

PM heads for the big stage

Australia's success has ScoMo well placed at G7 this time



LANAI SCARR

Three years ago Australia stood alone. Literally. Like a nervous outsider in disbelief they had actually been invited to the party, Scott Morrison was captain awkward during a group photo at his first Group of Seven meeting with France, Germany, Britain, Italy, the US, Canada and Japan.

In Biarritz — the playground of the rich and famous on the French Basque coast — ScoMo looked more like Nelly no-friends during the official snap on one of his first major international trips after becoming Prime Minister.

He amused himself on his phone while then US president Donald Trump mingled with his French and Canadian counterparts, Emmanuel Macron, Justin Trudeau, and their wives. Macron had decided to shake things up at the annual summit of the biggest democracies and invite observers to join the group.

"This is an important time, I think, to reinforce these shared values in today's world — democracy, respect for human rights and international law and free markets," Morrison had said ahead of his trip.

On Thursday, Morrison will jet to Britain to attend his third G7 — this time hosted by Boris Johnson. It's doubtful he will be a nervous outsider as he was in 2019. Australia is now a revered economy. It's weathered the COVID-19 economic and health storms better than any other developed nation.

Yes, our vaccine rollout is slower than those sitting around the G7 table. But we face the tyranny of distance. We also have had very few deaths compared with our international counterparts. Yes, sadly, 910 people have died in Australia due to COVID, but compare that to the US

which has recorded 612,366 deaths. Britain has had 127,840 deaths and Italy 126,523.

Yesterday Morrison said the G7 meetings were "incredibly important meetings for Australia's national interest".

"Australia is not a member of the G7. This is the third year in a row that I've been invited to participate alongside my global colleagues, to focus on the biggest challenges the world faces — COVID and the pandemic, the recession it's caused, the challenges around climate change, all of this will be key factors in the discussions that we have and, most importantly, global security and regional security here in the Indo Pacific," he said.

"These are important responsibilities of the Federal

Government, the Australian Government, so I'm looking forward to the opportunity of discussing and progressing these important matters with our global colleagues."

There is no doubt a concern that Morrison is leaving the country at a time when Victoria is in lockdown and has another outbreak of COVID. There are understandably comparisons to the time he left Australia at the end of 2019 to holiday with his family in Hawaii as bushfires ravaged the nation.

But Australia is at a tricky time when it comes to regional security and trade. China's trade sanctions have hurt many industries and progressing a Free Trade Agreement with Britain — also high on the agenda of the trip will be paramount.

In addition to G7 meetings in Cornwall, Morrison will have meetings in London, France and Singapore.

It is significant he is leaving the nation to travel overseas. There are risks, he will have to quarantine for two weeks upon return and miss parliamentary sittings. But all those risks seem worth it to Morrison who is very keen to secure our relationships with major democracies, secure our region and promote our economy. Chris Richardson from Deloitte said Australia being invited again — particularly at this time — was important. "By definition with a population of 25 million we are not one of the world's big players but getting invited to wave a flag

shows we are considered relevant, particularly when decisions are being taken in the global economic recovery," Richardson said.

"If you're outside looking in we have been a success story during the (global financial crisis) and now we have been a success story so far in an even bigger crisis."

Some major miners are concerned China may look to further trade strikes, particularly on iron ore, but Richardson said he did not think that China would view Australia being at the G7 as worthy of strikes on our biggest export.

"I don't think China will retaliate in an economic sense and in fact it may be in the early stages of dialling back their recent approach in an economic sense," Richardson said. "And that's partly because China has been a bigger victim than Australia has of the trade war to date."

Peter Jennings from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute said it was very important that Australia was attending the G7. "The G7 in some ways is turning into a de facto democracies group. To me it is a good thing because China cannot be a part of it," Jennings said.

"We have some standing and credibility on how to manage the situation (with China) which will add to Morrison's standing in this group. And it tells China that there is not just a small country of 25 million pushing back on them but the largest part of the world's population."

The optics will be important for Australia's global economic value and our regional security. But the trip comes with risks — not just geopolitical risks but also in a health sense.

Let's hope no one falls ill on Shark One.

Lanai Scarr is The West's Federal Political Editor



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Love thy neighbour a motto to live by: For them and you

A booming housing market has sparked reports that more and more established homes and apartments are being bought sight unseen.

In the process, it recklessly abandons one of the most important considerations that should always apply when buying a property: the neighbours.

Land the right neighbours and your domestic life is likely to flourish into a state of suburban bliss.

But make the wrong move and you will experience all the aggravation of living next door to the neighbours from hell — or, for short, the NFH.

GARY MARTIN



In many communities, the positive neighbourly gestures portrayed in the TV shows of yesteryear have all but been pushed into the background by squabbles over unkept gardens, barking dogs and overflowing recycling bins.

While there are those who believe we have become better neighbours because of pandemic-induced home stays, others feel many of us do not seem to understand what it means to "love thy neighbour".

Unruly or aggressive pets, residents speeding down the suburban street and neighbours having way too many noisy visitors are among common complaints of those living alongside a NFH.

And disputes over borders and fences, neighbours who cut down trees that do not belong to them and those who sneak their excess rubbish into others' bins can all add up to neighbourhood disharmony.

Some NFH devalue their neighbours' properties by failing to keep their own homes well maintained.

Think overgrown lawns, peeling paint, garish house colours and broken or

boarded-up windows. There is also the NFH who fails to wave or turns the other way when you drive or walk by, the next-door gossip and the neighbour who thinks they are in command of your street.

And, of course, the very worst NFH are the ones you suspect of involvement in criminal activity.

However, what we all often forget is that to live in a great neighbourhood you also have to be a good neighbour — and that requires more than lending someone a cup of sugar.

If a neighbour has an untidy yard, offer to help clean it up.

If you are annoyed that your neighbour fails to bring in their

bins from the curb, wheel them in for them.

And if your neighbour's kids enjoy playing on your front lawn, take that as a compliment. Not only may your actions qualify you for the neighbour of the year award but there might also come a time when you need help and will want your neighbours to be there for you.

It always pays to be on the right side of your neighbours — for your own sanity as well as your property's value.

Professor Gary Martin is chief executive officer with the Australian Institute of Management WA