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PDR: MS21-000232

DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

PM&C
Secretary
Ms Frame
Mr
Grigson
Ms Steel
Ms Quilty
Mr
Chisholm
Mr Roper
Mr de
Burgh
Mr Neil

To: Prime Minister**ADMINISTRATION OF THE FIRST PFIZER COVID-19 VACCINE**

Purpose: The Prime Minister to receive the first Pfizer vaccine to formally commence Australia's COVID-19 vaccine roll out

Timing and Venue: 11.00am -12.30pm,
Sunday 21 February

Castle Hill Medical Centre
Level 1, Castle Mall, 4-16 Terminus St,
Castle Hill NSW 2154

PMO
Dr Kunkel
s 22

(Talking points are at Attachment A s 22

Key Points:

- You and the Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Greg Hunt MP will visit the Castle Hill Medical Centre in Sydney, NSW, to formally commence Australia's COVID-19 vaccine roll out.
- You will receive the first Pfizer vaccine along with the Chief Medical Officer, Professor Paul Kelly, and the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer, Adjunct Professor (Practice) Alison McMillan.

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Event	First dose vaccination media event
Date	Sunday, 21 February 2021
Time	11.00am – 12.30pm
Venue	Castle Hill Medical Centre Level 1, Castle Mall, 4-16 Terminus St, Castle Hill NSW 2154 2/268 Old Northern Road, Castle Hill, NSW Venue contact: s 22 s 22

Sunday, 21 February 2021

Time	Action	Detail
s 22		
11.00	Prime Minister arrives	
11.05	Prime Minister is shown through to the vaccination room and meets other recipients	
11.07	Vaccinations commence	
s 22		
11.15	First vaccinations complete	
s 22		

s 22		
11.20	Doorstop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime Minister • Prof Paul Kelly • Prof Alison McMillan • Minister Hunt <div>s 22</div>	
12.00	Prime Minister thanks everyone and is escorted back to his car	
s 22		

Key contacts

Name	Role	Number
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From: PMO - Media**Sent:** Sunday, 21 February 2021 7:17:09 PM (UTC+10:00) Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney**Subject:** Prime Minister - Transcript - Press Conference - Castle Hill, NSW - Sunday 21 February 2021
[SEC=UNOFFICIAL]**UNOFFICIAL**

The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
 Prime Minister
TRANSCRIPT
PRESS CONFERENCE
CASTLE HILL, NSW
SUNDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2021

Eo&e...

THE HON. GREG HUNT MP, MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGED CARE: Well welcome everybody to the Castle Hill Medical Centre, it's a privilege to be joined here by Australians such as Jane, and John, Brett, and Mila and of course, the Prime Minister, The Chief Medical Officer of Australia, Professor Paul Kelly, the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer of Australia, Professor Alison McMillan, and the Member for Mitchell, Alex Hawke.

Today marks the commencement of Australia's National COVID-19 Vaccination Programme. It's an important step for Australia. Australians have stood shoulder to shoulder over the course of the last year, and now they are putting their shoulders to the job. They are making themselves available. And over the course of this week, we hope to see over 60,000 vaccinations, 240 different aged care centres, 190 towns, and suburbs around the country from Alice Springs to Albany, to Altona Meadows and so many others. But we have, in order to provide confidence, we had a group of Australians that represent our disability residents and workers, our aged care residents and workers, our frontline border protection workers. And of course, on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer in order to provide confidence, the Chief Medical Officer, Chief Nurse and the Prime Minister of Australia.

With that I am delighted to introduce the Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER: Well, thank you Greg, and Alison and Paul, Alex. Of course, to you Greg and the wonderful team at the Department of Health who have done just such an extraordinary job in preparing for what is the biggest vaccination effort our country has ever undertaken.

