



The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

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EO&E...

PRIME MINISTER: Well good afternoon everyone. Some encouraging news, the growth in the number of cases continues to be at very welcome low levels and we want to thank all Australians again for the great efforts that they are putting in. It is testing their patience, we understand that, and their patience is proving up to the mark. We are still very much in the middle of combatting this terrible virus, as we're seeing all around the world. But here in Australia, we're doing better than most, better than many, and we need to keep doing that, and so we thank Australians for the great support and the efforts that they are putting in as we go through these very difficult times. About two-thirds of the cases in Australia have - they have now been able to overcome and recover from those cases. So, we have active cases of less than about 2,500 now. Overseas experience, even the most cautious and careful of nations, such as Singapore, demonstrates that none of us can be complacent about these issues and we need to maintain the efforts that we're putting in place. Singapore now has, sadly, more cases than Australia after some very strong early successes. It is a reminder that even a country as diligent and as careful as Singapore has been that none of us can be complacent about this virus. As I've said on many occasions, it writes its own rules. We need to ensure that we are continually up to the mark in our response.

It means we need to stick to our plan and that was very much the view of National Cabinet today. We have got to stick to our plan. Our plan is working. Our plan is saving lives and it is saving livelihoods. So we need to stick to that plan. We need to stick together in ensuring we maintain the implementation of that plan right across the country. For those who are asking when can we ease? Well, we were clear about that last week. We laid down some clear markers as to what the requirements would be. We said there needed to be an effective rate of transmission less than the score of 1. And we said we need to get in place over these four weeks that we're now in - almost one week down in that timetable - of testing, tracing and a response capability on the ground. National Cabinet will continue to look at those areas that may be able to be eased at the end of that period when we look at those issues. But they are the clear markers. They are the clear prerequisites. There is no uncertainty about that. I think that's very clear. An effective rate of transmission consistently under 1 and putting in place the testing and tracing and response capabilities that are necessary for us to stay on top of any outbreak or any risks that could emerge when we moved into a period where we may be able to ease those restrictions. And states and territories in the meantime, where they have taken actions on restrictions that go beyond the national baselines, as we have already

seen Western Australia do, then they will take decisions over the next few weeks that may see them ease back on some of those restrictions where they are above the national baselines in terms of the issues.

Today we considered a number of measures and areas, and the first of those was in relation to elective surgery, which I flagged at the last media conference. Today we agreed to lift restrictions on elective surgery after Anzac Day, after the long weekend. This will not mean an immediate return to normal with elective surgery, but a gradual restart, subject to, of course, capacity and other constraints that may exist in each jurisdiction, and the Minister for Health will outline one of the reasons why we have been able to do that is the increase in the amount of personal protective equipment that we have been able to secure. And the Chief Medical Officer will also make commentary on that. But we will be easing the restrictions on the following areas and that is all Category 2 or equivalent procedures in the private sector, and selected Category 3 and other procedures, which includes all IVF, all screening programs, where they have ceased. I want to stress that the National Cabinet and indeed the AHPPC has never recommended any easing of screening tests or procedures, but where they have been eased, then they can be restarted. Post-cancer restriction procedures, such as breast reconstruction, dental and level 2 restrictions, so such as fitting dentures, braces, non-high-speed drilling and basic fillings. All procedures for children under the age of 18, all joint replacements, including knees, hips, and shoulders, all cataracts and eye procedures, and endoscopy and colonoscopy and all of these measures will be further subject to review on 11 May to determine if all surgeries and procedures can then recommence more broadly. We estimate that this will lead to a reopening of around 25 per cent of activity in elective surgery in our private and public hospitals, of the capacity that had been closed because of the earlier restrictions. Priority will be given, with this reopening, on the basis of clinical determinations by the relevant health professionals and that will occur in both the public and private system.

This is an important decision because it marks another step on the way back. There is a road back. There is a road ahead and the decisions that the National Cabinet has taken today is evidence of that. This would not be possible if we were unable to secure the additional PPE and it also wouldn't be possible if we were not able to have confidence about the level of contacts, sorry, of cases that had been identified in Australia and the slowing that rate of growth down to very minimal levels. So this is an indication to Australians that when we do keep staying ahead of this, then we can make these changes and we can start heading back to where we would all like to be.

