



**Australian Government**

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

**MEDIA TALKING  
POINTS  
DISTRIBUTION:  
STANDARD**

**Topic: POLITICAL-ECONOMIC**  
**Subject: US Election 2020**

**Originating Division: AMD**

**Version Date: 6/1/2021**

**Reason for Update: Georgia**  
Senate runoff elections

**Version: 6**

**Expiry: 21/01/2021**

**Talking Points**

- Australia has congratulated Joe Biden on his election as President of the United States.
- The President-elect has been a great friend of Australia over many years, including when he visited Australia in 2016.
- The Australia-US Alliance is enduring and built on shared democratic values such as the international rule of law, respect for human rights and equality, freedom of religion and belief, freedom of expression, and diversity of opinion.
- The world faces many challenges, including managing the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring a secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, and maintaining peace and stability
  - American leadership is indispensable to meeting these challenges and upholding the rules, norms and standards of our international community.
- We will continue to work closely with a fully enabled Trump Administration until 20 January [inauguration]
  - we thank President Trump and members of his administration for our strong working relationship over the past four years, which saw our alliance grow and deepen.

***If raised: Would the Foreign Minister like to comment on the Georgia Senate runoffs with results coming out today?***

- *Aware of great deal of interest in these two run-off elections in Georgia, which will determine control of the US Senate*
- *Over 3 million Georgia voters cast early ballots, which is a record for a run-off election in the state*
- *Georgia officials have stated that election day turnout appears to be lower than expected, with little wait time and no irregularities reported.*
- *The United States has a robust democracy, and we are confident its institutions will deliver a democratic outcome.*

**If raised: What is Australia's reaction to President Trump's attempt to pressure the Georgia Secretary of State to change the result of the election?**

- I am aware of public commentary on the matter; I don't propose to add to that commentary.
- Australia is not a participant in the US political system.
- The Prime Minister has congratulated President-elect Biden on his victory and looks forward to working with his Administration after his inauguration on 20 January.
- We will continue to work with the Trump Administration up to 20 January.

**If raised: Do you reject President Trump's claims of electoral fraud?**

- Aware of claims of electoral fraud and a number of legal actions that are underway.
- The United States is a robust democracy with great institutions.

**If raised: Will there be a peaceful transition of power?**

- The United States is a great democracy that has handled peaceful transitions of power for many years and we have every confidence that will continue.

**Any use or disclosure of personal information about individuals and the incidents contained in this background should not be made public. To do so may constitute a breach of the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).**

**Background**

On 4 January, the Washington Post published an hour-long recording of a phone call between President Trump and Georgia's Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, the official responsible for administering the state's elections. During the call, President Trump pressured fellow Republican Raffensperger to "find 11,780 votes" and recalculate the results of the election in Trump's favour.

On 12 November, Prime Minister Morrison tweeted "I've just spoken to President-elect @JoeBiden to congratulate him on his election. There are no greater friends and no greater allies than Australia and the US. I look forward to strengthening even further our deep and enduring alliance, and to working with him closely as we face the world's many challenges together. We look forward to celebrating the 70th anniversary of ANZUS next year".

In a call readout, the Biden transition team said the President-elect expressed his commitment to strengthen the US-Australia alliance and underscored the United States and Australia shared both values and history, and had fought side-by-side in every conflict since World War I. The President-elect said he looked forward to working closely with Prime Minister Morrison on many common challenges, including containing the COVID-19 pandemic and guarding against future global health threats; confronting climate change; laying the groundwork for the global economic recovery; strengthening democracy, and maintaining a secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

President Trump has not conceded and continues to pursue legal challenges to electoral processes. The electoral college cast its votes on 14 December 2020 in favour of President-elect Biden, which will be certified by the newly elected Congress on 6 January.

President-elect Biden has announced nominations for key positions in his administration, including: Antony Blinken, Secretary of State; General (Ret'd) Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Defense; Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security; Avril Haynes, Director of National Intelligence; Linda Thomas-Greenfield, US Ambassador to the United Nations; Jake Sullivan, National Security Advisor; and John Kerry, Special Presidential Envoy for climate.

Foreign Minister Marise Payne said in Parliament on 9 November that Australia had congratulated President-elect Joe Biden and Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris on their victory in the United States election and congratulated the American people on what was ultimately a smooth, calm and extremely well attended process. Minister Payne said the United States had been the linchpin of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific since 1945, and that Australia looked forward to working the administration on a range of our shared priorities.

