments. The centre must remain open. It must provide care for those parents who need their children cared for. They must also seek to re-enroll those parents who might have dropped off. So if they need care, they can get that care as well. And to help and assist with that we're backdating to the 23rd of March the requirement that the sector must pursue from parents a fee. So we're waiving the gap fee for parents going back to the 23rd of March.

So the hope is that now all parents who need, will get the care they want. And those who have sought to disengage from from the child care sector will re-engage with the sector. I want to thank the childcare sector for the cooperative way they've worked with me and worked with the government as we have devised this new way of payment. Obviously, we've had to calibrate this after we knew the settings of the JobKeeper payments so we could ensure that we got the balance absolutely right to keep the sector functioning and viable through the next six months.

PRIME MINISTER: Thank you Dan. I'm going to ask the Attorney now to update on the issues relating to industrial relations.

THE HON. CHRISTIAN PORTER MP, ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Thank you, Prime Minister, and thanks to everyone present. So the Prime Minister's asked me to give you a summary of some of the changes in industrial relations and workplace relations that have occurred over the last 3 weeks and to highlight some possible next steps in that regard.

So behind the scenes, in a quiet and cooperative way, there have been a series of reforms to modern awards and the IR system that's been done cooperatively and quietly but it has been utterly critical to saving what I believe to be tens of thousands of jobs. And it's probably fair to say that there's been the type of change in 3 weeks inside the award system that you might otherwise wait 30 years to see. The reform has been temporary, it's meant to last for as long as this crisis lasts. It's critical and ultimately it's been incredibly cooperative.

So there are 121 modern awards. There have been very significant changes to 3, restaurants, hospitality, and what's known as the clerks award. Now, whilst that's only 3 of 121, they cover about 2 million workers. These have been applications by agreement between the employers and the unions in each of those sectors, and they've been approved in record time by the Fair Work Commission. And the changes to those 3 awards have meant things like this, that an individual worker who was performing one type of duty in one type of classification can go and move and perform another type of duty in another type of classification. They have facilitated working from home arrangements. So remarkably, some of the awards were so inflexible that it was actually unlawful to work from home, of which, of course there is a great amount occurring in Australia at the moment. They've also allowed for, by agreement, things such as taking longer durations of annual leave at reduced rates. Those types of changes are absolutely critical. They would have saved tens of, tens of thousands of jobs. It's not a matter of the government claiming credit for those changes, we are here to thank the parties that have facilitated those changes. That is the ACTU, ACCI, the Australian Industry Group, individual employer associations like the AHA, individual unions like the SDA have changed the terms and conditions for 2 million workers to ensure that tens of

thousands of jobs have been saved. And as I say, that's been done quietly and cooperatively but represents a massive reform to our employment relations system.

So next steps that are to be undertaken, and I should congratulate the President of the Fair Work Commission, Iain Ross, for his remarkable work in facilitating those changes that I've just described and using his own motion power in the Fair Work Commission. It's proposed that all, 103 of the 121 modern awards will be changed to allow for 2 changes across 103 awards. The first is for 2 weeks of unpaid pandemic leave for all employees. And the second across those 103 awards is the allowing of the taking of double the duration of leave, at half the pay. Now you can see how those commonsense changes would allow the flexibility in a number of businesses, which flexibility could well make the difference between survival of the business and preservation of the jobs, or the failure of the business and the loss of the jobs.