On aged care, we reviewed recent events in a number of aged care facilities and took the lessons from those cases and an important one is the finding was that we are very concerned about the impact of restrictions that had been put in place in aged care facilities over and above what was recommended by the National Cabinet on the residents in those facilities. There is great concern that the isolation of elderly people in residential care facilities where they have been prevented from having any visits, from loved ones and support people, is not good for their well-being, is not good for their health and so the National Cabinet agreed that there needs to be a strong reminder that the National Cabinet decision was to not shut people off or to lock them away in their rooms. That was never the recommendation or the advice of the National Cabinet. The advice I think was very clear about ensuring that there could be visits of two a day, close relatives and support people, this would be undertaken in the resident's rooms but otherwise residents would be able to be in other parts of the facility, they could sit in common rooms, they could sit in outdoor areas of these facilities and we would like as many freedoms to be extended to residents in aged care facilities as is possible and there is no recommendation from the medical expert panel that they should be confined in that way. Where further restrictions should be put in place in aged care facilities is where you may have an outbreak in that facility or indeed an outbreak in the area in which the facility is located. So there are exceptional circumstances where further restrictions might be placed on people

living in residential aged care facilities in terms of access to visitors. But those additional restrictions are the exception, they are not the rule and we think it is a good thing for people to have those visits in accordance with those screening procedures and other things that are necessary to protect elderly residents in those situations. It shouldn't be done out of the convenience of isolation in terms of how these facilities are run, it should always be done always only in the interests of the care of those who are living in those facilities.

I also stress that the same applies, as we confirmed today around the states and territories, that for older people who are self isolating, that that does not mean that for care and compassionate reasons that they can't receive visits from those who would normally provide that care. That may be a relative, that might be a carer, it might be a friendly neighbour who regularly looks in on someone. Jen just went and visited someone the other day for that purpose and the visit was well received and this is important, I think, for the mental health and well-being of particularly elderly residents in our community. I know Australians that are doing a great job, they're ringing them up and they're sending them notes, and they're making them meals and things like this and that is wonderful. There should be the obvious constraints on that, we're not saying that there should be 50 people going through an elderly residents home on a daily basis, of course not, those visits should be limited just to those who would normally be looking in on people and taking good care of them. So I just want to remind people that that is still an interaction that we think is positive and that we also believe is safe.

On schools, National Cabinet was keen to reinforce the point as was made last week that the health advice is not, is not, in relation to schools that a four square metre per person rule be enforced in classrooms. That is not the advice of the medical expert panel and any suggestion that this is a requirement for schools is not the case. The recommendation was smaller class sizes, not smaller classrooms, smaller class sizes, and that those smaller class sizes is something that can be practically addressed at the school level but there is no requirement from the medical expert panel that there be a four square metre per person rule enforced in those classrooms.

Finally, we also today had the opportunity to brief the National Cabinet on the app which many of you are aware that we have been working on for some time. It was good to provide that update and we have been working closely with states and territories on that app and I was pleased that it received in principle support from the National Cabinet. There are a few more hurdles for this to clear as we address the many issues that are associated with this but it was absolutely seen as an important tool, of many, to help health workers in states and territories in the important work of determining contacts of those who may have been in close proximity to people who have contracted the coronavirus. This does three things. It firstly protects Australians in their own health and those of their own family by participating in this process. Secondly, it helps other Australians to keep them safe and, thirdly, it ensures that we can more effectively get back to a more normal setting where we have widespread take-up of this app and we will be saying more about that when we are in a position to launch that app in the not-too-distant future.

Just finally before I throw to the Minister for Health and then of course Professor Murphy, I updated the National Cabinet today that we have now processed, since the 16th of March, 517,000 JobSeeker claims. And by the end of this week we will have processed as many JobSeeker claims in 6 weeks than we would normally do in the entirety of the year. And I think that is an extraordinary effort by those working in the Department of Government Services, and Centrelink, as I said some 6,000 people in addition have been put into that program, to ensure that we are able to move through that work. There is still a fair bit of work to go there but having now eclipsed more than half a million people, that is obviously of great concern, and that is half a million people who are needing that payment and needing that support. But

what it does is it reinforces that both the JobSeeker and the JobKeeper payments work together to provide the necessary income support for Australians who find themselves out of work or those who are on reduced hours or who are being stood down through the course of the coronavirus crisis. Additionally stimulus payments of some \$4.5 billion in the \$750 payments, has been paid as of yesterday to just under 6 million Australian and the rest will flow in coming days.