This is an historic day for Australia. Jane Malysiak has seen many historic days in Australia over the course of her more than 80 years of life. She grew up in Poland in the Depression, she went through to the Second World War. She came to Australia. She built a wonderful life and is still living it gloriously today. And to have her here today and so many others who have joined us both in the front line of those who we know are most vulnerable, and in the front line who protect them. Whether it's those working in quarantine on our border force or those working with the aged, the aged care facilities and home care, or those working with disability care and indeed those vulnerable Australians as well.

What we're demonstrating today is our priorities on those Australians. What we're demonstrating today is our confidence. I am supremely confident in the expert process that has been led to get us to this day. So from tomorrow, tens of thousands of Australians over the course of the next week will confidently come forward from those key priority groups that have been defined to ensure that we move into this next phase of how we've been preparing and dealing with COVID-19.

I said at the outset we were going to make our Australian way through this pandemic. And the Australian way has proved to be when you look around the world, one of the most effective there is. And the reason for that, in my view, has consistently been the strength and resilience of the Australian people, the expertise that they've had available to them under the stewardship of Professor Kelly and Professor Murphy and so many others around the country has been exemplary. But it has been the response and the responsibility of Australians each and every day through this pandemic that has seen our Australian way through. And I say to my fellow Australians, now, the next step of that journey begins.

And so I call on my fellow Australians and I have by my own example today, joined by the Chief Nurse, and the Chief Medical Officer of our country, together with those Australians who are in the top priority of this vaccination programme, to say to you, Australians, it's safe, it's important. Join us on this Australian path that sees come out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The information is there for you to assess, for you to respond to. We've gone to great lengths with our scientific and medical community to ensure that the things you want to know about, that information is there for you. You're right to ask those questions. And that's why we have worked hard to ensure that you have that information. That our GPs are aware and that you can have those conversations. But what matters is that we all get through this together and we get through this together, Greg talked about putting the shoulders to the job, well today I put my shoulder to the job, and that's what I'm asking Australians to do in joining me and all of their fellow fellow Australians, as we continue on the successful path we're been on.

I'm going to ask Paul and then Alison to say a few words then happy to take questions.

PROFESSOR PAUL KELLY, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER: Thank you PM. As has been mentioned, I'm here in solidarity with the people that are really on the front lines, and are the priority groups for this vaccine today. So we've seen members of the Defence Forces and the ADF right at the frontline of our border controls, and in our quarantine system, we've seen people from aged care, disability and residential care and their carers. These are the frontline workers that we need to and want to protect as quickly as possible, because they're the ones most likely to be exposed to the virus. And most importantly, those people in our aged care facilities, residential aged care facilities and residential disability facilities, who are the most vulnerable Australians in terms of COVID-19. So I'm here in solidarity. I'm not asking for anyone to do something that I'm not prepared to do myself. We have a remarkable thing now with two fully registered vaccines in Australia. This is the first that was available. And so the plan was always that the Prime Minister, myself and Professor McMillan would be the first to get that first vaccine. I can absolutely guarantee that if that first vaccine had been AstraZeneca, I would have had that one. And in fact, the Minister for Health and Professor Brendan Murphy will be receiving that vaccine as soon as it's available, very soon. So this is an important step in the journey. It is not the last step. There are many steps to go, but absolutely, I encourage all Australians when your turn comes, as some of us have been privileged enough to do today, to take that opportunity to line up and get those vaccines and that's going to protect you and your families and the whole of Australia.

PROFESSOR ALISON MCMILLAN, CHIEF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY OFFICER: Prime Minister, Minister, Alex, Paul, thank you for the opportunity to join you here, to show our solidarity, and our confidence in this vaccine, to reassure you it doesn't hurt, I won't say the terminology, but it really doesn't hurt at all. This is such an important day for Australia, but it's a particularly focus obviously, on our health care workers they are the people who are part of 1A who will be starting to get this vaccine tomorrow. And I want to encourage all of them to have confidence in this and to get the vaccine along with aged care workers and, of course, the aged care residents, but also those who really are at the front line. I'm going to Howard Springs tomorrow to work with the team to look at how we can expand that facility, enormously successful facility. And this will help me as I feel that I go there and those that are working there that that additional protection. So, again, please, all Australians, this is the next step for us all, protecting those that are the most vulnerable and keeping safe our health care workers who look after us. So I encourage everyone to when your opportunity comes to get the vaccine. Thank you.

