OFFICIAL

The Hon Jim Chalmers MP

Treasurer

TRANSCRIPT

E&OE TRANSCRIPT

PRESS CONFERENCE

BRISBANE

THURSDAY 14th AUGUST 2025

SUBJECTS: M1 upgrade, Economic Reform Roundtable, housing, Australia to Recognise Palestinian State.

JULIE-ANN CAMPBELL, MEMBER FOR MORETON: Well, good morning, everyone, and welcome to a brand new park ‘n ride facility. Today is a fantastic day for people who live on the south side of Brisbane. It’s a fantastic day for people who live in Logan. And it’s a fantastic day for those who want to spend less time in traffic, less time in congestion and more time with their families. As we come together today, it’s exciting because this is not just about significant upgrades to the M1, it’s also about making sure that south siders and people from Logan have more options when it comes to public transport and more options when it comes to active transport, and it’s all about making sure that we continue to invest in making sure that people can spend more time at home and less time on the freeway or in cars. I’m delighted to have with me here the Minister for Transport and the Treasurer of Australia to make a fantastic announcement today. And I’ll hand it over to Jim.

JIM CHALMERS, TREASURER: Thanks very much, Julie-Ann. It’s a real honour to be here with you today delivering on both sides of our border, which is right there the member for Moreton and the member for Rankin. Really pleased to be here with Minister Brent Mickelberg as well from the Queensland state government. And this is a genuine partnership between the federal government and now two state governments. I pay tribute to Brent’s predecessor as well as Brent himself for seeing this beautiful project come to fruition. This is an absolute beauty - $750 million worth of investment. It’s been a long time coming but it’s been worth the wait. This project has had a whole bunch of difficulties to navigate over the last five years, whether it’s Covid, supply chain issues, natural disasters. So I wanted to pay tribute to everyone who’s worked on this project over the last five years. I know as a local resident who lives just around the corner and up the road over there, I know how important this stretch of freeway is. This is an absolutely crucial piece of road infrastructure. This is the link between Brisbane and Logan and the Gold Coast. And so today is a big investment in our local community, and it’s a big shot in the arm for this local South East Queensland economy. It's a big vote of confidence in the future of our part of South East Queensland, and it will make a big difference to a more productive local economy here in South East Queensland as well. The numbers are pretty astounding. I think three and a half million work hours, 150,000 tonnes of asphalt. I think a thousand kilometres of cabling. There’s the park ‘n’ ride, as Jules said. This beautiful new bus station. There’s the veloway for cyclists and the active transport as well. There’s at least eight lanes for big chunks of it but 10 lanes for parts of it as well. Eight kilometres of upgrades. So this is a really important day. It is a big investment in our local community. It is a big shot in the arm for our local economy. As Jules said, every minute that local people spend in traffic is a minute thieved from their families or from their small businesses. And so this investment will be very well appreciated I think by the local neighbourhoods around here. I say that as someone who has grown up and lived next to or near this freeway almost all of my life. I know how important it is, so I’m very proud as the local member with Jules and also as the Treasurer to have kicked in $510 million of that $750 million which has seen this project finished and which we formally open today. It will make a big difference. So it’s a big day for our local community. It’s a big day for the South East Queensland economy. And it’s been a big week for the national economy as well. On Tuesday the third interest rate cut in six months. Yesterday the seventh consecutive quarter of real wages growth, the strongest real wages growth in five years. And later today we’ll get more news on the unemployment rate and the jobs figures in this country. Under the Albanese Labor Government, we have seen the lowest average unemployment rate of any government in the last 50 years. We’ve kept unemployment low at the same time as we’ve got inflation down, and that has given the Reserve Bank the confidence to cut interest rates three times in six months. That is very welcome relief for millions of Australians with a mortgage under pressure. It means more money in the pockets of those millions of Australians to help them deal with the cost of living pressures which are still real. But whether it’s the interest rate cuts on Tuesday, real wages growth yesterday or the jobs numbers today, it’s really clear Australians are making welcome and encouraging progress in our economy. Inflation is down, real wages are up, unemployment is low. We’ve got the debt down as well, interest rates are coming down at the same time. Now, this is a really important platform for us to build on as we turn our mind to the bigger, more persistent structural issues in our economy, including productivity. That will be the focus of next week’s Economic Reform Roundtable. But investments like these in local communities like ours will make our economy more productive. The best way to work out what the next steps are to make our economy more productive are to do that together in the government’s usual considered, consultative and methodical way. That’s what the reform roundtable is all about. I’m going to throw Brent and then happy to take some questions.