So these are incredibly important changes, they would have saved tens of thousands of jobs. And I might also add they have been critical to ensuring and protecting the supply lines of the goods and services that Australians rely on. I'm now deep in drafting with the Treasurer and Treasury to ensure that our \$1,500 dollar JobKeeper payment is going to be facilitated in the simplest way legislatively. That is quite a task, but that is also a task that is going to involve changes to a number of acts. So thank you, Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER: Thank you, Christian. And now we're going to go to questions, another figure I should have been relaying to you, is Australia has now reached a testing rate of more than a 1,000 tests per 100,000 population. That's 1 percent of the population. We're the first country to the best of our knowledge that has been able to exceed that mark. Our testing resources, and I'll ask both of you guys to join me, the testing resources that we are putting in place have been absolutely fundamental to our tracing and other measures that we're taking at a state level to ensure that we can contain the growth and spread of the virus. Those testing figures are the result of some incredible work that has been done by the Health Ministers, the securing of the testing materials themselves and their application right across the country. It has been an extraordinary, mammoth testing effort and that has put Australia on top when it comes to ensuring we have the best information on tracking this virus.

Happy to go to questions, we'll go here, and as I'll, try and make sure everyone gets a go. Yep?

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, why has it taken so long for relief for this particular sector? Hundreds of centres have already closed, parents keeping kids at home have still been paying fees to keep their place and also the centre Goodstart won't qualify for that JobKeeper payment because it's over, has a turnover of over a billion. Will an exemption be made for that major centre argument given it employs over 3,000 casual educators?

PRIME MINISTER: I'll let the Minister speak to the issues around Goodstart and those other measures, but this week we announced a \$130 billion package to support JobKeeper all around the country. We, in just the last few weeks have put \$200 billion worth of support into the Australian economy for the next six months. We have mobilised a testing regime better than any in the world. We have put additional resources at record levels our hospitals, into our private hospitals, into our aged care facilities. And we've been working through these issues each and every day. No government in our history has moved more quickly to deal with the resourcing needs of the Australian people than the one that is leading Australia through this crisis. Dan.

MINISTER TEHAN: Thanks PM. And we had put measures in place, we'd lift the rate of absence days from 40 to 62. We'd also asked all those centres who were suffering as a result of parents withdrawing to put into, submissions to the child care fund. And we're looking to see what additional financial assistance will be provided as well of that, as well with that fund. But the key thing was we needed to put in place a new system to deal with what was occurring. Now, the old system is quite a complex system. It was drafted for a pre-pandemic time. What we needed to be able to do with reductions in attendances is look at how we could put in place a new, new system which would adjust for that. And that required looking at ways to do that outside the current legislative framework. And this is incredibly complex piece of work to be able to do. And can I just say to all officials in the education system who have worked tirelessly on this for the last week for the sector who have liaised with the government on this. Thank you for your support because they have fully understood the complexity of what we have done. In turning a system upside down and putting in place a new arrangement which we are able to announce today. And our hope is the payment will flow before Christmas. Now when it comes to Goodstart, they have over a billion dollars in revenue, they make a profit of \$100 million roughly annually. Now I continue to liaise with Goodstart. We have to see, they are just over the \$1 billion revenue mark. So we continue to discuss with them. Obviously, they will benefit from what we have announced today, which puts a baseline into their funding. Now we will continue discussions with them. And I was on the phone to them this morning and I have said that I will continue to discuss with them because there is some sort of debate or discussion as to whether that \$1 billion revenue mark for how long that will hold for and what then adjustments could be made.

JOURNALIST: [Inaudible]

MINISTER TEHAN: No, I'm not, I'm not saying that exemptions will be made. I'm saying we will continue to liaise and discuss these issues through with them. But they would not have been aware, even when I was discussing with them this morning about what we have announced this morning.

PRIME MINISTER: Under the JobKeeper package also, the tax commissioner, JobKeeper applies to not for profits as well as profit, profit making companies. And the Australian Tax Office commissioner will have an authorised discretion to deal with unique cases. So that just doesn't apply in any one sector. It applies across the board.

Michelle?

JOURNALIST: A point of clarification to the Minister. Will these centres be open to all who were using them before, or the Prime Minister emphasized the importance for essential workers of varying sorts. But what about people who are not working or who are working from home? Is it open slather to them all?