PRIME MINISTER: Thank you Alison, happy to take some questions.

JOURNALIST: PM, why did you feel you had to bring the programme forward a day to do this today?

PRIME MINISTER: This is a curtain raiser. That's how I describe it. I mean tens of thousands of people will be coming in tomorrow and I wanted them to know as they went to bed tonight that we have been able to demonstrate our confidence in the health and safety of this vaccination to let them know that it's good to go. And I was very happy to send that message today with my colleagues here, but also with those Australians who we wanted to demonstrate were the priority groups for this vaccination over the coming weeks and months. And so people could understand what the priorities would be that it is important we all do this, but most importantly, that it is safe.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, how concerned are you about vaccine hesitancy and why do you think some Australians are worried?

PRIME MINISTER: This is the biggest vaccination programme we've seen and it's in the middle of a pandemic, a global pandemic that none of us have seen unless, you know, we're centenarians. And as a result, I appreciate and understand that people have questions. I appreciate the scale of what's going on here and that Australians would rightly want to know more information. So I'm not surprised by that. I think that's, I think that's quite [inaudible]. And that's why we are seeking to approach that in a very calm way, but most importantly in a very informed way, this whole process has been developed and it's being run and is being signed off by the best medical experts in the world, and they are Australian. And so for that reason, I would encourage people to join with us, as I said before, but also to answer the questions, have the questions answered that they want to ask. I think that's completely understandable. You know, I think as time goes on and as people see the benefits, as we're already starting to see in other countries, that have gone down this path, that I would expect to see confidence continue to lift. We have one of the highest rates of vaccinations in the world more generally when it comes to other vaccines. And so Australia's got good form on this. And that's why I say all the way through the pandemic, that Australians have shown the ways themselves. I think in their very co-operative, patient and responsible approach to how they've responded to the pandemic themselves.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, your health minister this morning has said that on his watch the department won't be advertising on Facebook because of what's happened in the last couple of days, but when it comes to the vaccine. Do you think that it is worthwhile for the health department to advertise about the vaccine and the safety of the vaccine on social media or are you comfortable that people are well enough aware of the vaccine that you don't need to do that?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, I'll ask Greg to add to this, but we'll be using all the communication mechanisms and tools to reach people. And that's what I anticipate, we'll be putting an enormous effort behind this communications campaign. And I want to particularly thank Alison, and many others who have been involved, Professor Skerritt, and others who have played such an important role of reassuring Australians, and they will continue to do that. But Greg did you want to add?

THE HON. GREG HUNT MP, MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGED CARE: Yeah. So and we'll continue to provide information, what we wouldn't be doing in the immediate future is doing additional paid advertising. So, of course, these are social media outlets, which have a general capacity to post but then on top of that as all of you would know far better than me, there's the capacity to do paid advertising which is not [inaudible] for now.

JOURNALIST: So you'll post about the vaccine but you won't use paid advertising to boost that information?

THE HON. GREG HUNT MP, MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGED CARE: Correct.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, is there any update on when we can expect the first shipment of AstraZeneca to arrive from overseas?