And so with that I will pass over to the Minister for Health and then Professor Murphy.

THE HON. GREG HUNT MP, MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Thanks very much to the Prime Minister and to Professor Murphy.

Today is an important day on the road back. There is progress on all three fronts. On containment, capacity and recovery. And it is the progress on those first two fronts of containment and capacity which allow us to take these steps on the road to recovery through greater freedoms and opportunities for elective surgery, which will mean such an enormous amount to Australians in need of health assistance.

In terms of containment, with regards to our first pillar, our border measures, we reviewed and extended the current prohibitions on travel into and out of Australia yesterday. Secondly, with regards to our testing, we have, as of early this morning, 434,000 tests completed in Australia and as was noted by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine last week, it remains at the global forefront in terms of the accuracy of our testing which is just a tribute to all of our pathologists and our state systems and territory systems and the cooperation with the Commonwealth around the country. In terms of tracing, we continue to follow up all of the cases that we possibly can and the goal of the app of course is to assist with the protection of ourselves, our families, our health workers and to assist that process of tracing which has been going on since the very first case was found in Australia back on the 25th of January.

And then in terms of distancing, what Australians have been doing in a very consistent way across the country, has led to a real flattening of the curve. I would say now, building on what I said on the weekend, that we now have a sustained and consolidated flattening of the curve. Less than 1 per cent growth in cases for 9 consecutive days and over the last 3 days, we have averaged less than half a per cent of growth in new cases. This is a collective national achievement, it's our doctors and our nurses, our pathology workers, but it's every Australian that has been contributing and I want to say thank you for what people have done. You are the ones that have made this happen. You are the ones that have helped Australia lead the world as well as with those other containment measures. Those containment measures though are still important as the Prime Minister mentioned, even a country as cautious, successful and sophisticated, as Singapore is seeing an outbreak on a very large scale and so we have to keep doing what we are doing because these measures save lives and protect lives but they also allow us to achieve the road back at an earlier time. If we can hold, practice, continue our distancing measures, it will put us in a stronger position to be on the road back earlier.

In terms of the capacity that the Prime Minister mentioned, with regards to our primary care, we have been very successful with over 4.7 million telehealth consultations. In particular, though, what we have been able to do is secure the masks and the PPE that are critical for the protection of our health workers which, in turn, means that we can take steps such as the recovery on elective surgery. We have secured and delivered into Australia 60 million masks, that has allowed for 22 million distributions with another 11.5 million masks to be distributed over the coming week and we have secured a further 100 million masks over the coming 6 weeks. That means that we are in a position now to support elective surgery.

Equally, what the Prime Minister has mentioned with regards to aged care, making sure that there is support for the residents with helping to decrease their isolation whilst there's support for our aged care workers by increasing the testing capacity and focus on our aged care workers to give them that protection, to protect their residents that they care and work so hard for and this is an extremely important combination. And in terms of our hospitals, we have now had delivered 3,260 ventilators in the last week and a half from a great Australian company, ResMed, that's 3,000 non-invasive and 260 invasive ventilators. We have now achieved our national goal of full capacity of 7,500 ventilators. That is an extraordinary achievement across our hospitals, across the country.

All of this means we are in a position to start the recovery and today's announcement, the decision of the National Cabinet and the announcement of the Prime Minister that not only can all of Category 1 elective surgery continue but that Category 2 and urgent Category 3 can proceed on a 1 in 4 basis, approximately will mean an immense difference for families, whether it is in terms of IVF, whether it's in terms of dental pain, whether it's in terms of orthopaedic procedures or other procedures, it's going to mean a real difference to their quality of life. It is a result of what Australians have done with containment, it's a result of what we have been able to do in assisting Australians with capacity, and it is a very important day on the road back.

PRIME MINISTER: Thanks Greg. Professor Murphy?

PROFESSOR BRENDAN MURPHY, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER: Thanks PM and Minister, I will be brief.