MINISTER TEHAN: So what we're going to ask the centres is to prioritise and they should prioritise. Obviously, those who need their children cared for because they are working, and working where they can't care for their children safely at home for them then to prioritise as well vulnerable children who need that continuity of care as well, and then to re-engage with those parents who have taken their children out of care, to see whether they can be accommodated as necessary as well. But there is a clear priority list that we want centres to take into account, and the most important of those are those essential workers and the vulnerable children.

PRIME MINISTER: So Michelle, in this new normal that we're living in, it's no longer about entitlement. It's about need. And we're calling on all Australians to think about what they need, and to think about the

needs of their fellow Australians who may have a greater need when it comes to calling on the many things that are being provided.

I'll go to Greg and over the back. Then I'll come over this way.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister you talk about a 6 months or more, shutdown effectively.

PRIME MINISTER: That's not, that's not the phrase I've used and that's not the phrase that I've counselled people to use.

JOURNALIST: Okay, well, you've mentioned this is something we'll be dealing with for 6 months. Would you be able to provide a threshold as to when the shut downs can start winding back to avoid a second stage pandemic? Is it, is it something like that there's no known cases or no new cases? And more importantly, will there be a ban on travel- will the borders be closed until there is a vaccine?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, they're important questions, but again, what the National Cabinet has done and the National Cabinet is meeting again tomorrow and they'll also be considering issues around childcare regulation and things of that nature. They have imposed a range of restrictions on people. I wouldn't use the phrase that you are, and again, I'd encourage people not to not to use that phrase, because that can only, I think, encourage people to think that there is a, there aren't food in the shops and things of that nature. So that's the basis of why I encourage media not to use that word. So I'd ask you to co-operate by doing that. The thresholds about when you can ease restrictions, whether they be, whether they be the social restrictions, the closures that have been put in place or indeed the travel arrangements, these are not things that are known at this point and can't be known at this point. And that's what the government working together with all the state and territory governments, our medical advisers and others are constantly looking at. But this is why I've been fairly upfront with Australians to say you're looking at least six months for this, and that's why we have to adapt. And I can assure you that if any of these restrictions were not necessary from a health point of view and if there was the ability to ease them without compromising the nation's health and indeed risk what you've noted as being a taking off of the virus again. Well, we'd have to be very careful about that. That's why I counselled that going into this, that the restrictions we put in place have got to be restrictions that we can live with each day. There were many others who advocated much stronger measures. And I did say you need to be careful what you wish for because we have to live with it for 6 months. And it's important that as a country and the governments of the country working with the states and territories, the way we implement these and we work together means that people can live with them each day because we want Australians to be able to keep doing it. And we don't want that frustration to become so much that they might otherwise walk away from the measures that we already have. So this is a partnership between governments and the public. It's a partnership to do things that are sustainable and to make the changes in a manageable way. And as I said, we are fighting a war on two fronts, we are fighting this virus and we are fighting the economic threats that it carries for us. And to do that, we have to get the balance right between all of these measures. We are watching the data very, very closely and we will see cases obviously continue to rise. No one is saying that that won't occur, but it's the pace and rate of that growth that is important. And one of the key focuses of all countries around the world and the G20 leaders, G20 leaders meeting we had the other day, was we're all investing everything we can to find that vaccine, but not just the vaccine, but to improve the treatments that are available, the anti-viral treatments. And there are some promising signs in a number of these, and we'll continue to work with other countries along those lines.

Now, over here, yep, up the back?

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, when you say child care will be free, is this free for all parents or is the existing means testing arrangements still in place?

PRIME MINISTER: Dan?

MINISTER TEHAN: Yeah no, the existing means testing arrangements are no longer in place. So what this means is that we want everyone to be able to access care who is working during this 6 month pandemic.