PRIME MINISTER: When we have more information on that then we will be providing it.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister you've been quite consistent about the vaccine being voluntary in the community in some elements, there is a bit more of a sense that it should be mandatory. The actions of some Premiers in closing borders and things, are you going to discourage Premiers and employers and that kind of thing to not to make it mandatory for people to take up?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, the Australian way is for this to be non-mandatory. That's the Australian way, but there are already precedents that when it comes for where there are public health reasons, or where any vaccination such as flu vaccines for people working in aged care facilities or those working in ICU wards, that's a fairly normal process. And health workers in particular are familiar with that. And if that were the case, that that would be the basis of a public health order put in place by a state jurisdiction. Now we've already had this discussion amongst the Premiers at the National Cabinet and indeed our health ministers have also discussed it, as has the Chief Medical Officer with the chief health officers. And at this point, their advice from the medical expert panel is that is not anticipated. But as with everything, you watch the information, you take the advice, you see how it progresses and you make sensible decisions. Now, if there are genuine health reasons that medical experts would advise that, then state jurisdictions would consider, what I'm pleased about, because I appreciate the Premiers working with, not just on this issue, but on the broader vaccination approach. And, of course, the broader management of the pandemic, it's important that we have consistency on those public health orders that relate to things like that. And that's what the AHPPC is working to do, that's what the premiers and health ministers are working to do.

JOURNALIST: What does this mean for the timetable for opening up state and international borders. And when can Australians expect life to resume and return to normal?

PRIME MINISTER: Well it's a little too early to say, I'd say on a number of those things I note today- I understand and I'm happy to be corrected if I haven't got this information correct but my understanding is the Queensland Chief Health Officer today has made some comments about this as one of those states that has often used those tools. I welcome her suggestion today that what we are commencing can certainly reduce the need for those types of

responses in the future. And I believe that is that's where people want to get to at a state level. That's certainly where I want to get to. And that's why I asked the Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister Cabinet to present back to the National Cabinet on how this changes, how we manage the risk of COVID going forward. Today is the beginning of a big game changer. There's no doubt about that. And it's successful rollout will only further reduce the risk. And when you reduce the risk, then obviously you do not need more blunt and extreme measures in order to deal with COVID. I mean while we still don't know and Paul, you might want to comment on this. We still don't know absolutely based on the medical evidence about the impact on transmissibility. What we do know, but I've got to say, signs are looking good, what we do know is that this deals with serious disease and, you'll know, a year ago, it was about this time last year a little soon after actually, that our biggest fear as we faced the pandemic a year ago with those horrific scenes that we have seeing occur in Europe and in other parts of the world, you know, that led to mass graves in New York, things like this. We were looking at that type of abyss. And what this vaccine does is removes that risk of that serious and widespread and sort of cataclysmic spread of disease with those results. Now, there are many other viruses that are in our community. We all know that. And we don't have the sort of responses we've had to COVID to those. COVID are far more aggressive, and we're seeing increasingly more aggressive strains. But if you reduce, remove the level of serious risk of serious illness that you can begin to start managing this like you would any other virus in the community. But Paul did you want to add to that?

PROFESSOR PAUL KELLY, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER: I think I think you've summarised it well PM, that key point is about severe disease. And we know that both the AstraZeneca and the Pfizer vaccine which I now have had, that will protect me. This is new evidence coming all the time from the real world experience from countries that have been vaccinating now for a couple of months. In the case of Pfizer and a little bit shorter in terms of AstraZeneca in the U.K., for example, that real world experience is absolutely confirming that decreases in hospitalisations and decreases in deaths, decreases in serious diseases. These are really important findings and early advice out of Israel seems to be suggesting, that there is also a decrease in the viral load or the amount of virus that people are carrying after if they become infected after vaccination. That's leading us towards an idea about and about how useful this is to stop the transmission. But these are early days and so preliminary information is useful. But I would wait to see the confirmation.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, you've brought forward several, you've launched several reviews into what was brought forward by Brittany Higgins, what would you

PRIME MINISTER: I'm very happy to deal with those issues but given we've still got Professor Kelly and Alison with us,

JOURNALIST: When's the average punter going to be able to get the jab?

PRIME MINISTER: Sorry?

