

UNCLASSIFIED



The Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister

TRANSCRIPT
PRESS CONFERENCE
CANBERRA, ACT
THURSDAY 11 APRIL 2019

E&OE...

PRIME MINISTER: Good morning everyone. Earlier this morning, I visited the Governor-General here in Canberra and he accepted my advice for an election to be held on the 18th of May. We live in the best country in the world. But to secure your future, the road ahead depends on a strong economy. And that's why there is so much at stake at this election. Despite global economic headwinds, Australia's economy is strong. We are delivering the first budget surplus in more than a decade. Unemployment is at decade lows. And last year, for the first time in our history, more than 100,000 young Australians got a job.

With a stronger economy we will create another one and a quarter million jobs over the next five years. We will maintain those budget surpluses without increasing taxes, and pay down the debt. We will deliver tax relief, as we have, for families, for hard working Australians, for small businesses, allowing Australians to keep more of what they earn. We will keep Australians safe as Liberal National governments always do, and we will keep our borders secure, as you know we will. And we will be able to guarantee the increased funding for the essential services that Australians rely on. Schools, hospitals, medicines, roads - all guaranteed by a stronger economy. All of this delivered by that plan that has kept our economy strong, not by increasing taxes. This is how we will make your life easier in the years ahead. This is how we will take the pressure off you and your family. There is more to do and a lot has got done, and we are getting on together with the job.

So at this election there is a clear choice. It is a choice that will determine the economy that Australians live in, not just for the next three years but for the next decade. It's a choice between a government that I lead and the alternative of a Labor government led by Bill Shorten. You will have the choice between a Government that is delivering a strong economy and will continue to do so, or Bill Shorten's Labor Party, whose policies would weaken our economy. You will get to decide between a Government that has fixed the Budget or Bill Shorten's Labor Party that we always know can't manage money. You will have a choice between a Government that is lowering taxes for all Australians, or Bill Shorten's Labor Party that will impose higher taxes that will weigh down our economy. It's taken us more than five years to turn around Labor's Budget mess. Now is not the time to turn back.

Keeping our economy strong is how we secure your future and your family's future. Keeping our economy strong ensures that we can secure your wage, your job, your business and, importantly, the business you are going to work for today. Particularly, those small and family businesses out there employing more than half of the Australians who go to work today. And it's also absolutely essential to guarantee the funding for the services that you rely on - hospitals, schools, roads, medicines, aged care, disability care - all of these now already at record levels of funding that only a strong economy can guarantee into the future, not higher taxes.

Australia is the best country in the world but our future depends on a strong economy. So I'm asking my fellow Australians today that on the 18th of May, you vote Liberal and National around the country. So together all of us as Australians can continue to build our economy to secure your future. Now I'm happy to take a few questions. Over here, Phil.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, Labor's key theme is going to be fairness. How do you respond to that, how do you counter that?

PRIME MINISTER: I believe in a fair go for those who have a go. And what that means is part of the promise that we all keep as Australians is that we make a contribution and don't seek to take one. When all Australians do that, that's when we get the fair go mentality and culture that has made our country strong today. So under our policies, if you're having a go you'll get a go. And that involves an obligation on all of us to be able to bring what we have to the table. It doesn't matter what level of ability you have, what your means are, where you live in this country. It matters that we all bring our best. Under my Government, under our Government, under a Liberal Nationals Government, we will always be backing in those Australians who are looking to make a contribution not take one and, together, that's how we make our country stronger.

JOURNALIST: Prime Minister, what would you say to Australians who are thinking, 'why should I reward an unstable Government?'

PRIME MINISTER: This election is about the future. But it's a decision people can make about the future because of the record of the economic management that our Government has delivered. The record of national security and strong border protection that our Government has delivered. The record of bringing unemployment down, of getting young people into kids, of delivering record funding for hospitals and schools. Over the last five and a half years we have increased funding for public schools around the country by more than 60 per cent. We've increased funding for hospitals by more than 60 per cent. We've increased funding for Medicare by 27 per cent, and bulk-billing rates today are at their highest level. Our Government has the record of delivering not only a stronger economy, but the dividends of a stronger economy in the essential services that Australians rely on.

And so the choice that is going to be made by Australians on the 18th of May is like it always is at every election, and that is, who do you trust to deliver that strong economy which your essential services rely on? Who do you trust to deliver the strong economy and the Budget management that these services can be funded, that the business that you work for will be there in three years, in five years, in ten years? The strong economy that is the way and the path to higher and sustainable wages in this country. The strong economy which, at the end of the day, enables us all to invest in our communities, where we live and where we work, and where we play. So, make no mistake, elections are all about questions of trust and

our record of delivery on the things that Australians rely on, the economy they live in and the services that they rely on is very clear and our plans to continue to deliver that are very clear. Mark?

JOURNALIST: The question is though that the Australian people voted for a government led by Tony Abbott in 2013 and ended up with Malcolm Turnbull. They voted for Malcolm Turnbull in 2016 and ended up with you, via Peter Dutton. What absolute guarantee can you give the Australian people that if they vote for you they'll get you?

PRIME MINISTER: That's why after I became Prime Minister we changed the rules in the Liberal Party, as you know. It was the biggest change to the Liberal Party's rules since Sir Robert Menzies founded our parliamentary party here. Those rules say that at the next election on May 18, if the Liberal National Government is returned, if I'm re-elected as Prime Minister, then I will serve as your Prime Minister because the rules have been changed to prevent the things that have happened in the past. The same is true of the Labor Party - they changed their rules as well. So it's crystal clear, at this election, it is a choice between me as Prime Minister and Bill Shorten as Prime Minister. You vote for me, you'll get me. You vote for Bill Shorten and you'll get Bill Shorten.

JOURNALIST: On your first day in Question Time as Prime Minister you said, "when placed in command, take charge." How would you describe the battle, the scale of the battle, you're about to lead the Coalition into?

PRIME MINISTER: Well, I believe that we must win this election for the interests of our country. The last time Labor was elected to form a Government back in 2007 they inherited a strong economy and they inherited budget surpluses. And in the space of one year they turned a \$20 billion surplus into a \$27 billion deficit. They turned strong borders into weak borders. And we have spent the last more than ten years getting back to where we were. You vote Labor once, you pay for it for a decade. That's what history has taught us. You know, in the last 18 months we have only just now got back and exceeded, in fact, the share of the working age population that is in work. The last time we hit that record was when the Liberal and National Party left office in 2007, and it has taken us more than a decade to get back to where we were. Australians have worked incredibly hard and over the last five years, they've been supported by a Government that has been backing them in. Against stiff headwinds, indeed in the past, \$80 billion taken out of our economy on the downside of the mining investment boom but we continued to grow, and our economy continued to prevail by the hard work of Australians.

See, the Liberal and National Parties believe that the strength of our economy is rooted in the hard work and effort and enterprise and aspiration and the champion in every single Australian. Our job is to release those champions in our economy, to release those champions in the workforce, to release those champions in our health and education sector, to release those champions in our homes. We have a plan to make Australia stronger. And on the 18th May, Australians will have the opportunity to back that plan as we're backing them. Thank you very much.

[ENDS]

**Contacts: Press Office, (02) 6277 7744
The Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Sydney**