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Please find attached:

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW, 2NZ INVERELL (FED)

Senator Tim Ayres discusses cricket, Glasgow Summit, Government advertising, and Senate inquiry into the ABC's complaints handling process.

319Y1519

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TRANSCRIPT



TIM AYRES
LABOR SENATOR FOR NEW SOUTH WALES

E&OE TRANSCRIPT
RADIO INTERVIEW
2NZ INVERELL
MONDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2021

SUBJECTS: Cricket; Glasgow Summit; Government Advertising; Political Interference with the ABC.

MONTE IRVINE, HOST: I'm talking to New South Wales Labor Senator Tim Ayres. Good morning. Senator Ayres. How are you this morning?

TIM AYRES, LABOR SENATOR FOR NEW SOUTH WALES: Good morning. Good morning to your listeners.

IRVINE: First of all, a bit of good news. Australia wins the T20 World Cup.

AYRES: I wish I had sat up last night to watch it, it sounded like an absolute scorcher. There's plenty of things to look forward to this summer, but a summer of cricket is going to be pretty terrific.

IRVINE: Absolutely, should be nice to get out there. And its Ashes season as well, which makes it even more intense for us to get around and watch it.

AYRES: There's so much to choose from: men's cricket, one days, the tests, the 20/20s, women's cricket – it's going to be a fantastic summer for women's cricket. It's going to be absolutely terrific, I can't wait.

IRVINE: Alright, getting into today's current issues. First of all, the COP 26 climate pact – it's finished up over in Glasgow. There's still a lot of questions around what's come out of that and how the government's reacting.

AYRES: Yes, well, the COP26 conference concluded just a few hours ago. It's gone on for a week after most of the leaders left. It's been seen globally as a small step forward when many people were hoping for more movement at the global level. I suppose the key outcome here is that the conference is going to reconvene again next year rather than a few years' time, so there'll be more discussion amongst the global community about 2030 targets and the pathway to net zero and trying to move towards a position where we can limit dangerous climate change and try and keep the planet safe. So that's going to be the next big move in the global climate negotiations, another round of negotiations has been brought forward to 2022

IRVINE: The 2030 emissions target, Australia's signed that but Prime Minister Scott Morrison has actually come out and said, 'nope, our target is fixed, our number is fixed'. Not being movable on that, is that more to do with politics and placating his coalition partners in the National Party?

AYRES: Well, you've got to remember that the Prime Minister said there won't be any movement, the target is fixed, all the way up until a fortnight before the Glasgow conference when he executed one of the biggest U-turns in Australian political history. Suddenly the Prime Minister realised that he needed to bring something to the Glasgow conference. Now he's saying, again, there won't be any changes. Well, we'll see. But this is the problem that you end up having if you're saying one thing in Glasgow and something different in Gladstone and something different again in Glen Innes.

The Prime Minister's position hasn't been consistent, that's why he's been criticised so roundly, so correctly, over this U-turn on electric vehicles. Of course there should be a sensible position in Australia about electric vehicles. We have a very small range of electric vehicles on sale for Australian customers and we're becoming a dumping ground for the world's low-standard fuel vehicles because of the government's very poor framework. Everybody remembers what Scott Morrison said about electric vehicles in the last election campaign. It was hysterical and it was silly. Now he's adopted a different position. And this is the problem: he holds a position right up until the very moment that he changes it.

IRVINE: If the Labor Party was successful in winning the 2022 election, will the Labor Party be prepared to sign up to zero emissions for methane by 2030?

AYRES: Well, we've said all the way along that we'll have a very clear position on all of these questions well in advance of the election. Now, it's not too far away – we've got an election that's going to be in the first six months of 2022. We did say as a Labor Party that we would have a position out there once the Glasgow conference had concluded and once the government had provided its modelling for the commitments that it's made.

Now the Glasgow conference concluded a few hours ago. What passes for modelling coming from the government was dropped out in typical Scott Morrison fashion late on a Friday afternoon. We're studying the modelling closely, working through the implications of the Glasgow conference, and we'll have a very clear position out there for voters.

It'll be focused on three things. Firstly, how do we reduce emissions? Secondly, how do we drive down the price of electricity for households and businesses? And thirdly, how do we drive more jobs, particularly more manufacturing and industrial jobs, for Australia's regions and suburbs? Those will be the three things that will be driving the Labor policy approach and Albo and Chris Bowen will be out there over the coming weeks and months, bringing forward the new Labor policy. You'll get to see our position on all of those questions when that happens.