JOURNALIST: Just the average Joe, when are they going to be able to get the jab?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, there were, there were a lot of average Joes, and Jills who work in aged care and disability care and who have disabilities or live in aged care facilities or work on border force and in hotel quarantine. They are the priorities. I'll let Greg go through the next couple of steps. But this is about getting through the whole population. We said we'd get there by October and that's, we're on track.

THE HON. GREG HUNT MP, MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGED CARE: So there are five phases all up, phase 1A is the phase which commences today about aged care and disability care residents and staff, our frontline border protection and quarantine workers and our frontline health care workers. Phase 1B will involve our over 80's, our over 70's, immunocompromised, indigenous Australians over 55, and emergency service workers. Phase 2 will involve the over 60, the over 50s, critical workers, and indigenous Australians under 55. Phase 2B, they will then be the general balance of the population. We recognise that there will be people who catch up because of life circumstances or increased confidence. And then subject to clinical trials the third phase would involve children. But there are global clinical trials and we won't make any predictions on the outcome of them.

JOURNALIST: PM Premier Berejiklian has said that it's her Government's intention that everyone working in hotel quarantine gets the jab in the next coming weeks, indicating that people who choose not to get it might not get any more shifts in the hotel quarantine system. Do you think that that's the correct approach that people who don't choose to get this jab should not be working in hotel quarantine? And perhaps Professor Kelly can I get your epidemiological [inaudible] please.

PRIME MINISTER: Well I'll throw to Paul. The priorities for people working in hotel quarantine are obvious and it's stated in our strategy, that's exactly what we wish to achieve, and that's what the Premiers are seeking to achieve. I'm very confident that that isn't going to be a problem, and the Premier is too, see I'm quite confident about how Australians respond sensibly to these things. And I believe, having spoken to some of those who are working in those very facilities at the moment they're all just saying let's go, let's get on with it. So I'm not going to jump to those next levels, because I think that's frankly something that we need to ponder at this moment, because I believe, I believe

they will respond very cooperatively because they are working on the front line of it. And so I'd be surprised if that proved to be the type of issue that you've highlighted. Paul?

PROFESSOR PAUL KELLY, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER: Thank you PM. So I'd encourage anyone that's in that priority group as an absolute priority, get a booking and get going with the vaccination. Like the PM I very much trust the Australians, that most people will take this vaccine once it becomes available. We have extraordinarily high immunisation rates in Australia, extraordinarily high. 95 per cent in some cases even more in aboriginal communities. So people take up that opportunity, we know that and recognise the issues that are coming to the fore about hesitancy, but I'm sure once we get started, that will dissolve, that will dissolve on our front lines straight away. We need it to dissolve in relation to aged care and disability care residents because they are the most vulnerable and we just need to get them protected before [inaudible].

JOURNALIST: Professor Kelly, can I ask, there are some concerns within the multicultural communities that they're kind of being left out of the consultation programme, we've been speaking to quite a lot of them, they want to know how can we make sure misinformation isn't getting into these communities? So what information are we giving in language and culturally appropriate to these groups?

PROFESSOR PAUL KELLY, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER: So I'll let the minister add shortly about what he's been doing and we have the Minister [inaudible] here also, so look we've done a lot of work with the with many of linguistically diverse communities and hopefully those communities around Australia. We had specific briefings last week with the media that goes to that, we're talking to the elders of many communities and leaders of the community's we have very strong support, for example, from the Muslim community through their imams, and so those things are really important. We've learnt a lot of lessons along the way in this pandemic how important that is. And so we're, no one never gets left behind here. We will be countering every message which is discouraging people and replacing those with encouragement.

THE HON. GREG HUNT MP, MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGED CARE: Look at very briefly, we've not only had widespread engagement with multicultural Australia, we are doing advertising in over 30 languages, we've been working with SBS, which has been fantastic. We are doing fact sheets in over 60 languages. Professor Kelly mentioned the Islamic community issued a statement of support for many members of their community as possible to take up vaccination, and others are doing it. We are also empowering local communities across cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds to design and develop their own grassroots campaigns and outreach campaigns. And, briefly, Alex Hawke is the minister for multicultural affairs to make some comments.