Leader of the Opposition Anthony Albanese tweeted: “Congratulations to @JoeBiden and @KamalaHarris on a victory delivered with record support with a progressive agenda based on decency, honest government, creating opportunity and dealing with the pandemic and the challenge of climate change”. “The US Alliance has been our most important partnership since WW2 and your commitment to leadership will see this strengthened into the future”.

## Handling Notes

## Media Interest

Approval	
Consultation	Post Washington
Author	s22(1)(a)(ii) , AMD; s22(1)(a)(ii)
Cleared by	James Fisher, AS USB



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

**MEDIA TALKING  
POINTS  
DISTRIBUTION:  
STANDARD**

**Topic: POLITICAL-ECONOMIC**

**Subject: Events at US Capitol Building**

**Originating Division:  
AMD**

**Version Date: 14/1/2021**

**Version: 5**

**Reason for Update: Update**

**Expiry: 7/04/2021**

**Talking Points**

- I welcome President Trump's commitment to an orderly transition of power.
- US institutions are robust and its democratic strength resides in the full breadth of its people who have played no part in this week's violence
  - this strength was demonstrated by the determination of Congress to reconvene after the day's violent events and certify Joe Biden's electoral victory
  - we look forward to President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration on 20 January.
- I condemn any use or threat of violence to interfere with democratic processes.
- Particularly saddened by media reports of the loss of life at the Capitol building.
- Australia has congratulated Joe Biden on his election as President of the United States.
- We continue monitor the situation closely.

**Should President Trump resign or be removed from office?**

- *Note that the US House of Representatives voted to impeach President Trump.*
- That is a matter for the United States.

**Travel Advice**

- Widespread protests and demonstrations are likely to continue in the weeks ahead
- Avoid areas where protests and demonstrations are occurring due to continuing potential for disorder and violence.

- Follow the instructions of local authorities and abide by any curfews and stay at home orders.
- Monitor the media for information and updates.
- COVID-19 remains a serious health risk.
  - Various restrictions and public health measures are in place and vary by location.
  - Follow the instructions of local authorities, including those related to quarantine, self-isolation, social-distancing and the wearing of face masks.

**If asked about Trump's tweet and comments? Twitter/Facebook removing Trump's posts? Locking Trump's twitter account?**

- We look forward to a peaceful transfer of power to the newly elected administration in the great American democratic tradition.
- Questions about decisions by Twitter and Facebook are best addressed directly to those platforms.

**Any use or disclosure of personal information about individuals and the incidents contained in this background should not be made public. To do so may constitute a breach of the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).**

## **Background**

### **Events at the Capitol building**

On 6 January, congressional certification of Electoral College votes was temporarily suspended when the US Capitol building was breached by a number of armed protesters. Explosive devices were discovered at the headquarters of the Republican National Convention and Democratic National Convention. One protester was shot and killed inside the building, one police officer was killed, and three other people died from medical emergencies. Police, supported by National Guard troops, secured the Capitol building and its vicinity later in the day. After the Capitol building was secured, certification of Electoral College votes continued on the night of 6 January, with Biden being confirmed as President-elect. Some Republican lawmakers challenged Biden's victories in Arizona and Pennsylvania, but the objections were rejected by most Republicans and all Democrats, and failed.

The protesters had arrived from a rally held earlier outside the White House addressed by President Trump. Trump had claimed to be the legitimate winner of an election that had been rigged and stolen. Trump encouraged the crowd to walk to the Capitol building and "give our Republicans... the kind of pride and boldness they need to take back our country."

Trump released a statement on the night of 7 January saying "Like all Americans I am outraged by the violence, lawlessness and mayhem... To demonstrators who infiltrated the Capitol: you have defiled the seat of American democracy. To those who engage in the acts of violence and destruction: you do not represent our country. And to those who broke the law: you will pay... Now, Congress has certified the results. A new administration will be inaugurated on January 20. My focus now turns to ensuring a smooth, orderly and seamless

transition of power. This moment calls for healing and reconciliation... to all of my wonderful supporters. I know you are disappointed, but I also want you to know that our incredible journey is only just beginning.”