JOURNALIST: The cruise industry in Australia is worth \$5 billion dollars a year. The cruise ship industry, we've had New South Wales Police Commissioner in the last few days threaten to send the Navy out to kick out cruise ships off the coast. We've had him say that they shouldn't get treatment because the companies don't pay tax in Australia. Overnight, Trump actually said that people on cruise ships deserve to be treated humanely. Where are you sitting on this issue? And is that damaging rhetoric from the New South Wales Police Commissioner hurting our ability to get Australians who are stranded off the coast of the US home as well?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, the cruise ships that are off the coast are being managed by the New South Wales government and they have the authorities that they have to deal with that. And I understand some of them were visited for the purposes of health checks very, very recently. The principles that we've had in place haven't changed, and they've been applied consistently. If there are people who are sick and need health care, then whether it's a foreign national off our shores, who is in need of that or an Australian somewhere else who is in need of that, then countries have been respecting that. And that is the position of the Australian government and that has been respected and that has been honoured as recently as we've seen in Western Australia with the cases that are there that we are provisioning those ships so they'll be able to move on their way. And that's what we would be encouraging them to do. And the states will continue to manage those issues with the authorities that they have.

JOURNALIST: The messaging here might be confusing for some parents, they were told to keep their kids at home. Now they're told to send them to childcare. What's the actual preference?

PRIME MINISTER: No, I don't, well, I disagree. What we've always said and the health advice has been very clear and it has not changed. There is no health risk to children going to school or going to childcare. So that hasn't changed. Absolutely no change. That has been the clear and consistent advice that the government has received and that I've relayed on these issues, as have the Premiers. They've all said that the health advice is clear, children can go to childcare and children can go to school. What schools have moved to largely now and will continue to, is a dual model of providing education of both distance learning for those children who can have an appropriate environment provided at home for them to do that. And where there are parents who can't do that either because they are working and they're in, if you've got a job that's an essential job, then they need the ability for their children to go to that school. And we've had great cooperation from the teachers unions, from the schools, ensuring that no child is being turned away or on that basis. Now, what we're doing here is ensuring the same arrangements exist for childcare centres. So people who have those jobs won't have their livelihoods put at risk. I don't want a parent to have to choose between feeding their kids and having their kids looked after. Or having their education being provided. This virus is going to take enough from Australians without putting Australian parents in that position of having to choose between the economic wellbeing of their family and the care and support and education of their children. I won't cop a situation where a parent is put in that place with their kids.

Now we're gonna come over here, Phil?

JOURNALIST: Regarding the airlines? The government has said it doesn't want,

PRIME MINISTER: Sorry I couldn't hear you over all the shutters?

JOURNALIST: Regarding the airline industry. The government has said it doesn't want to accede to that request by Virgin for a loan. It doesn't be seen to be bailing out a specific business. Is that a principle that will be applied across the business sector as this crisis unfolds, that distressed businesses need systemic sector wide support programs rather than individual bailouts? Is that?

PRIME MINISTER: Well Phil you know I haven't made any comment on this matter. What I can only point to is the decisions that the government has made and those decisions have been made on a sector wide basis.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister you've, you may have heard the call from the opposition today saying that backpackers that are qualified nurses maybe from the UK or whatever, that their qualifications should be fast tracked, in other words, they should be absorbed into the system as soon as possible. Do you agree with that? And one other question. What keeps you awake at night with this crisis? We see these images from New York, from London, really distressing images. And what sort of discussions do you have with your family about it?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, look, on the first, just remind me the first part of that again?

JOURNALIST: Nurses?