IRVINE: Speaking about the election, as you said, 2022 is an election year and we will have an election in that first six months. But something that's also come out, and it's been mentioned in a number of media outlets, is the amount of money that the government's spending on advertising. Currently, taxpayers are paying \$59 million for major government advertising campaigns to run in the lead up to the 2022 election. Now some of these you can understand, they need to get this information out there. For example, for the Department of Social Services, \$13 million being spent to try and increase the disability support, aged care and veteran support workforce, that's one you can understand.

But then there's others. And this is one that sort of leads back into what we're talking about before, that they spent a huge amount of money for the positive energy campaign: \$12.9 million, that's not including GST, on the positive energy campaign that ran in September in the lead up to the Glasgow COP 26 climate talks. That does seem more like they're going to spend

this money to put their position out there as the Liberal National Coalition, rather than using it for what should be used for proper government policy.

AYRES: You're right Monte, it's a rort. Your first observations is right too, of course there's a role for the government to be paying for advertising for important public information campaigns. We should have seen one in the first half of this year encouraging Australians to get the vaccination. The failure to run that campaign is why there's so much misinformation about the vaccines that are available. There is a role, as you say, for government advertising to make sure that the NDIS workforce is fully staffed and that people are aware of the jobs and opportunities that are available there.

But most of this government advertising, 60 million bucks of taxpayer's money, is just to promote what the government's up to. And we see that with these two campaigns: the 'Our Comeback' campaign. I mean, it was millions and millions of dollars, bus stops, billboards, advertising, all designed to promote the government's economic achievements.

Now, the 'Our Comeback' campaign was shelved when there wasn't an economic comeback. But it was just millions of dollars' worth of taxpayer's money and this most recent campaign that you point to: what is the public purpose of that except to try and persuade voters of the government's latest position on climate and energy? It's a complete waste of taxpayers' money.

I know that the Prime Minister's a former advertising executive and marketing is his special skill, but we're not going to have a marketing-led recovery. It'd be much better if the government stopped the focus on the advertising and the spin, and instead focused on the substance. I think that's what most people want to see.

IRVINE: There's another campaign that is out there and it does seem to almost indicate the difference in priorities that the government has got. We talked about the \$12.9 million that they're spending on the positive energy. But you look at another campaign that they have, which is 'Stop the Start' campaign, which is spent by the Department of Social Services, and this is against domestic violence. They're putting \$4.3 million on those ads.

Surely that would be a more important subject, considering this government's track record with, not so much domestic violence, but around women. Surely, more positives spend on that spot, rather than leading up to a pretty ordinary government policy on emissions?

AYRES: Well, government's about priorities, and it's about choices. And you get to see the government's priorities through where it spends and through what it does and I think it's fair enough to point that out. I think the overall point is that there is an enormous amount of taxpayers' money and public money being spent on partisan political interests here. Just like the sports rorts, and the car park rorts, and the regional rorts, and the bushfire funding rorts, the government's lost the capacity to understand its public role. It sees public money, as money that it can expend for narrow partisan political purposes.

And that's a real problem now in Australian politics. People are sick of all the rorting of public funds for political gain in the lead up to elections. And I think if they looked under the bonnet and had a look at what happens on government advertising, they'd be pretty scandalised by it. I get to see it, in Senate estimates, huge amounts of money that's being spent advertising for the government, and that's not good enough.

IRVINE: Well, speaking about money and being spent in a partisan way to help the government, Ita Buttrose, the Chair of the ABC has actually come out and accused the Morrison government of political interference and attempting to intimidate the ABC by the Senate establishing an inquiry into the ABC's complaints handling process. Now, there are already two independent people looking into the ABC's complaints handling process and Ms. Buttroses' argument is: why does the Senate need to establish a separate inquiry into what the ABC is doing?

AYRES: Yeah, I hope Andrew Bragg pulls the pin on this inquiry. He's been very harshly criticised here by the independent chair of the ABC. Ita Buttrose is a political conservative, but she takes her role as Chair of the ABC pretty seriously and I don't think I've ever seen a chair of the ABC be so harshly critical or issue such a withering statement about political interference in the ABC as this time around. So I hope he takes that into account and lets this independent inquiry in the ABC do their work.

