

Australians start voting as Pope's death overshadows election campaigning

Rod McGuirk

Australians have started voting at the general election as the death of Pope Francis overshadowed campaigning.

Polling stations opened to voters who, for a variety of reasons, will be unable to vote on May 3. Around half the votes are expected to be cast before the election date.

Both prime minister Anthony Albanese and opposition leader Peter Dutton

cancelled campaign events planned for yesterday out of respect for the late pontiff.

Flags were flown at half-mast from government buildings across the country, where 20% of the population were Catholics.

Mr Albanese was raised as a Catholic but chose to be sworn in as prime minister when elected in 2022 by making a secular affirmation rather than by taking an oath on a Bible.

Mr Albanese, who has described himself as a "flawed Catholic", attended a mass in honour of the Pope in Melbourne's St Patrick's Cathedral yesterday morning.

"I try not to talk about my faith in public," Mr Albanese said. "At times like this, I think what people do is they draw on who they are and certainly my Catholicism is just a part of me."

Mr Albanese and Mr Dutton, who leads the conserv-

ative Liberal Party, met in Sydney later yesterday for the third televised leaders' debate of the campaign.

Mr Albanese said he expects to receive pressure from social media giants to ease Australia's impending ban on children using their platforms, with Mr Dutton keen to agree with him in the election debate.

President Donald Trump's US administration has already raised the issue on

behalf of the firms, mostly US-based, in relation to trade tariff negotiations.

In the televised event ahead of the election, Mr Albanese and Mr Dutton both pledged strong support for the laws that force social media companies to negotiate to pay for local news hosted on their platforms, and that will restrict access to X, Facebook, Instagram and others by children aged under 16 from December.

Mr Albanese said his government "won't budge" on the issue. "The social media ban that Australia is implementing with bipartisan support is world-leading," he said during the debate on the Nine Network. "There's no question in my mind in the lead-up to December, when it comes into force, you will see major pressure being placed by some of the social media giants."

Mr Dutton said his Liberal and National coalition was

"on a unity ticket" with Mr Albanese's Labor Party on the issue.

He said multinational technology companies "just see our kids as a commodity, as a profit line online".

"We have worked really hard to hold those companies to account," he said, "to provide a safer place online and to make sure the big media companies treat our kids with respect according to the law, and it is not a lawless zoo."



PM Anthony Albanese.

No quick end to the conflict, Russians again warn

Illia Novikov

Russian drones have battered the Ukrainian port city of Odesa and glide bombs hit Zaporizhzhia, as the Kremlin again warned that negotiators were unlikely to obtain a swift breakthrough in peace talks on the war.

Ukrainian, British, French and US officials are due to meet in London today to discuss the situation.

Anticipation is building over whether diplomatic efforts can stop more than three years of fighting since Russia's full-scale invasion of its neighbour. Hostility has run deep since Russia invaded and illegally annexed Ukraine's Crimea Peninsula in 2014.

US president Donald Trump said last week negotiations were "coming to a head" and insisted that neither side was "playing" him in his push to end the war.

This came after US secre-

is expected to visit Moscow again this week.

Western analysts say Moscow is in no rush to conclude peace talks because it has battlefield momentum and wants to capture more Ukrainian land.

Russia has effectively rejected a US proposal for an immediate and full 30-day halt in the fighting by imposing far-reaching conditions.

Odesa came under a "massive attack" by Russian drones overnight, injuring at least three people, the head of Odesa regional administration, Oleh Kiper, wrote on his Telegram page.

A residential building in a densely populated urban area, civilian infrastructure and an educational facility were hit, he said.