THE HON. ALEX HAWKE MP, MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION, CITIZENSHIP, MIGRANT SERVICES AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS: Thanks, Greg. And just add to what Paul Kelly said there, I think multicultural communities are also embracing the concept of vaccination as the wider community is, and from the government's perspective, we have a series of consultations, roundtables with community leaders, faith leaders, some of which have been mentioned today. There's so much diversity in the Australian community. We thought about translations in about 60 languages, there's communications would be in every single one of those languages. There's video communications. We're working with the Multicultural Council of Australia as well to ensure that every part of the vaccination message is delivered to every community in Australia. And here we are at the cusp of western Sydney, there's diversity all around us in these communities. And we're finding great support from all those community leaders, from those faith leaders, from every part of the multicultural community in Australia for the vaccination rollout. And the government will keep working with them as issues are identified. And what we're seeing so far is the great support from those community leaders, from those faith leaders they are speaking with their communities every day, every week. And the message is getting through.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, Prime Minister, on Brittany Higgins if we may now?

PRIME MINISTER: Are we finished with [inaudible] health?

JOURNALIST: What do you think is the first thing that's going to go back to normal? And what is the last going to get back to normal once we get going on the scale of this vaccine?

PRIME MINISTER: Well Greg you might like to comment on that and I'll allow you to do that. Every day that goes past from here gets more normal. Every day. And that's what we've started today. And that's what's exciting about today. The exact path will in many ways illuminate itself as we work through these issues. But the thing I've got to tell you that I'm most pleased about today is that I now know as this vaccination rolls out, and particularly because it focuses on the most vulnerable in our community. That the greatest fear that I have as Prime Minister in facing this pandemic, this vaccination addresses, and that is serious disease and the sort of widespread fatalities that we saw overseas. That is what I'm most pleased about that, that element of this pandemic because of this vaccination, that we move further away from that every single day. That's a big change. That is a massive change. And that will lead to others. Greg?

THE HON GREG HUNT MP, MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGED CARE: Sure, so I think the first thing that changes is confidence and that's the first thing and today is about confidence and hope and protection above all else, and yes

that will lead to shops and schools being progressively more and more open and other activities around the country and in the later stages of course, in a world where there are between 300 and 400 thousand cases a day engagement with the outside world, is something which happens perhaps on a more staggered basis. But what changes today is confidence goes up.

JOURNALIST: Just in relation to that issue, on Brittany Higgins,

PRIME MINISTER: Okay, I'm very happy to answer the question, but I do know there's a lot of health questions and, but if we are finished with the health questions I'm going to excuse Alison and Paul. That's my key point.

JOURNALIST: Can you give people reassurance that those Australia will choose not to get this, that there won't be a mandatory- no one will be forced to get it?

PRIME MINISTER: Well it's a non-mandatory vaccine. The only issues that can arise in relation to that are public health orders issued by the state and territory governments. Which is currently the case with the flu vaccines and many other types of vaccines. So that would be exactly the same process that chief health officers and chief medical officers would assess for particular applications based on the health advice, but that just relates to the performance of an occupation. There's no mandatory compulsion on anyone in this country to have it, but I do know Australians from how they responded already to this pandemic and they have been a source of strength for the results that we've achieved, the Australian way that we have embarked on we will continue and it steps up a whole nother gear as of tomorrow.

Okay, thanks. Thanks Alison. Thank you very much, Paul. Happy to take other questions.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister you've launched 4 reviews in response to the allegations that have been brought forward by Brittany Higgins, what do you ultimately hope comes from those reviews?