You know, there's a bit of an obsession amongst some of the back benchers in the government with the ABC. But take a step back: the ABC is so important to Australia. It is so important, in particular, to country Australia. It tells Australian stories. It holds governments to account through its new service and, in particular, it tells country stories. It's so important that we protect it and people ought to respect the independence of the ABC and not try to interfere

politically in the work that the ABC does.

IRVINE: And part of this has come from the repercussions of a story, I think it's a three-part story that the ABC ran into News Limited's effect basically being a propaganda machine for Donald Trump in the US. And they talked to plenty of former News Corporation people or presenters and executives of News, of Fox, over in the US. It does seem like they're trying to keep Rupert Murdoch on side by having a go at the ABC. There's no secret that Rupert Murdoch doesn't like the ABC. But it also seems to be trying to keep him accountable.

AYRES: Well, it does sound like a bit of a square up, doesn't it? I mean, the ABC has always been – because of the investigative journalism, governments always find scrutiny from the ABC uncomfortable. It certainly was the case for the Hawke and Keating governments, for the Howard Government, for the Rudd and Gillard governments, and it's the case for this government as well.

The trick, though, is to understand that that's the ABC playing its role as the public broadcaster and to not set out to interfere with the work of the ABC. It's just a case that when you're in government there's a proper role for scrutiny and accountability, and the public broadcaster is part of that. Occasionally, there's criticism of government programs and often, if you're in government, sometimes you feel like that's a bit unfair. But that's the role of the independent public broadcaster, and people ought to stop engaging in political interference with the public broadcaster.

IRVINE: Look Senator we've run out of time. Thank you so much as always for our chat this morning. I look forward to talking to you next Monday.

AYRES: Good on you mate, catch you next week.

ENDS

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From: [ABC Communications](#)
To: [Sally Jackson](#); [John Woodward](#); [Peter Munro](#); [Phoebe McIntyre](#); [Nick Leys](#); [Laura Todd](#)
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TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE, ST MARYS (FED)

Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, discusses flooding in Western NSW, economic recovery, net zero modelling, 2030 target, coal, Senate inquiry into the ABC's complaints system, Australian manufacturing, G20, supply chains, inflation in the US, James Patterson and freedom of speech.

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The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

**TRANSCRIPT
PRESS CONFERENCE
ST MARYS, NSW
MONDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2021**

EO&E...

MS MELISSA MCINTOSH MP, FEDERAL MEMBER FOR LINDSAY: Welcome everyone to Western Sydney, and we are right in the heart of manufacturing at Baker and Provan. We make stuff in Western Sydney, just like Baker and Provan do right here in St Marys, and I'm so proud that we are driving Australia's manufacturing forward, and to bring the Prime Minister today. Over 600 manufacturers in my community of Lindsay employing over 6,000 people. This is what it's about, creating local jobs for local people. And I'm really pleased that the Prime Minister is here today at Baker and Provan. Thank you.

PRIME MINISTER: Well, thank you very much, Melissa. It's great to be here. Before I speak about this manufacturing hub out here in Western Sydney, just a couple of very quick points on what's unfolding in western New South Wales. I was with the Premier earlier today and there is a pre-evacuation order in western New South Wales, for Forbes, and the Lachlan River. It's a flooding area that, when you think back a number of years ago, was beyond imagination. But that is the nature of Australia. And, so, if it's flooded, forget it. That's our very clear message. The Federal Government, of course, working closely with the New South Wales Government to provide whatever support is needed. At present, there isn't a requirement, but I have no doubt the Premier will reach out if indeed that is required, and certainly the Emergency Services Minister David Elliott. So, our thoughts are with those in western New South Wales today. And while it's great to see the rainfall that we have seen across so many drought-affected parts of this state, it also brings those dangers as we go into the summer season. It is the floods, it is the cyclones, it is those types of weather events that we're anticipating to be more of a risk this summer. Obviously, the risk of bushfires and others are always present in Australia, but the various briefings that we've had at the National Security Committee and also with premiers around the country has been to very much focus on those flooding and cyclone events.

But it is very, very great to be here at Baker and Provan. In fact, Arthur Baker, who started this business together with Provan 75 years ago is actually from the Shire, and came out here. So there's that Shire-Western Sydney connection once again, Melissa. And, so, it's wonderful to see what's being achieved here, whether it's the apprentices that have been trained, and it's great to see so many people a part of this great family business that have been here for more than 20 years. I think it just goes to show the continuity, the stability, the expertise that had been built up to ensure that they have been such a successful business and now expanding, with the size of the projects and the contracts that they have.