PRIME MINISTER: Yes, as you know, we moved several weeks ago to ensure that student nurses could have their hours relaxed. And I think from memory there was about 20,000 in that category to ensure that they could be made available into the health system and that's been important. And equally, there are backpackers who have a whole range of skills in both the health sector, but another critical sectors and I know in the ag sector with, you know, the great, I suppose irony of what we're seeing at the moment is those parts of our community have been suffering for so long with drought in particular have now seen some rain and they are looking to get a crop in. And there's a bit of work going on out there and they need people and we have to be careful in how they access workers that we don't basically pick up the virus from the cities and transfer it to the regional parts of our country, which are for now, less affected. And we're working on that issue right now. I got to say, with the NFF and a few others to ensure we can deal with some of those labour needs out in the agricultural sectors. But those who are here as backpackers, they also work in areas of not just healthcare, but in disability care and aged care and a range of different care settings. And they're an important part of that service. So we are looking at how we can ensure that they are better utilised during the course of this current crisis and there's more work to be done there. The immigration, the acting Immigration Minister is working on those issues as we speak. Mal?

JOURNALIST: On the other issue?

PRIME MINISTER: Oh I'm sorry, on the other issue. Look, to be honest, I'm pleased that my family is with me. They've joined me in Canberra, and that's a great comfort to me. And I hope it's a comfort to them

but they sustain me. And we're just like any other family, I suppose, in many other respects. You talk to your kids about what this means, and I suppose the really difficult issue for all of us is trying to imagine the world on the other side of this. And to give your family some positive and encouraging news about how amazing Australia is and how we'll all come out of this. And I think back to my grandmother and how she lived through the Depression and I remember as a kid being told stories by my grandmother about what they used to do as a family to get through, and we're doing the same thing in our house. We're keeping each other entertained, as I said the other day, we're doing lots of jigsaw puzzles. Jigsaw sales are soaring I understand. But, you know, you've just got to keep your family positive and stay connected and together. For us, our faith is very important to us. And that helps us get through each day. But every family's different. Stay together, Australia.

Yep Mal?

JOURNALIST: PM will Parliament have a role between now and October apart from the bipartisan endorsement of the legislation that you're proposing?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, I hope it's, the Parliament will continue to do its job, as it's called on to do in terms of passing legislation and whether that's given bipartisan support ultimately, we'll find out next week. But the initial responses from the opposition have been very positive, and I thank them very much for that. And we'll have further discussions about that, we've already had discussions with the opposition through our, what will now be our weekly meeting for them to raise issues. And we've already got arrangements with them in terms of expenditure. And how particular the Finance Minister's advances are being utilised and things of that nature. The difficulty in calling the Parliament together is a practical one, frankly. Predominantly we've got people coming to Canberra, and we're moving to other parts of the country as we need to call the Parliament together, we will and it will continue to do its job. But equally, our parliamentarians, while they may not be meeting here, they're working incredibly hard in their communities. The phones are running hot every day, connecting people up in their communities to care and support the many programs, frankly they've got a bigger job to do out there in their communities at the moment than they would have here, because their community needs them in their community, because they are local leaders who can help lead their communities through what will be the very difficult months ahead.

Andrew?

JOURNALIST: Just a question for the Minister, just on a few of the mechanics, mechanics of the childcare, the free childcare. Will the system revert back to, I guess, the current system at the end of the pandemic crisis? If a family wants to increase the number of days it accesses childcare? Will that be covered free as well? I'm thinking like if a nurse who's working part time, that has to go back to full time. And does it apply to everyone who has got a child in the system as of like, I guess a couple of weeks ago, or is it only those essential workers?

MINISTER TEHAN: So the way it will work is we were going to have it for 6 months. So there'll be a one month review, there's an additional 12 weeks up until June 30 with a second 12 weeks. And then obviously there'll be an assessment made of the situation, where we're at in terms of flattening the curve with the pandemic, what the requirements are, and then we can look to see whether we would then obviously look to evolve back to the existing system. So that's, that's the arrangement that we've currently got. But we will continue to assess and review as we go on. Obviously, all those people who are connected currently to a childcare centre, we want them to be able to get access to that centre. And for those who need to up their hours, or up their days, obviously that's a discussion that they're going to have to have with their centre themselves. But what we do want and as the PM has said, we want everyone to use

common sense in this area. We want people to understand that the priority will be given to those who need to be working. The priority will be given to those who can't care for their children.