Also, during daylight yesterday, Russia hit the southern Ukraine city of Zaporizhzhia with two massive aerial glide bombs — a retrofitted Soviet weapon that



Palestinians examine the remains of bulldozers deliberately targeted by an Israeli air strike in Jabaliya, northern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

Picture: AP Photo/Jehad Alshrafi

Israeli strikes kill 17 in Gaza and destroy heavy equipment used to clear rubble

Wafaa Shurafa

Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip killed at least 17 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and destroyed



four women and four children, according to Nasser Hospital, which received the bodies. The dead included a two-year-old girl and her parents.

success after he appeared to fail to secure the support he wanted from Mr Trump on issues such as stopping Iran from developing nuclear weapons, reducing US tax

Spain to meet Nato's defence spending

Spain will meet Nato's defence spending target this year, Spanish prime minister Pedro Sanchez has said.

The news comes as pressure grows on the eurozone's fourth-largest economy to boost its military expenditure. Mr Sanchez said the government would raise defence spending by €10.5bn to reach Nato's target of 2% of GDP. The spending would go towards telecommunications, cybersecurity and buying military equipment, as well as raising salaries and adding troops. Spain spent the least of all Nato members last year on defence as a share of GDP. It previously committed to reaching the 2% target by 2029.

Sudan's paramilitary groups kill at least 30

Paramilitary groups in Sudan attacked a city in the western Darfur region, killing more than 30 people, according to the Resistance Committees activist group.

The Rapid Support Forces and allied militias launched an offensive on el-Fasher, the provincial capital of North Darfur province.

Dozens of other people were wounded in the attack, said the group, which tracks the war. The attack is the latest deadly offensive on an area that is home to hundreds of thousands of displaced people.

Jury selected in Weinstein's retrial

A jury of seven women and five men has been picked for Harvey Weinstein's rape retrial. It is a more female panel than the five women and seven men

tary of state Marco Rubio suggested the US might soon back away from negotiations if they did not progress.

Mr Rubio has suggested that today's meeting could be decisive in determining whether the US administration continues its involvement.

Retired lieutenant general Keith Kellogg, Mr Trump's envoy for Ukraine and Russia, will represent Washington in the discussions in London, the US State Department said yesterday.

Mr Rubio will not attend because of a scheduling issue, according to spokeswoman Tammy Bruce.

But Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov cautioned that "the settlement issue is so complex that it would be wrong to put some tight limits to it and try to set some short time frame for a settlement, a viable settlement — it would be a thankless task".

Mr Putin's foreign affairs adviser, Yuri Ushakov, said Trump envoy Steve Witkoff

for months it has used to lay waste to eastern Ukraine.

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy said his earlier offer of a ceasefire covering civilian sites still stands, adding: "Russia needs to be seriously prepared to talk about this. There are no obstacles on the Ukrainian side and there will be none."

Mr Peskov said there are no plans for talks on the proposal to halt strikes on civilian facilities.

He said Moscow is prepared to consider such a step but noted that reaching an agreement could take time.

"While talking about civilian infrastructure, it's necessary to clearly define when such facilities can be a military target and when they can't," he said.

"If a military meeting is held there, is it a civilian facility? It is. But is it a military target? Yes, it is. There are some nuances here that need to be discussed."

bulldozers and heavy equipment that had been supplied by mediators to clear rubble.

Separate strikes yesterday killed two in Lebanon.

Israel's 18-month offensive against Hamas has destroyed vast areas of Gaza, raising fears that much of it may never be rebuilt.

The territory already had a shortage of heavy equipment, which is also needed to rescue people from the rubble after Israeli strikes and to clear vital roads.

The Israeli military said it struck and destroyed around 40 pieces of heavy machinery. Israel said Hamas used the vehicles, including bulldozers, for planting explosives, digging tunnels and breaching fences, including during the major attack on October 7 2023.

A municipality in the Jabaliya area of northern Gaza said a strike on its parking garage destroyed nine bulldozers provided by Egypt



Palestinians inspect the damage caused by an Israeli army air strike in Khan Younis, Gaza Strip, yesterday.

and Qatar, which helped broker the ceasefire that took hold in January.

Israel ended the truce last month, renewing its bombardment and ground operations and sealing the territory's two million Palestinians off from all imports, including food, fuel and medical supplies.

