

# PM shows contempt for transparency: Libs

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The Coalition has accused Anthony Albanese of showing contempt for parliamentary accountability by failing to answer more than 3700 questions on notice following Senate estimates in March.

Analysis of the Senate's question on notice database by the opposition has found thousands of questions have been left unanswered, despite the government having about a month to respond.

Most unanswered questions relate to health and aged care, with nearly 770 outstanding requests. Then follow education (550), prime minister and cabinet (528), infrastructure, transport and regional development (516) and cross-portfolio Indigenous matters (476).

Manager of opposition business Paul Fletcher said the figures were "alarming" and the Prime Minister had broken a key promise made before the election to be transparent.

"The questions pertain to a range of public interest matters and Australians deserve answers," Mr Fletcher said. "Labor had the entire winter recess period to respond and failed to do so.

"The government has taken a wrecking ball to critical infrastructure projects, their release of details surrounding the voice referendum has been woeful and economic uncertainty is a major

concern for many families." In his first speech to caucus when Labor swept to power last May, Mr Albanese pledged to do politics in a different, less-divisive way and provide more time for parliamentary debates.

Deputy manager of government business in the Senate Anthony Chisholm said the number of questions on notice to the government had almost doubled compared with the former Coalition government.

He said Labor had answered all but two questions in the first round of estimates and would continue to respond to the outstanding questions. "Paul Fletcher is conveniently forgetting the Liberal and Nationals' appalling track record on responding to questions on notice," Mr Chisholm said.

New analysis from the Prime Minister's Office provided to The Australian found the former Coalition government gagged debate more than 700 times.

The PMO also said the house wasted more than 61 hours voting on whether debate should be gagged.

Opposition health and aged care spokeswoman Anne Ruston said the extent of unanswered questions "flies in the face of parliamentary scrutiny".

"Health and aged care was a key part of Labor's policy platform going into the last election but they have made it clear that this was only a priority for them in campaign mode, not in government," Senator Ruston said.