BRENT MICKELBERG, QUEENSLAND MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS: Thanks very much, Treasurer. It’s tremendous to be here today announcing the completion of the Eight Mile Plains to Daisy Hill upgrade project. This has been a mammoth undertaking – five years of work to get to this point. And I’m very pleased to have this project completed and delivering for not just residents but for communities right across the south-east. As the Treasurer spoke, this is also a critical road, as anyone who has driven the M1 knows, for interstate traffic, freight and our businesses that rely on that traffic. And we’re really focused as a government, Queensland government, with getting on the job with delivering this important infrastructure to deliver the benefit for all Queenslanders. I want to acknowledge the Federal Government’s contribution as outlined by the Federal Treasurer. I want to acknowledge the manner in which we’ve gone about addressing these large infrastructure projects. This is a project that has not been without complexity. The project team and contractors who have worked on this project have done a tremendous job to get to this point, and we’re very pleased to be able to open it today. And we look forward to working collaboratively with the federal government to deliver more of these projects, not just across the South East but right across Queensland in coming months and years. I’ll hand back now to the Federal Treasurer, and I’m happy to come back and take any questions at the end.

CHALMERS: Thanks, Brent. Any questions?

JOURNALIST: Treasurer – on the roundtable? Is it very productive to bring business and unions to Canberra to talk about productivity when a list of potential outcomes has already been presented to Cabinet?

CHALMERS: Well, a couple of things about that. We’ve already got an agenda to boost productivity in our economy. We’re rolling that out and we’re delivering it. And we believe that the best way to work out what the next steps are is to do that together in a considered and consultative way. The Economic Reform Roundtable is our genuine attempt to build consensus around dealing with and addressing some of the big, persistent structural issues in our economy – primarily productivity but also resilience and budget sustainability. Now, we’ve been working very, very hard to consult with business and unions, experts, economists, and community more broadly in the lead-up to this Economic Reform Roundtable. We don’t pre-empt any of the reform directions that come out of that roundtable, but we are preparing for the issues that people have been raising with us. As part of our consultations, a whole range of issues have been raised with us, including some that have been reported today. I don’t think it should come as a surprise to anyone that the Treasury has been briefing us on those issues that have been raised in the very substantial consultation that we have undertaken. So we’re not pre-empting any outcomes or directions out of next week, but we are with Treasury’s help preparing for them. And I don’t think that’s a big surprise.

JOURNALIST: Will you take the Treasury’s recommendations and pause the National Construction Code?

CHALMERS: There are a number of issues that has been proposed to us. I’ve been consulting for weeks now in probably one of the most intensive periods of consultation that people have seen for a long time. And ideas like that have been put to us, not just those ideas that have been reported today but probably hundreds of different ideas have been put to us. And we don’t want to pre-empt the discussions next week. This is a genuine attempt to try and build consensus around the suggestions that people might have for us, to agree on some reform directions for the government to do more work on. But those are just some of the ideas that that have been put to us. And, again, I don’t think it should come as a big surprise to anyone that the Treasury has been briefing us on those ideas, helping us to prepare for those proposals that people have said that they will put to us. We’re not pre-empting any outcome. We are preparing for the ideas that people have put to us. Those that have been reported today are just a few of the many ideas which have been put to us, and they’re all welcome.

JOURNALIST: Negative gearing reform was not one of the options listed in that document. Would negative gearing reform on the table for this Government?

CHALMERS: We haven’t changed our policy or our position on that, but people have put all kinds of proposals to us, including changes in that area. And what I’ve tried to do is to be respectful to people. We know that we’ve got about 25 people, very busy people, with a lot of expertise and experience coming to Canberra next week. And I’ve tried to be respectful of that and not artificially narrow or limit the contribution that they may make. So, people have put that suggestion to us, but the government hasn’t changed its policy or its position on those issues that you’re asking me about.

JOURNALIST: Israel says it’s a disgraceful day for Australia when terrorists celebrate foreign policy. How do you reflect on those comments?

CHALMERS: The policy that we announced earlier in the week is about isolating and excluding Hamas. There is absolutely no role for Hamas in the future government of a Palestinian state. We’ve made that clear. And we want to see the return of the hostages. We want to see the aid flow. We condemn the terrorist attack of October 7. And our position is that we want to see the people of Israel and the people of Palestine, the families, and people of those two parts of the Middle East to be able to raise their kids in peace. And that’s what a two-state solution is all about. We want to isolate and exclude Hamas. The Palestinian Authority has made commitments in that regard, and we will work with the international community to keep the Palestinian Authority up to the mark on the commitments that they’ve made.

JOURNALIST: Hamas still has the support of the Palestinian [INAUDIBLE]. How do you separate the two?

CHALMERS: Well, I couldn’t be clearer. The position that we have advanced in concert with a number of our friends around the world is consistent with our view for some time that we want to see a two-state solution. We believe that recognition of a Palestinian state is an important step in that direction. We want to make sure, and we will make sure that Hamas has no role in the government of a Palestinian state. The Palestinian Authority has made commitments in that regard, and we’ll keep them up to the mark.