## **Aftermath**

*On 12 January, the US House of Representatives passed a resolution urging Vice President Pence to invoke the 25th amendment to remove President Trump from office. Vice President Pence has ruled out taking this action.*

*On 13 January, the US House of Representatives voted to impeach President Trump for a second time, charging him with “incitement of insurrection” for his role in the events. The resolution was passed 232 to 197 (including all Democrats and 10 Republicans). President Trump is the only US president ever to be impeached twice. The earliest the Senate could consider the charge would be after it reconvenes on 19 January. A two thirds majority of the Senate would be required to convict President Trump. A conviction could mean President Trump would be barred from holding public office again.*

A number of senior Administration personnel have resigned, including: Elaine Chao, Secretary of Transportation; Betsy DeVos, Secretary of Education; Matt Pottinger, Deputy National Security Advisor; Mick Mulvaney, Special Envoy to Northern Ireland and former Acting Chief of Staff; Stephanie Grisham, First Lady's Chief of Staff; Rickie Niceta, White House Social Secretary; and Sara Matthews, White House Deputy Press Secretary.

President Trump’s Twitter account was temporarily suspended “for repeated and severe violations of [Twitter’s] Civic Integrity policy”. His Facebook and Instagram accounts have been suspended for the remainder of his term as President.

President-elect Biden said “Let me be very clear: the scenes of chaos at the Capitol do not represent who we are. What we are seeing is a small number of extremists dedicated to lawlessness. This is not dissent, it's disorder. It borders on sedition, and it must end. Now. America is so much better than what we're seeing today. Our way is plain: It is the way of democracy — of lawfulness, and of respect — respect for each other, and for our nation.”

We are not aware of any Australian citizens requiring assistance as a result of the events at the US Capitol building. No Embassy staff were involved.

## **Georgia Senate Runoffs**

Both Democratic candidates for the Georgia Senate Runoffs, Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, have claimed victory for their respective seats. These wins ensure that the Democrats will control the US Senate under a Biden Administration.

On 4 January, the Washington Post published an hour-long recording of a phone call between President Trump and Georgia’s Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, the official responsible for administering the state’s elections. During the call, President Trump pressured fellow Republican Raffensperger to “find 11,780 votes” and recalculate the results of the election in Trump’s favour.

## Reactions from political leaders

On 7 January, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said “the riots and protests that we've seen in Washington D.C. have been terribly distressing. They are very concerning... I'm pleased that the Senate has been able to recommence their proceedings and we hope for a peaceful and stable transition of government to the new administration, elected by the American people. And this is a difficult time for the United States, clearly... This is one of the world's greatest democracies, and it remains so because of its forbearance and its persistence in the principles and values upon which the nation was established. And I have no doubt that that will prevail.”

On 7 January, Foreign Minister Marise Payne said “It is certainly very concerning — deeply troubling to see what has happened in Washington today. But I think it's important for all of us that we know that the actions of a violent minority won't impede the transfer of power, because those US institutions that you've just referred to who are foundational in terms of a democracy, they are robust, and the democratic strength of the United States, I think, that resides in the full breadth of the American people who are not part of this violence. This is a minority action... we absolutely condemn the violence at the US Congress. And we have been consistent in our condemnation of the use or threats of violence anywhere to challenge democratic processes. And in this case, sadly, one woman has lost her life. And that is very, very sad. We've seen the Trump campaign challenges themselves. They've been well-aired, extensively aired through the courts, and that's appropriate. And those courts have heard and adjudicated on those matters. We congratulated the incoming president on his election as President of the United States.”

Anthony Albanese quote retweeted President-Elect Biden, saying “Democracy is precious and cannot be taken for granted - the violent insurrection in Washington is an assault on the rule of law and democracy. Donald Trump has encouraged this response and must now call on his supporters to stand down.”

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo tweeted “The storming of the U.S. Capitol today is unacceptable. Lawlessness and rioting -- here or around the world -- is always unacceptable. I have travelled to many countries and always support the right of every human being to protest peacefully for their beliefs and their causes. But violence, putting at risk the safety of others including those tasked with providing security for all of us, is intolerable both at home and abroad. Let us swiftly bring justice to the criminals who engaged in this rioting. America is better than what we saw today at a place where I served as a member of Congress and saw firsthand democracy at its best.”

Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Francois-Philippe Champagne tweeted “Canada is deeply shocked by the situation in Washington DC. The peaceful transition of power is fundamental to democracy – it must continue and it will. We are following developments closely and our thoughts are with the American people. We are following developments closely and our thoughts are with the American people.”

Prime Minister Boris Johnson tweeted “Disgraceful scenes in U.S. Congress. The United States stands for democracy around the world and it is now vital that there should be a peaceful and orderly transfer of power.”



United Kingdom Foreign Minister, Dominic Raab, tweeted “The US rightly takes great pride in its democracy, and there can be no justification for these violent attempts to frustrate the lawful and proper transition of power.”

New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, tweeted “Democracy - the right of people to exercise a vote, have their voice heard and then have that decision upheld peacefully should never be undone by a mob. Our thoughts are with everyone who is as devastated as we are by the events of today. I have no doubt democracy will prevail.”

New Zealand Foreign Minister, Nanaia Mahuta tweeted “We regret unfolding events in Washington DC. Our thoughts are with the American people. Violence has no place in thwarting democracy. We look forward to the peaceful transition of the political administration, which is the hallmark of democracy. Kia tau ngā manaakitanga.”

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted "Distressed to see news about rioting and violence in Washington DC. Orderly and peaceful transfer of power must continue. The democratic process cannot be allowed to be subverted through unlawful protests."

The Taoiseach (Prime Minister of Ireland) tweeted “The Irish people have a deep connection with the United States of America, built up over many generations. I know that many, like me, will be watching the scenes unfolding in Washington DC with great concern and dismay.”

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg tweeted “Shocking scenes in Washington, D.C. The outcome of this democratic election must be respected.”

First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, tweeted “The scenes from the Capitol are utterly horrifying. Solidarity with those on the side of democracy and the peaceful and constitutional transfer of power. Shame on those who have incited this attack on democracy.”

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said “We all saw the unsettling pictures of the storming of the US Congress yesterday evening, and these images made me angry and also sad... I regret very much that President Trump has not acknowledged his defeat since November and also again not yesterday. Doubts about the election outcome were stirred and created the atmosphere that made the events of last night possible.”

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the EU Commission, quote tweeted President-Elect Biden, saying “I believe in the strength of US institutions and democracy. Peaceful transition of power is at the core. @JoeBiden won the election. I look forward to working with him as the next President of the USA.”

## Handling Notes

## Media Interest

Approval	
Consultation	CCD, Media, Post Washington
Author	s22(1)(a)(ii) , AMD; s22(1)(a)(ii)



Cleared by	James Fisher, A/g FAS AMD
------------	---------------------------

**Distribution**

s47E(d)

Version: 16.0

Created at 7/01/2021 1:02 PM by s22(1)(a)(ii)

Last modified at 14/01/2021 9:43 AM by s22(1)(a)(ii)



**Australian Government**

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

**MEDIA TALKING  
POINTS  
DISTRIBUTION:  
STANDARD**

**Topic: POLITICAL-ECONOMIC**  
**Subject: US Presidential Inauguration**

**Originating Division: AMD**

**Version Date: 21/1/2021**

**Version: 1**

**Reason for Update: New  
talking points**

**Expiry: 30/04/2021**

**Talking Points**

- Australia congratulates President Biden on his inauguration as the 46th President of the United States
  - we also congratulate Vice President Harris on her inauguration – the first woman to hold that important position.
- President Biden has been a great friend of Australia over many years.
- The Australia-US Alliance is enduring and built on shared democratic values such as the rule of law, respect for human rights and equality, freedom of religion and belief, freedom of expression, and diversity of opinion.
- The world faces many challenges, including managing the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring a secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, and maintaining peace and stability
  - American leadership is indispensable to meeting these challenges and upholding the rules, norms and standards of our international community.

***If asked about impeachment proceedings against former) President Trump***

- Not appropriate for me to comment on US domestic political issues.

***Travel Advice***

- Protests and demonstrations may continue in the weeks ahead.
- Avoid areas where protests and demonstrations are occurring due to continuing potential for disorder and violence.
- Follow the instructions of local authorities and abide by any curfews and stay at home orders.
- Monitor the media for information and updates.
- COVID-19 remains a serious health risk
  - restrictions and public health measures are in place and vary by location
  - follow the instructions of local authorities, including those related to quarantine, self-isolation, social-distancing and the wearing of face masks.