Just on elective surgery, one of the things that has concerned the health profession generally during this pandemic has been the lack of attention to non-COVID related medical conditions. We have said previously we are really keen for people to not stop seeing their doctors for their chronic medical conditions, continue to get that clinical advice whether it's by tele-medicine or if necessary face-to-face. And the same applies to elective surgery. Some people think elective surgery sounds like it's something that's not important, it is incredibly important, some elective surgery is life saving. It really means all surgery that's not urgent. So some people are seriously disabled with hip and knee problems. Some people can't see because of their cataracts, some people need surgery and have been waiting for it and this is an opportunity in a safe and controlled manner to slowly restart, cognisant of making the process safe, cognisant of getting the facilities up and running again, cognisant of the need to preserve our PPE, this is a gentle, careful start of normalising what is so important, the general healthcare needs of the community.

In the aged care space, just a couple of comments. We are all concerned about the terrible tragedies that happen when you have a big aged care outbreak and of course we understand the need to protect the residents. And that protection is best achieved by ensuring that nobody, nobody, enters an aged care facility if they are in any way unwell. No staff member, no visitor, no-one coming in for any other reason. You do not go into to an aged care facility if you have the slightest respiratory symptom, a sore throat or a tickle, you stay away. And anyone who works at an aged care facility is eligible for a COVID-19 test and can get them. That's the most important thing.

We've also really expanded our response in aged care outbreaks so that every resident and every staff member can be tested. But as the Prime Minister has said, it is not reasonable in a situation as we are now across pretty much the whole country, where the community outbreaks are not in existence, to lock poor residents away from their family. We've made a series of recommendations at AHPPC previously, that could make visits safe. We don't want lots of visitors, we want limited visitors, no more than two a

day and not for a long period of time and with appropriate health screening and visits to occur in a safe part of the facility. But it's not reasonable or fair to people who may have been used to getting their family coming every day, who may even have dementia in some cases, to be denied access to their families. So we are encouraging all providers to be proportionate. Of course protect the residents, of course screen everybody who comes into the facility, but don't lock residents away from their families. Thank you Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER: Thanks, Brendan. I am going to start here and then I'm going to move around. So, thank you.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister today we've seen the easing restrictions in terms of elective surgery, South Australia yesterday recorded its third day with no new cases, which has prompted calls for considerations in regards to community sport and when bans on that could be eased. Where do you see community sport fitting in, in terms of easing restrictions such as health requirements and things that are going to boost the economy? And just a question for Brendan Murphy, is it unreasonable for a sporting code to think that they will be able to start up their community sports again in winter, given the additional risk that that poses?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, let me just deal with your question first and then I'll go to Professor Murphy. The baseline restrictions remain in place. That's the view of the National Cabinet, we are monitoring those key metrics that we said we would over the next four weeks. If we felt we were in a position to do something earlier than that then we would so decide. But the decision of the National Cabinet remains that we will keep the restrictions in place at a baseline level. It is true, South Australia is getting a great result, so is the Northern Territory, Western Australia has had some great numbers, this is fantastic, it's great. But you've got to keep them going and you've got to stick to the plan. And there is a strong resolution amongst the National Cabinet to stick to the plan because the plan is saving lives and it is saving livelihoods. But what we have announced today shows that we are on the road back, thanks to Australians we are on the road back and we want to stay on the road back. And to do that you have got to move carefully and that's what we're doing.

Brendan?

PROFESSOR MURPHY: So thanks, PM. So I think as we've pointed out, a new outbreak can occur very quickly as we have seen in north-west Tasmania, brilliantly controlled by Tasmanian Health, one person can infect 40 people. So we have to have those systems in place such as widespread sentinel surveillance, such as really good public health response, such as the app that we have been talking about. So that if an outbreak occurs we can get on top of it before we do more widespread relaxation. That's one of, we have only started elective surgery in a gentle way because we want to do it in a controlled way. Of course things like community sport and those sorts of things will be considered, and the National Cabinet will be given a range of potential options that can be looked at once we feel that the situation is safe. We are obviously concerned about exercise in the community and small-scale community sport is one thing that could be considered. But we don't want to pre-empt any of the decisions of National Cabinet, they have asked for a long list of the risks and benefits of a range of things that can be considered at the end of this 4 week period.