JOURNALIST: Treasurer, just back on the National Construction Code, given Labor didn’t agree with this policy when the Coalition proposed it, what’s changed?

CHALMERS: We haven’t adopted or announced that as policy. What you’re referring to is advice and analysis on an idea that has been put to us. And as I said before, there have been hundreds if not thousands of ideas put to us. That’s a good thing. And the Treasury’s job is to analyse that and to advise me on that. The document you’re referring to is not a government announcement. The document that you’re referring to is all about the usual way that Treasury advises treasurers on ideas put to them. In this context, it’s in advance of the Economic Reform Roundtable. Nothing that has been reported today has been adopted as government policy. What you’re talking about is advice and analysis for the lead-up to a meeting next week, a roundtable next week. And I don’t think it’s especially surprising that Treasury has provided advice of that nature.

JOURNALIST: ASIC is looking to review the rules around superannuation firms investing in residential property. Would you support those changes?

CHALMERS: Absolutely. What ASIC is talking about after a long period of consultation is making it easier for superannuation funds to invest in the housing that our communities desperately need. And this is a good example of what can come from the sort of engagement we’ve seen leading up to this economic Reform Roundtable. This regulation – RG 97 – has been a barrier to superannuation funds investing in housing. The Property Council has said that if this change was made, the change that ASIC is now considering, it could mean like something like 35,000 extra homes over the course of the next five years. Now housing is one of the defining challenges in our economy. We’re always on the lookout for ways to partner, whether it’s with institutional investors or state governments or others, to build more homes. And so, I welcome Joe Longo’s announcement yesterday that he will be reviewing RG 97. For a couple of years now the big funds, the big institutional investors, have raised this with us as an issue. We don’t want them to be deterred from investing in housing; we want them to be encouraged to invest in housing. And so I welcome the progress made yesterday in that light.

JOURNALIST: [INAUDIBLE] You’ve ruled out any changes in this government at this stage. We had an interest rate cut that is expected to increase demand for housing. Yesterday’s lending data showed that investors are – as a proportion of buyers are increasing. Are you worried that if we do see prices take off limited housing stock and investors becoming more active, it will price first home buyers and families out of the housing market?

CHALMERS: Well, two things about that. I mean, first of all, thanks for mentioning the interest rate cut on Tuesday because that is a really important decision taken by the independent Reserve Bank to make it easier for millions of Australians with a mortgage. And there have been three interest rate cuts in the course of the last six months. Our political opponents said before the election if Labor was re-elected interest rates would go up. They’ve come down multiple times. So, let’s not skip lightly over the good news on Tuesday when it comes to interest rates being cut for the third time in six months. Now, when it comes to issues around housing affordability, the best thing we can do here is build more homes. That’s why ASIC’s announcement yesterday is so welcome. It’s why the Commonwealth government is investing tens of billions of dollars in housing. It’s why the state government has made announcements this week because we all need to work together to build more homes. The best way to help particularly young Australians or all Australians looking for a toehold in the housing market is to build more affordable options. That’s what the government is all about.

JOURNALIST: Building more homes does take nine to 18 months. What about first home buyers right now who are about to be priced out of the market during the busiest time of the year?

CHALMERS: There’s no change in the housing market you can make today that will make a big difference tomorrow. Inevitably it takes time to build homes, and we want it to take less time to build homes. And that’s a big priority at the Economic Reform Roundtable as well. Now, we’ve already got tens of billions of dollars committed to housing. We’ve been working with the states and territories on planning and zoning. We’re working with investors and others in the building industry as well. We need to make the housing sector more productive. We need to get the approvals moving faster. We need to build homes so that there are more affordable options for more people. And inevitably it takes time to build a home; we want it to take less time.

JOURNALIST: You mentioned negative gearing before. What about capital gains tax? Are you open to changes to that?

CHALMERS: I give you the same answer that I gave to your colleague about that – we haven’t changed our policy or our position on that. People have put suggestions to us on that as well. Our priority is building more homes for all the reasons that I just ran through. Anyone else?

JOURNALIST: Just on the Quad, the Premier is keen for the Quad to come to Brisbane. What about you?

CHALMERS: Not just the Premier – I am too. Now, let’s work together and bring the Quad to Queensland. The PM is keen. The Premier is keen. I’ve got a spare room at my joint if they need it. This would be an amazing outcome, I think, for Queensland. I’m sure we’re on a unity ticket. Minister Mickelberg I’m sure, Jules is in the cart for this as well. Let’s bring the Quad to Queensland. What better way to showcase the best country on earth than to bring it to South East Queensland. And so whatever help Premier Crisafulli needs, Prime Minister Albanese needs, I think as a very proud Queenslander from this neck of the woods I think it would be an absolutely tremendous outcome. Obviously, there’s work to do to work out the best way to go about it. But in principle bringing the Quad to Queensland would be a terrific thing for, you know, the best part of Australia. Thanks very much.

ENDS