The strikes also destroyed a water tanker and a mobile generator provided by aid groups, and a truck used to

pump sewage, the Jabaliya al-Nazla municipality said.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the strikes. The military says it only targets militants and blames civilian deaths on Hamas because the group operates in densely populated areas.

An Israeli air strike early yesterday destroyed a multi-storey home in the southern city of Khan Younis, killing nine people, including

"They were asleep, sleeping in God's peace. They had nothing to do with anything," said Awad Dahliz, the slain girl's grandfather.

"What is the fault of this innocent child?"

Also yesterday, a strike in the built-up Jabaliya refugee camp killed three children and their parents, and a strike in Nuseirat killed a man and two children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry's emergency service and local hospitals.

Also yesterday, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US president Donald Trump spoke by phone, two weeks after meeting in Washington. Mr Trump wrote on his social networking site that the two spoke about trade and Iran, among other issues, adding: "The call went very well — we are on the same side of every issue."

Mr Netanyahu's hastily arranged visit to Washington was not deemed a big

iffs, the influence of Turkey and the war in Gaza.

Israel's air and ground war has killed more than 51,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to the ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were civilians or combatants. Israel says it has killed around 20,000 militants.

The war began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on October 7 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking 251 people hostage. They are still holding 59 hostages, 24 of whom are believed to be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefire deals.

Hamas has said it will only free the remaining hostages in return for the release of Palestinian prisoners, a full Israeli withdrawal and a lasting ceasefire. Israel has said it will keep fighting until the hostages are returned and Hamas has been either destroyed or disarmed and sent into exile.

Hollywood movie mogul at his first trial five years ago. Opening statements are not expected until today, as prosecutors and defence lawyers still need time to finish picking the last of six alternate jurors — those who step in if a member of the main panel cannot see the trial through.

More close allies of Bolsonaro charged

A panel of Brazil's Supreme Court justices has unanimously accepted charges against six more key allies of former president Jair Bolsonaro for allegedly attempting a coup to keep him in office.

Last month, the panel unanimously accepted charges against Bolsonaro and seven close allies over the alleged coup plot after his 2022 election defeat to president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, and ordered the former right-wing leader to stand trial.

Harvard sues Trump administration over freeze

Michael Casey

Harvard University has announced it has filed a lawsuit to halt a federal freeze on more than \$2.2bn (£1.92bn) in grants after the institution said it would defy the Trump administration's demands to limit activism on campus.

In an April 11 letter to Harvard, the Trump administration had called for broad government and leadership reforms at the university and changes to its admissions

policies. It also demanded that the university audit its views of diversity on campus and stop recognising some student clubs.

The administration has argued universities allowed antisemitism to go unchecked at campus protests last year against Israel's war in Gaza. Harvard president Alan Garber said the university would not bend to the demands.

Hours later, the government froze billions of dollars in federal funding. "The

government has not — and cannot — identify any rational connection between antisemitism concerns and the medical, scientific, technological, and other research it has frozen that aims to save American lives, foster American success, preserve American security, and maintain America's position as a global leader in innovation," said the lawsuit, filed in Boston federal court.

The lawsuit added: "Nor has the government ac-

knowledge the significant consequences that the indefinite freeze of billions of dollars in federal research funding will have on Harvard's research programmes, the beneficiaries of that research, and national interest in furthering American innovation and progress."

Within hours, the White House lashed back.

"The gravy train of federal assistance to institutions like Harvard, which enrich their grossly overpaid bureaucrats

with tax dollars from struggling American families, is coming to an end," White House spokesman Harrison Fields said. "Taxpayer funds are a privilege, and Harvard fails to meet the basic conditions required to access that privilege."

For the Trump administration, Harvard presents the first major hurdle in its attempt to force change at universities that Republicans say have become hotbeds of liberalism and antisemitism.

Gunmen kill tourists in Indian-controlled Kashmir

Aijaz Hussain

At least 26 tourists have been killed by gunmen at a tourist resort in Indian-controlled Kashmir, police said.