PRIME MINISTER: I'm going to keep going around, I won't see everyone today, there are quite a few of you here today. But, yep?

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, you have seen the best of Australians, arguably, during this crisis, but also at times the worst of Australians, for example, Asian Australians being spat on and bus drivers attacked. Is it time for a new anti-racism campaign? And what is your message to people doing that sort of thing?

PRIME MINISTER: Stop it. That's my message. It's, and I think that is the message of every Australian. Now is a time to support each other and I would remind everyone that it was Chinese Australians in particular that provided one of the greatest defences we had in those early weeks. They were the ones who first went into self-isolation, they were the ones who were returning from family visits up into China and they were coming home, and it was through their care, it was through their commitment, their patience that actually Australia was protected in their first wave. I mean within a week of our first case, we'd shut off travel from those from China except for Australians returning home. And so absolutely I deplore that sort of behaviour against any Australian regardless of their ethnicity or their religion or whatever it happens to be. And I think that is the view of all Australians. So we have to call that sort of thing out. It's not on.

Yep?

JOURNALIST: PM, PM, thank you, the Chinese Foreign Ministry has rejected Marise Payne's for an independent inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus, saying things like we are dancing to the tune of another country, no surprises for who that would be, um what is your reaction to that? And what sort of steps will you take in your talks with other leaders, perhaps, about trying to establish such an inquiry?

PRIME MINISTER: Well I think such an inquiry is important and we can respectfully have a difference of view from that that has been put by China. The virus began in China, in Wuhan, that's, I think that is well understood. And it's important the WHO acts, and all parties that are part of the WHO, act with great transparency. I think this is important regardless of where a virus may break out, if it happened in Australia, if it happened in China, if it happened in parts of Africa or the Pacific or the Middle East or wherever it would happen to be, it's important for public health globally that there is a transparency in the way that you can get access to this important information early. So it's not pursued as an issue of criticism, it's pursued as an issue of importance for public health. And I think it's important that all countries cooperate with that regardless of who they are, and we would be certainly pursuing something along those lines. It's, I know it's a view that the Foreign Affairs Minister has articulated with my very, very strong support and I think there is great support for that type of initiative more broadly.

Yep, no just hang on, behind you?

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister some reports this afternoon that North Korean Chairman Kim Jong-Un is in a serious condition in hospital. Are you seeking clarification on that and would his deteriorating condition concern you?

PRIME MINISTER: Well I can't really offer any comment on that because I can't provide any confirmation of it. So until these facts are more clearly determined, there is not really much I can offer.

JOURNALIST: You mentioned May 11 as a date when elective surgeries would be reviewed, and that is also a date when Victoria's state of emergency is due to end, Solomon Lew says his retail stores will reopen, NSW children will start going back to school on a rostered basis, so is that date May 11 potentially a turning point with how Australians can live while dealing with this crisis? And would you be hopeful that May 11 would be the date where we can see a further easing of the social distancing restrictions?

PRIME MINISTER: No look I wouldn't read too much into that. We are already on the road back and I think we have already reached a turning point on these issues provided we can keep the controls in place that keep the virus under management, it will continue to write its own rules, and it is provided, I think, that we continue to stay on top of it. Then I think we will continue to see further easing of restrictions. I mean today's decision, the decision that other governments have made whether it be in Western Australia or elsewhere regarding schools, these are all turning points and they are all turning points in the right direction, and I look forward to more of them.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, does the provision that allows for compassionate visits to the elderly, extend to any friend or relative that might be struggling mentally during the isolation process? If not, why? And did states give assurances that these kinds of visits to a grandparent at home, for example, wouldn't result in an on the spot fine?

PRIME MINISTER: They simply reinforce what the original restriction was and that always enabled those sorts of care or compassionate visits. That has always been the case. And if that is what the nature of what the visit is, they just restated their commitment and support to that.

JOURNALIST: Just on IVF, there have been a lot of commentary from people going through that process who have obviously been quite upset. Do you hope that this will bring some relief to families that are going through that very personal struggle at the moment?