PRIME MINISTER: I hope they will give us what we need to change the culture not just today, but longer term. And I hope that it will ensure that the systems and processes that we've relied on here will create and provide greater support to anyone who would find themselves a victim of those types of events in the future. It's a fairly straightforward expectation. I want the culture to be better. I want the system to be better for the sake of particularly those who were impacted directly by these things, but also for those who are in a position of seeking to help and support people in that situation. That's what I want to know. I want to honestly know and if we need two, if we need four, we will get what we need to ensure we find out that information. There are many good ideas and suggestions that are already coming forward. There are changes that have already been made in recent years, and I think this will really help us do that.

JOURNALIST: But three of those reviews are being conducted by your Department and your staff, and that's hardly independent or at arms length?

PRIME MINISTER: None are being conducted by my staff. My Department is involved in that. There's also the process, Celia Hammond is involved in which is a Party process, and then of course there is the multi-party parliamentary process, that Minister Birmingham is working through with the other party leaders, and we hope to make further announcements there, if we believe there's a need for further things then we'll be taking that advice, particularly from my Secretary of Prime Minister and Cabinet. So we're keen to know how to make it better.

JOURNALIST: Jennifer Westacott from the Business Council of Australia was saying today that the, there's a pervasive culture of discourtesy, disrespect and bullying in Parliament House. What do you say to her claims?

PRIME MINISTER: I think the culture needs to change and it needs to continually improve, but I've got to say, if any workplace, thinks that this is just confined to the parliament, they are kidding themselves, seriously, they're kidding themselves, we've got our issues to deal with as a Parliament, and we're saying we do.

JOURNALIST: So she needs to look at her businesses that she supports?

PRIME MINISTER: You can make your own comments. All I'm simply saying is we need to deal with what's happening in our house and everybody needs to deal with what's happening in theirs.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister Samantha Maiden says that she went to your office, the PMO on the Friday to raise questions about Brittany and what she had said. You say you didn't find out about it until the Monday the 15th. So are we to believe that your office did not inform you of this for 48 hours?

PRIME MINISTER: Correct.

JOURNALIST: And is there, why? Why on earth did that happen?

PRIME MINISTER: I've expressed my view to my staff about that very candidly on Monday.

JOURNALIST: Are they being reprimanded? I mean, it's a very serious allegation that isn't being brought to the Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER: And you can be assured that they know exactly my views about that.

JOURNALIST: PM your Health Minister again this morning

PRIME MINISTER: But, you know, it's not about how I feel. It's always about the person who's at the centre of this, and that's why we have to do these things. That's what it's about.

JOURNALIST: In relation to support for people who make, Brittany and others like her who make, raise complaints like this. Minister Hunt appeared to back an independent body to deal with complaints, of this nature this morning, calling for an external structure to make sure people have confidence in coming forward. Do you agree that we need an external body to deal with complaints of this nature?

PRIME MINISTER: I've already said I think there's merit in that. But I think that is for the process that we've put in place to actually consider those things and to make recommendations that can then be accepted and we can go forward. I really don't want to prejudge a lot of this. I said a few days ago, last Tuesday in fact, that what we need to do is ensure that people are able, in these circumstances, to feel they can raise these issues, even though people are saying, you can, they need to feel that they can and to do so in a discrete and a private way and so they can get the support they need. And that's what I want to see happen. But the other thing, we must deal with this issue, it's a very important and serious issue. I can assure you I and my Government are going to take it very seriously. But as a Government, we've also got to focus on the many other things that we're here today to do. Australians are relying on me and my team to protect their livelihoods, to protect their lives, to maintain the health of the country, to make sure we roll out this vaccination programme, that we get Australians back into work, and that we remain very focused on the things that are impacting them every single day of their lives where they are. I can assure you we will deal with this other matter which is very serious, but I can assure you, it won't take away from us dealing with what I know Australians need us to do. Our come back from the covid-19 pandemic is underway. And today, we have just taken another massive step forward down that the Australian path. Thank you all very much.

[END]

Media Contacts: Press Office, (02) 6277 7744

The Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Sydney

Press Office of the Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister, Canberra