Small and medium-sized businesses are at the heart of our economic recovery, and our Government is seeking to secure that economic recovery as we come out of COVID. This is the big challenge facing Australia. Australia has done an incredible job as we've fought our way through this pandemic. So, now, what will be one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, and so much was done here in Western Sydney to achieve that during the recent outbreak here across Sydney. One of the highest vaccination rates in the world we're heading towards right now, we have one of the strongest, if not one of, the strongest economies of advanced economies in the world coming through the pandemic, and, of course, we have one of the lowest fatality rates from COVID in the world. But the challenge now is to secure that economic recovery, and manufacturing is at the heart of that strategy, with our Modern Manufacturing Initiative, by keeping electricity prices down and ensuring they have the reliable, affordable energy they need to power up what they're doing right across the country. The defence contracting work, particularly defence manufacturing, being such an important part of our Modern Manufacturing Initiative, which Baker and Provan here are benefiting from with the significant projects that they're a part of.

But there's also the Snowy Hydro project, another massive infrastructure project, one of the biggest, if not the biggest in the country, together with projects like Western Sydney Airport, not far from here. These big infrastructure projects, combined with the investments we're putting into skills and manufacturing, the instant asset write-off, we're creating the right conditions through our policies to secure Australia's economic recovery, and we're putting small and medium-sized businesses right out front in leading that recovery.

Today, we can tell you that 54 per cent of all the Commonwealth contracting has gone, some \$18.7 billion in total, has gone to small and medium-sized enterprises. That's up \$5 billion on the previous year. That's a massive surge that we've seen this Government, my Government, investing in small and medium-sized enterprises through what we're procuring to make sure that they're getting a go.

I said at the last election, a fair go for those who have a go. Small and medium family-sized businesses are having a go in this country, and we've increased the procurement to those businesses by \$5 billion in the past year alone. So that's a big vote of confidence in small and medium-sized enterprises, and we need to continue to keep getting out of their way.

We're also making sure they're getting paid on time by Commonwealth Government agencies, whether that's the Department of Defence or Snowy Hydro projects, or the many other projects that are out there on infrastructure. We're making it a term of those conditions that we have with the big contractors that they pay their small and medium-sized enterprises on time, particularly on digital invoicing of five days or less, because cash flow is what keeps people in jobs. Cash flow is what secures our economic recovery, and we're doing our bit on that. And there's no doubt family and small businesses right across the country are doing their bit. Happy to take some questions.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, this net zero modelling released on Friday appears to show to get to net zero you need a carbon price of between \$24 a tonne and \$400 a tonne. What's the difference between that and a carbon tax?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, what we have is the cost of abatement that is run through our Climate Solutions Fund. So, we've been running that for years. That's what we're doing. We don't have a carbon tax. We will never have a carbon tax.

JOURNALIST: Doesn't that pass cost on?

PRIME MINISTER: No, there's no carbon tax in Australia. And there won't be one, because we are for technology, not taxes. And what we are doing is we're procuring abatement through the Climate Solutions Fund, which has been a very important part of our, our commitments to already be achieving a 20 per cent reduction in emissions. That's what I said at the last election. I went to the last election, I said we would have a 26 to 28 per cent target for 2030. We keep that commitment, and I said one of the ways we were going to achieve that was through the Climate Solutions Fund, which we've topped up again. So we're procuring that abatement that is actually driving technology improvements in everything from soil carbon to the low emissions technologies and energy. And that's an important part of ensuring the technologies labour path to our net zero goal.

JOURNALIST: But that's funded through tax, isn't it? I mean, ultimately, we're paying, when you're putting out these incentives, these supplements.

PRIME MINISTER: But we're not putting a, we're not putting a tax on Australians to do that. Not at all.

JOURNALIST: Are you ruling out a more ambitious 2030 target for COP27, if you're elected?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, all that happened at COP26 was all countries noted a request to revisit these things. But I've been very clear about what our target is, and that we will meet and beat it. See, we are going to achieve a 35 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030. That's what we're going to achieve and that's what actually matters. It's, what matters is what you actually achieve. And, so, we're well above our target.

JOURNALIST: Why don't you make that your target then, if you're going to get to 35 per cent anyway?

PRIME MINISTER: Because our policy is to meet and beat, that's what we do.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, do you agree that COP26 sounded the death knell on coal?

PRIME MINISTER: No.

JOURNALIST: So you disagree with Boris Johnson?