PRIME MINISTER: Yep Shane and just behind you, and then to you. Yep?

JOURNALIST: So will parents get their fees covered if their kids are absent. And the other question being, just how will payments be made? Is it through Centrelink, through the centres?

MINISTER TEHAN: No, the payments will be made to the child care centre. So what we're doing is we're changing the way the system works. So as of Sunday night, we're going to be asking all childcare facilities to be finalising all their existing fees and getting them into the system. Currently this week and as of Sunday night, we'll be turning that off and then we'll be making fortnightly payment to centres directly because they're the ones that we have to, they're the ones we have to underpin the viability of.

JOURNALIST: Parents, if their kids are absent will they still be getting their fees covered?

MINISTER TEHAN: So what we've said, for those parents who have who have removed their children from childcare going back to the 23rd of March, centres have the ability to be able to waive the gap fee dating back to the 23rd of March.

JOURNALIST: PM you mentioned you've spent, or planning to spend at least \$200 billion. I think you've announced an extra \$1.6 billion today. Have you and the Treasurer started putting your mind to how you're going to pay for that? Does that include revisiting policies such as franking credits? And has it come to your mind that the senior public service and yourselves and Cabinet have to consider a pay cut? Given what's going on amongst many other businesses, including here?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, of course, we've given great consideration to the capacity of the Commonwealth to support the announcements that we've made. And that has been done on the advice of our Treasury officials and working closely with the Australian Office of Financial Management. And this is going to put a great strain on the country, clearly, but it is one that is absolutely necessary given the circumstances that we face. But we have still been even in these unprecedented announcements, we have exercised a discipline and a measure in this. We are very conscious of the size of these commitments and what can be done, that's why I said the other day, There'll be some who will think it's too much and some who thinks it's too little. And what we have done is sought to calibrate these commitments consistent with what the country will be able to withstand. And no, we're not reconsidering franking credits and these sorts of things.

I mean, ultimately, when we come out the other side of this, then obviously we're going to have to address the many challenges that we've taken on. One of the important principles, though, Shane, that we've put in place is to ensure that the measures are temporary and they do not provide long tails of expenditure. Now, as we know and it's, look, it's an observation, it's not intended as a criticism. It's just learning from history. When we went through this last time, there were long tails on expenditure and there were structural changes to expenditure. There are not structural changes here, whether it's what the Minister for Education, Dan has just outlined to you, or what the Attorney General was outlining in terms of industrial relations. There is a snap back there, a snap back to the previous existing arrangements on the other side of this. And so there is an intensity of of expenditure during this period. And then we have to get back to what it was like before. And then we have to deal with the burden that will be carried out of this period of time. And on the last matter, well we put the freezes in place.

Here and then we've got one, two. And I think there was one up the back and then we'll have to call it quits.

JOURNALIST: PM Do you think it's time the banks cut their dividends now as they've been forced to do in New Zealand this morning? And also secondly, is there anything the federal government can do to incentivize state governments to pass on land tax waivers to landlords to help them with their negotiations with tenants?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, on the first one, that's that's a matter that's being considered by the Council of Financial Regulators, and that's not a move that has been decided at this point or has been considered necessary at this point. And I'm aware of the decision of New Zealand agencies at this point, the Australian government and in particular through our financial regulators, we have not received that advice to move to that level. When it comes to dealing with the tenancy issues, this has been a key focus of the work of the National Cabinet over the last week or so. And I want to thank you, whether it's the retailers groups, the landlord groups or the banks and others, they've all been engaging very constructively in how we can deal with this very difficult issue of a, particularly a retail tenant in the majority of cases, who has had either shut their doors or have had a significant reduction in their revenue. Now, they are obviously greatly assisted by the two measures we've most recently put in place, both the JobKeeper arrangements, but also the cash flow arrangements we put in place prior to that, which could provide up to \$100,000 to these businesses. But there will be quite a significant disruption to that normal tenancy arrangement. And what we are seeking to do, working with the states, is to ensure that there are the appropriate incentives in place for landlords and tenants to get together, particularly those who are under great stress. Anyone who's part of the JobKeeper program is already defined as that. And I would urge landlords and tenants to work this out. They're going to need each other on the other side. They're going to need each other to be, they're going to need the premises and the landlord is going to need the tenant. And so they need to. I tell you what the great incentive for a landlord is, if that tenant goes bust and can't pay rent. Then they've got no one paying rent and they'll be looking for a tenant in a very bad market 6 months from now. So my advice to landlords is sit down with your tenants and work it out.