PRIME MINISTER: Well I have some familiarity with how they would feel about these sort of things and I certainly hope that it would provide them with some of that comfort and I hope that more broadly, it is a message, as Greg was saying, to Australians more broadly that we are on the road back and these are the steps that we are taking. They are not all great leaps and bounds. This one is a pretty significant one I have got to say, though. And each step is important and I think is an encouragement to everyone else for the good work they have been doing and so why, we are always just thanking Australians every day and I look forward to continuing to thank them.

Yep?

JOURNALIST: Yeah just on those jobs numbers, that extraordinary jobless claim numbers. Are you confident that the rate of jobless claims is now slowing? The ABS put out some figures today showing that the last week was actually the biggest in jobless claims over the last three weeks?

PRIME MINISTER: We have seen a slowing in the rate of claim and that's welcome. But the levels of claims are still very high and they are obviously deeply concerning to me because every one of those half a million Australians who we have processed for JobSeeker claims is an Australian that has lost their livelihood. And that is deeply distressing to me. Terribly distressing. That's why we have doubled the JobSeeker payment effectively through the addition of the COVID supplement. And we still have a lot more claims to get through.

Yep?

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, just on the COVID tracing app, obviously Australians are a bit wary about giving the Commonwealth that kind of data, so what kind of assurances can you give people, we understand it could be released as early as this week, that the Commonwealth won't stuff it up and you will be able to protect people's privacy?

PRIME MINISTER: Well there will be the privacy statement which is being developed up with the Privacy Commissioner. There are also the technical assurances that we have been working very carefully through. We have not been rushing to this solution. We have been listening carefully since we first indicated that we would be moving to use this app to the various concerns that have been raised and ensure that they're being addressed. And we were able to work through quite a few of those today with the National Cabinet.

I want to be clear about a couple of things. The app only collects data and puts it into an encrypted national store which can only be accessed by the states and territories. The Commonwealth can't access the data, no government agency at the commonwealth level, not the Tax Office, not government services, not CentreLink, not Home Affairs, not the Department of Education, not child care, nothing. The Commonwealth will have no access to that data. It will be locked in the data store, an encrypted data store that can only be accessed by the state health detectives, if you like, the health tracers. Those who are actually making contact with the individual whose phone they would then seek for them to unlock the data for it to be released to them, so they could begin the contact tracing process. So that's what it's for.

It's for a process that is currently being undertaken manually and this would speed it up. Now I noticed in New Zealand they are looking to ask people to keep diaries of these things. We think this is a more comprehensive and a more foolproof system of ensuring that we are picking up as many of those contacts as possible, but it will keep people safe, it will keep them and their families safe. It will keep others they are coming in contact with more safe and it will of course help Australia get back into an economy which will be supporting more and more jobs.

John?

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, the Wall Street Journal is reporting that China has reached out to about a dozen countries in our region to canvass the possibility of reinitiating very important business travel and diplomatic travel. Has Australia had any reach out from China or been in discussions about that? Would you be open to it?

PRIME MINISTER: We have just rolled over again the travel restrictions that we currently have in place with both outbound and inbound and we have no plans to change any of those. There are some exemptions that sit around diplomatic travel and a few other very limited cases and they will remain. Sorry, Sam, you can be next.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, when Bret Walker led the South Australian Murray-Darling Royal Commission, the Commonwealth went to the High Court to block him compelling evidence from Commonwealth public servants. He is now leading a Commission of Inquiry into the Ruby Princess, including the decisions and actions of Commonwealth agencies. Will you guarantee that the Commonwealth will provide full cooperation and won't take those efforts to stymie him getting evidence from Commonwealth agencies?

PRIME MINISTER: We always cooperate with Royal Commissions.

JOURNALIST: Not the Murray Darling one. So you are ruling out going to the High Court or trying to stop this?

PRIME MINISTER: We are always cooperating with Royal Commissions. Sam?