PRIME MINISTER: I don't believe it did. And for all of those who are working in that industry in Australia, they'll continue to be working in that industry for decades to come, because there will be a transition that will occur over a long period of time. And I make no apologies for Australia standing up for our national interests, whether they be our security interests or our economic interests. We have a balanced plan to achieve net zero by 2050, but we're not going to make rural and regional Australians pay for that. We're going to do this in a balanced way, focusing on the technological advances that we know will actually see us solve this problem. We're not going to tell Australians to do that. We're not going to legislate them and regulate them and force them to do things. I think Australians have had a gutful of governments telling them what to do over the last couple of years. And our approach going forward to secure our economic recovery is not tell businesses what to do, not tell customers what to do. Our plan

is to ensure that they can take the lead, that their choices take the lead. The Labor Party loves telling people what to do. And the only thing they like doing more than that is taxing.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, Dave Sharma has revived calls for a more ambitious reduction target, saying that by 2035 we should have sufficient technological development for us to reach 40 to 45 per cent by that time. I mean, is this something that the Government would ever consider?

PRIME MINISTER: What we want to do is ensure we achieve our emissions reductions by growing our economy and seeing low emissions technology be more and more cost effective and scalable in, not just here in Australia, but around the world. And when that's achieved, then emissions will reduce. And, so, we're happy to see emissions reduce. We're happy to over perform on our targets. But I'm not happy to tell Australians what to do through climate policy. I'm not happy to tax Australians on those things. And Australians, I think, can have confidence about that. We're not having an each way bet on this. We know where Australia's interests reside, and we will always stand up for those interests to ensure that Australia's economic security is, is there. That's how you secure Australia's economic recovery.

JOURNALIST: There's been a rapid increase in the number of illegal fishing boats off the northwest coast of Australia. What's being done to prevent that? And is it time that the crews and the ships are detained, not just deported back to international waters?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, no one has been stronger on border protection than my Government. No one. Ever. We are the gold standard of border protection because we're not double minded about it. You know, we don't, we don't squirm about it in the Coalition. Australians understand that if they want their borders secure, then only a Coalition Government can give them that confidence. And we have the runs on the board, and we have one of the best border protection agencies of anywhere in the world. We established the Australian Border Force. We made it happen and we funded them to do the job. And they're best placed to be out there on that front line, making the calls that they need to make to ensure that Australia's borders and fishing interests and other security interests are protected. I just was, I just caught up this morning with one of our Border Force crew who is crewing up from the Northern Territory, will be heading back there shortly. I mean, it goes to tell you about where the Border Force draws its people from around the country. They do an amazing job. A very brave job. But we invested in their, in their capabilities, and there's no one better than the Border Force in protecting our borders, and there's no one stronger than the Coalition to make sure they have what they need to get that job done.

JOURNALIST: [Inaudible] Andrew Bragg's inquiry into the ABC complaints system, and have you discussed the matter with Andrew Bragg?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, that's a matter for the, for the Senate. I mean, there's no government agency that is above the scrutiny of the Senate, and I don't understand why that would be an extraordinary initiative to take. The Government's responsive to inquiries undertaken, whether it's by Joint Standing Committees. I mean, we've had a Senate Committee that has been enquiring into the management of COVID from the start of COVID. They look into what the Chief Medical Officer does, or General Frewen does. There's no government agency that's beyond the, beyond the scrutiny of the Senate. There's no special set of arrangements for one agency over others.

JOURNALIST: So, you're comfortable with the inquiry?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, why wouldn't it be? It's a government agency. Yes, they have their independence, and no one's questioning that. But they're not above the scrutiny for how they conduct themselves using taxpayers' money, or any other government agency. That's, that's that's, sort of, business as usual for the Australian Parliament. I don't know why they consider themselves an exception to this.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, you seem to be out campaigning early. Do you regard yourself as the underdog at this election?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, I think that's fairly clear. And I've been there before, on more than one occasion. And what I'm thrilled to be doing is, having spent pretty much since June locked up in various quarantines and other lockdowns in New South Wales and Canberra, I am just pleased as to be out and about, talking to people like Mal, talking to the, to the trainees and the apprentices that are on the tools here, seeing the country open up again, because I'm just full of optimism about where Australia is and where we're heading.