Yep, right up the back?

JOURNALIST: A question for the Education Minister. How will these measures announced today affect after school services, a lot of providers have already closed, given learning going online?

MINISTER TEHAN: So, well those after school services will be able to look at these new measures that we've put in place. And if they can start up, then we would encourage them to start up. Can I also say there is also measures as part of this, for those offering vocational care. So that will, the way that arrangement will work is that we will go back to the term three holidays of last year and look at what payments were made there over those vocational periods. And then we'll be able to offer assistance to those who are offering vocational care.

And can I just say one other thing, and it goes to what the PM was talking about, what he's talking about with his family. There are a lot of parents out there at the moment, especially those that have Year 12 students who are contemplating what their VCE is going to look like this year and what that will mean for pathways into work, into vocational education, into university next year. All the Education Ministers have these at the top of the next priority list. We wanted to deal with child care. We want to deal with child care regulation, which the states and territories have been very cooperative on. Our next thing is to look at what it means for VCE students. And can I say to all those VCE students out there and their parents, this

is the next on our list of priorities. Obviously there are numerous issues that families are facing, but this is one I'm getting a lot of feedback, which is of concern and we will be addressing this in the coming weeks.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, I understand that you say there is no health risk in sending kids to school, but there is some conflicting advice from the states. Gladys Berejiklian said for practical purposes, keep your kids at home. So in that case, who should parents listen to, should they send their kids to school?

PRIME MINISTER: Gladys Berejiklian in the same press conference said that there was, there was no, that the health advice said it was safe for children to go to school. So my simple point was, is the health advice has been very clear and the New South Wales Premier has made that point. Now, since that time, I mean, this is a rapidly evolving situation. And Dan just made the point that the groups of Ministers around the country are dealing with these issues, like a production line of issues that they need to address day in, day out, and where we are at now at schools is many of them are already moving to distance education. But no child is going to be turned away at a public school or at a private school if that's what their parents need for them to be there. And so parents can make commonsense choices based on their own arrangements. Schools will be doing the same. And I think that's the best way to approach the situation. Now we've got one more up the back and then we'll have to call it a day.

JOURNALIST: On childcare, Minister I just want to ask about that 50 per cent, pegging it at 50 per cent of the pre coronavirus daily peak cap. By doing that, even when you take into account the jobKeeper payment on top of that, there's gonna be a reduction in revenue to these child centres from before the coronavirus crisis struck. So do you accept that there is still going to be staff losses from within the sector? And what can be done for those people?

MINISTER TEHAN: Now, what we're doing, is we're completely recalibrating the way the childcare sector will operate. And what you can't do is compare apples with oranges. And if you look at the data and when you put JobKeeper in there. Our view is that we are providing additional support to the sector and that being in providing that additional support to the sector. What we're saying to them is we want you to remain open and we want you to prioritise those essential workers. And as the PM has said, that's anyone who's out there working, those vulnerable children and then to look at re-engaging with those who have taken their children out of the sector.

PRIME MINISTER: Alright, well I want to thank everybody, the National Cabinet will meet again tomorrow. We'll be considering a range of matters if there are issues to report on following that meeting, then then we'll do that under the normal arrangements.

Thank you all very much.

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