JOURNALIST: Just in relation to JobKeeper, are you concerned about these emerging reports of workers being exploited or even sacked when they request JobKeeper? I've had many, many emails just in the last 24 hours. A woman saying that when she asked to be put on JobKeeper as a casual and she was eligible, her boss said he did not like the tone and he said she was then sacked. Another worker was told she would now have to work up to \$750 worth of hours to get the money and she was sent a text message saying you work when I tell you and if you don't like that you are sacked. What protection do these workers have? It seems to be very much at the goodwill of the employer?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, you are raising two separate cases. I would be concerned about any behaviour by employers that was coercive and be very keen for that to be relayed to Fair Work and the Ombudsman and others to ensure that we can take action on those cases where they are presented. I think that is important. On the second issue, in terms of if you are doing, if you are getting paid \$750, then the employer can obviously ask you to do \$750 at your rate of pay or work. That's what the Act provides for. That is not an unreasonable request that someone would work the hours that they are being paid for, that is being paid by the employer but obviously that is being met by the Commonwealth through the JobKeeper program. But coercive behaviour by employers in this situation is no more tolerable than it is at any other time and I would expect those sorts of complaints to be raised formally and would be keen to know the incidents, the level of that and it is something I would be happy to raise and have followed through on.

JOURNALIST: Did you catch Malcolm Turnbull's interview last night and what do you think about his criticism of the government?

PRIME MINISTER: On this issue, I am just going to remain focused on the actual bigger picture and that is dealing with the coronavirus response. I have answered the question.

JOURNALIST: Back to the National Cabinet, given we are in a better position than we thought we would be a month ago, touch wood, and we are thinking about lifting restrictions and getting people back to work in about a month. Is there a possibility that the money you have set aside for JobKeeper and JobSeeker that you may not spend as much as you anticipated on those rescue packages and that might just take an edge of the cost of this in terms of budgeting?

PRIME MINISTER: We will follow the estimates and if there are estimates variations then obviously we will note those at the time. When we costed this measure, it was based on 6 million Australians being picked up by JobKeeper. But similarly, we need to understand that the automatic stabilisers, as they are known, the supports that already exist within the welfare system that get called upon at a time like this, they are also covered by estimates variations. So what does that mean? So you would have directly budgeted for JobKeeper to be at \$130 billion over that period of time and we had some budgeting about the additional cost of the COVID-19 supplement on the JobSeeker arrangements. But there will be many more who will be drawing on the original JobSeeker payment and that would have been accepted and absorbed by the Budget. So we're still a long way, I think, from knowing the full extent of all these costs. What we have always been prepared to do, though, is meet them and the combination of the JobKeeper and the JobSeeker payments means that we have put in a safety net for Australians both through their employer and directly through the social security system that Australia has never known before. And this is the platform that enables businesses and individuals to be able to get through better than they

otherwise would and it is a very uniquely Australian program, the combination of these two things together and it is what is going to help us all get through together. I mean, Virgin is very topical today for very understandable reasons and we are obviously concerned for those employees in Virgin. But those employees themselves are getting support of some \$15 million a fortnight through the JobKeeper program and then there is the other supports that have been provided and we look forward through the voluntary administration process, which as the Treasurer and Deputy Prime Minister made very clear today, that process is a road out. It is a road out and forward into the future to ensure that the airline can emerge on the other side and we can have the strong commercial viable competition between two carriers in Australia, which the government believes is very important. It is very important in usual times but it will be even more important as we emerge from the coronavirus economic crisis, ensuring that we have those carriers in place. It is important for the jobs which we have always been very concerned about and it is important that the competition regulator also, particularly as we are coming out and as the administrator works with the airline to ensure that it can go forward in a viable way, that it is also not crushed by any anti-competitive actions that might be put in place by any other player in the market. So we are very keen to see that remain in place, we're very keen to have policies which are supporting jobs, which is going to support the resurgence of the economy we'd obviously like that to be as quick as possible but I believe it will be a challenging road ahead and I think we all understand that and I wish the administrator all the best. As you know, Nicholas Moore will be doing that work on behalf of the Government to engage with the administrator. I am encouraged by the fact that there are already 10 parties that have expressed interest in working with the administrator regarding Virgin's future, I think if we had not taken the actions that we have and not demonstrated the patience that we have had then all we may have ended up doing is sending \$1 billion to foreign shareholders and that was never part of my plan. Our plan was always about seeing two viable airlines on the other side, two viable airlines that would be there not just one year from now but five years and 10 years from now. Thank you all very much.

JOURNALIST: Is that 10 potential investors that you said have expressed interest?

PRIME MINISTER: Sorry? 10 parties have shown interest, is my understanding, and I welcome that announcement.

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