But I've got to tell you, manufacturing, which is why we're here today, is going to play a huge role in Australia's future. We've got a million Australians back working in manufacturing. Under Labor, one in eight manufacturing jobs went. We have restored that. And you can see it here in Western Sydney, you can see people are back on the tools here in Western Sydney in manufacturing jobs. That's occurring right across the country. What's driving it is lower taxes. What's driving it is we're keeping the pressure down on electricity and energy prices. What's driving it is putting money into training and skills, so the apprentices of tomorrow can be learning what they need to learn, to ensure businesses like this go for another 75 years. That's what's driving the policies that put business and Australians in the driver's seat when it comes to securing Australia's economic recovery. We're backing them in. We don't want to tell them what to do. We want to support the decisions that they're making. Labor's all about telling them what to do.

JOURNALIST: Chris Minns says that all public transport should be manufactured in New South Wales for New South Wales. Would you support making that mandatory across the country, the state, or the country, at least Australia, produces the public transport that their citizens can travel on?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, I can just tell you our record, 54 per cent of the \$18.7 billion of Commonwealth spending this last year has gone to small and medium-sized enterprises, just like the one we're standing in today. So, that's not a promise, that's a record. That's a record. You know, not far from here, is Western Sydney International Airport, which is the Nancy-Bird Walton Airport. Now, Labor had six years in government. The Leader of the Opposition Anthony Albanese banged on about a Western Sydney Airport, day in, day out, but did nothing. They're good at whinging, they're good at whining, they're good at sledging, but they weren't that good at building. And what you can see out there, and what you can see in our defence contracting, what you can see at Snowy Hydro, what you can see at Inland Rail, what you can see is things getting done, things getting built on the ground. And what we're seeing here is apprentices getting employed. What we're seeing is new equipment getting built. What we're seeing is defence contracts coming through to small and medium-sized family enterprises. That's how you secure the economic recovery. And that's what's at risk under Labor.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, on the economic recovery, on the economic recovery, how concerned are you that inflation in the US and supply chain problems around the world could screw up the recovery here in Australia that we're expecting, going into the election?

PRIME MINISTER: This is a very good question. It was one of the most important meetings that took place at the G20, there was more focus on other things. But at the G20, one of the most important sessions was convened by President Biden, and that was looking at the security and the volatility in supply chains, and in particular in that area, I was highlighting the need for critical critical minerals, rare earths and supply chains that go into building this new technology. But we are seeing disruption in supply right around the world, whether it be on our wharfs, and that's why it's very important that we don't allow the unions on the wharfs to do the wrong thing by our farmers and our manufacturers who need critical supplies coming in and they need critical exports going out. But whether it's on that, our infrastructure and the regulation that sits around all of this, it's so important that we can free up those supply chains. So we need less regulation in this area, not more. We need to let business take the lead in securing this economic recovery, not tie them up in more legislation and regulation. So, yes, you're right to highlight the inflationary pressures in the United States. I think it does highlight that Australia's economic recovery has to be secured by people who have a track record of economic management. Otherwise, you're going to see petrol prices go up. You're going to see electricity prices go up. You're going to see interest rates go up more than they would need to, otherwise. And that's why economic management is so important now, as we come out of COVID. Having secured our help through the pandemic, we now must secure the economic recovery.

JOURNALIST: The Chinese Embassy has lodged a complaint through Australian Parliament about James Paterson about a speech he did last week talking about the risk of foreign interference. Is it appropriate for a foreign embassy to then be interfering in Australian Parliament in that way?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, I think the comment is very ironic, I think, because the whole point is Australia, as a liberal democracy, believes in free speech and none more so than in our Parliament, and for Australians who are elected to our Parliament to be able to speak very plainly about what they believe the issues are that are needed to secure Australia's defence interests. And James Paterson does a tremendous job on that, and I will always stand up for Australia's liberal democracy, and it's been a big focus of my attention engaging with other leaders around the world who lead liberal democracies, particularly in the United States, in India and Japan through the Leaders' Dialogue with the Quad. This is an important way of ensuring liberal democracies work together to ensure that we can have a free and open Indo-Pacific. Our model for how we run our country is one that gives people their freedoms, and one of those most important freedoms is their freedom of speech. And, so, this is one of the issues that has been highlighted by the Chinese Embassy here in Australia about one of their issues with Australia, one of the reasons why they have expressed disappointment in Australia about the relationship. Well, I'm not going to sell out Australia's free speech. It's never going to happen. Australia is a free country where you can speak your mind, and under our Government you can be very sure that will be retained and always stood up for in whatever forum is necessary. Thanks very much everyone.

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