**Any use or disclosure of personal information about individuals and the incidents contained in this background should not be made public. To do so may constitute a breach of the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth).**

## **Background**

At 12pm on 20 January EST (4am 21 January AEDT) Joseph R. Biden was inaugurated as the 46th President of the United States. Kamala Harris was inaugurated as Vice President – the first woman to hold the position.

In his inaugural address, President Biden referred to the violence that had taken place at the Capitol building, and noted that while American democracy was “fragile” it had prevailed. He spoke of the many challenges facing America: the pandemic and its implications, racial injustice, climate change, and appealed for Americans to unite and “end this uncivil war”. He specifically identified white supremacy and extreme right wing terrorism as domestic challenges. Biden restated his commitment to be a President not just for those who voted for him but for all Americans. Specifically addressing “those beyond our borders”, Biden said the US had been tested, but would repair alliances and engage with the world once again to meet today’s and tomorrow’s challenges.

## **Australian responses**

The Prime Minister tweeted on 21 January: "Congratulations to President @JoeBiden and Vice President @KamalaHarris on your inauguration. The Australia-US Alliance has never been more important. I wish you both every success for your time in office and look forward to working closely with your new administration."

Acting Foreign Minister Birmingham also tweeted on 21 January: "Congratulations to President Biden & VP Harris. Each new administration sees another chapter written in our valued alliance. Looking forward to your leadership & partnership."

The Prime Minister congratulated then President-elect Biden on his election in a phone call on 12 November. In a call readout, the Biden transition team said the President-elect expressed his commitment to strengthen the US-Australia alliance and underscored the United States and Australia shared both values and history, and had fought side-by-side in every conflict since World War I. The President-elect said he looked forward to working closely with Prime Minister Morrison on many common challenges, including containing the COVID-19 pandemic and guarding against future global health threats; confronting climate change; laying the groundwork for the global economic recovery; strengthening democracy, and maintaining a secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

On 18 January, in response to a question about President Trump’s actions, PM Morrison said, “...It's for the American people now to come together behind their elected President and to come together and go forward in the way that we would hope they would as a close friend and a very strong ally. And I look working very closely with President Biden and his whole team.”

On 7 January, asked whether there was a case for the Vice President to remove President Trump, Foreign Minister Payne said, “As always, we will work with the US administration of

the day to maintain and strengthen our alliance, which has long been a force for stability and for good in our region. But those matters are matters for the US system.”

### International responses

UK Prime Minister Johnson tweeted “Congratulations to @JoeBiden on being sworn in as President of the United States and to @KamalaHarris on her historic inauguration. America’s leadership is vital on the issues that matter to us all, from climate change to COVID, and I look forward to working with President Biden.”

Japanese Prime Minister Suga tweeted: “Congratulations to President @JoeBiden and Vice President @KamalaHarris on your inauguration. Japan and the United States are allies tied firmly by bonds and shared universal values.”

Indian Prime Minister Modi tweeted “My warmest congratulations to @JoeBiden on his assumption of office as President of the United States of America. I look forward to working with him to strengthen India-US strategic partnership.”

Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau tweeted: “Congratulations to @JoeBiden on your inauguration as the 46th President of the United States. Our two countries have tackled some of history’s greatest challenges together – and I’m looking forward to continuing this partnership with you, @KamalaHarris and your administration.”

### Handling Notes

#### Media Interest

High

Approval	
Consultation	CCD, Australian Embassy in Washington
Author	s22(1)(a)(ii) AMD; s22(1)(a)(ii)
Cleared by	James Fisher; a/g FAS AMD

#### Distribution

s47E(d)

**From:** James Fisher  
**Sent:** Thursday, 7 January 2021 8:53 AM  
**To:** s22(1)(a)(ii)  
**Cc:** Craig Chittick <[Craig.Chittick@dfat.gov.au](mailto:Craig.Chittick@dfat.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** suggested tweet [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

s22(1)(a)(ii) as discussed, a draft tweet.

Very concerned by distressing scenes at the US Congress – I am monitoring the situation closely. I condemn any use or threat of violence to interfere with democratic processes. The peaceful transfer of power is a hallmark of democracy.

---

James Fisher | Assistant Secretary  
United States and Canada Branch  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
t s22(1)(a)(ii) | m s22(1)(a)(ii)