Two senior officers said at least four gunmen, whom they described as militants, fired at dozens of tourists from close range yesterday.

The officers said at least three dozen others were injured, with many in serious condition. Most of the tourists killed were Indian, the officers said.

Officials collected at least 24 bodies in Baisaran meadow, 5km from the disputed region's resort town of Pahalgam.

Police described the incident as a terror attack and blamed militants fighting

against Indian rule. "This attack is much larger than anything we've seen directed at civilians in recent years," said Omar Abdullah, the region's top elected official.

The attack appeared to be a major shift in the regional conflict in which tourists have largely been spared from violence.

India's home minister, Amit Shah, was heading to Srinagar, the main city in Indian-controlled Kashmir. He said prime minister Narendra Modi, who is on an official visit in Saudi Arabia, has been briefed.

"We will come down heavily on the perpetrators with the harshest consequences," Mr Shah said.

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, a key resistance politician

and Kashmir's top religious cleric, condemned what he described as a "cowardly attack on tourists", adding that "such violence is unacceptable and against the ethos of Kashmir which welcomes visitors with love and warmth".

The attack coincided with the visit to India of US vice president JD Vance, who is on a largely personal four-day stop.

The meadow in Pahalgam is a popular sightseeing destination, surrounded by snow-capped mountains and dotted with pine forests. It is visited by hundreds of tourists every day.

Nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan each administer part of Kashmir, but both claim the territory



Paramedics carry a wounded tourist at a hospital in Anantnag after gunmen indiscriminately fired at visitors in Pahalgam.

in its entirety. Kashmir has seen a spate of targeted killings of Hindus, including immigrant workers from Indian states, after New Delhi ended the region's semi-autonomy in 2019 and drastically curbed dissent, civil liberties and media freedoms.

Tensions have been simmering as India has intensified its counter-insurgency operations.

The region, known for rolling Himalayan foothills, decorated houseboats and pristine meadows, has become a major domestic tourist destination.



Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Phort Láirge
Waterford City & County Council

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO ACQUIRE 1 PROPERTY COMPULSORILY UNDER THE DERELICT SITES ACT, 1990 (as amended by the Planning and Development Act, 2000)

Compulsory Acquisition (CPA) No. 4 of 2025 –
2 Manor Hill, Waterford City

NOTICE is hereby given that Waterford City & County Council (hereinafter referred to as "the Council") in exercise of the powers conferred on it by Section 14 of the Derelict Sites Act, 1990 intends to acquire compulsorily under the said Act, the property described hereunder.

A copy of the orders and of the maps referred to in it may be viewed at:

- <https://waterfordcouncil.ie/media/newspaper-adverts>
- Waterford City & County Council Customer Service Offices at Bailey's New Street, Waterford City or Civic Offices Dungarvan, Co. Waterford between the hours of 9.30am – 4pm
- By scanning the QR Code below:



Any owner, lessee or occupier (except a tenant for a month or a period less than a month) may, on or before 23rd May, 2025 submit to the local authority an objection to the proposed compulsory acquisition of the property. Any such objection must be in writing stating the grounds of the objection and addressed to Ivan Grimes, Director of Services, Planning, Corporate Services, Culture, HR & IS, Waterford City & County Council, City Hall, The Mall, Waterford.

The Derelict Sites Act, 1990 (as amended by the Planning and Development Act, 2000) provides that if an objection is made to the proposed compulsory acquisition of the property and the objection is not withdrawn, the property shall not be acquired compulsorily by the local authority without the consent of An Bord Pleanála.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY PROPOSED TO BE ACQUIRED ALL THAT AND THOSE

the property known as 2 Manor Hill, Waterford City, covering an area of 0.013 acres or thereabouts, in the District Electoral Division of Waterford City South and as more particularly delineated on Map Ref. CPA 2025-04.

DATED THIS 16th APRIL, 2025.

SEAN MCKEOWN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
WATERFORD CITY & COUNTY COUNCIL,
CITY HALL, WATERFORD.