

Solidarity

Issue No. 139 / July-August 2020

\$3/\$5

STOP MORRISON'S CUTS



DEFEND WORKERS' RIGHTS WE WON'T PAY FOR THE CRISIS

CORONAVIRUS

Failures that led to
Melbourne outbreak

UNIVERSITIES

Fighting job cuts and fee
increases on campus

MALCOLM X

Ideas for the anti-racist
movement today

Solidarity **WHAT WE STAND FOR**

Capitalism is a system of crisis and war

Capitalism is a system of competition, crisis, and war based on exploitation of workers, producing for profit not human needs. Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over production or distribution. Through environmental degradation and climate change capitalism has become a threat to humanity's future and life on earth.

Workers power and socialism

The working class has the power to challenge the existing system and create a better world. We stand for socialism, a society based on democratically elected workers councils which would control and plan the economy to produce for human need. The authoritarian states like Russia and China are not socialist but forms of state capitalism where workers have no power.

What about elections and parliament?

Parliament, the army, the police and the courts are institutions of the capitalist state that maintain the dominance of the ruling class over the rest of society. The capitalist state cannot be taken over and used by the working class, it must be smashed. Workers need to create their own state based on workers councils.

While parliament can be a platform for socialists, real change doesn't come through parliament. It is won by mass action in strikes, protests and demonstrations.

We are internationalists

The struggle for socialism has no national boundaries. We oppose everything that turns workers from one country against those from another; we campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose borders and immigration controls, and welcome migrants and refugees.

We oppose imperialism and support all

genuine national liberation struggles. We oppose Australian nationalism.

Australia is an imperialist power established through genocide on stolen Indigenous land. We support the continuing struggles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for land, justice and self-determination.

Oppression and liberation

We oppose sexism, racism, homophobia and transphobia. We fight against all forms of discrimination and the oppression of women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, migrants, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. We oppose discrimination against Muslims and people from the Middle East.

Linking up the struggles

We are active building movements for environmental and social change and economic equality. We are active in our unions and work to build the organisation and self-confidence of the rank and file. We work to bring activists together to strengthen each movement and build a common struggle against capitalism.

Educate, agitate, organise

Socialism cannot be introduced from above, by parliament or parties. The emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself.

Solidarity is an organisation of activists, anti-capitalists and revolutionary socialists committed to socialism from below. We are part of the International Socialist Tendency.

A democratic revolutionary party is necessary to deepen resistance to capitalism and to build a movement to overthrow the system. Solidarity members are beginning to build such a party out of today's struggles against the system.

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

National

Online meetings via Zoom
6.30pm every Thursday
See fb.com/soliaus/events for details or contact solidarity@solidarity.net.au

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Things they say

We've had racists, and they've existed. They've tried to get elected president. He's the first one that has.

Joe Biden thinks Trump is the US's first racist president, in a country founded on slavery and Indigenous genocide

Thatcher and Reagan are figures of hate for the left because they were so successful

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg tries to explain away his love for two figures who broke unions and destroyed workers' lives

Insecure work is no good for public health in terms of dealing with a global pandemic

The penny drops for Victorian Premier Daniel on casual workers who can't afford to stay home, after he subcontracted running of quarantine hotels to private security firms

Person, woman, man, camera, TV
Donald Trump tries to prove his mental ability by repeating five words to show 'I'm cognitively there'

Just because you don't see me on cameras doesn't mean I am not hard on the task.

Scott Morrison defends his trip to a footy stadium in Sydney

I've done my best to convince him that 2024 would be better than 2020.

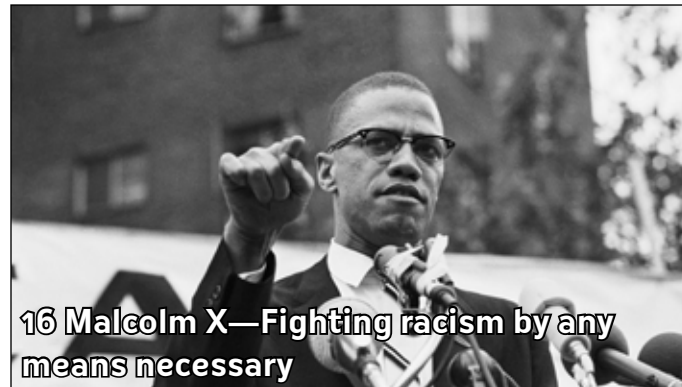
Elon Musk on how he encouraged Kanye West's bizarre presidential campaign

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INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

NSW police chief joins dishonest anti-protest campaign

THE NSW Supreme Court has backed police opposition to a Black Lives Matter protest, despite the state's top cop lying to the media and signalling he would disregard a previous court decision.

Police Commissioner Mick Fuller joined the dishonest campaign by Liberal MPs and the Murdoch media blaming protests for spreading coronavirus in Melbourne, citing, "serious concerns" due to "the Black Lives Matters protest in Melbourne, and that people who attended it came from the vertical towers".

But the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services says there is no evidence that anyone contracted the virus at the Melbourne rally. Nor was anyone from the locked down public housing towers among those at the rally who subsequently caught the virus elsewhere, the Department told the media.

Fuller also said that he would fine people who attended the Sydney rally, even if the court ruled in protesters' favour. This is despite a previous court decision in favour of a Black Lives Matter rally specifically ruling that this gave protesters protection from fines under the Health Act.

The hypocritical campaign against the 28 July protest in Sydney has come despite other activities including crowds of 10,000 at the football, 500 at community sport and hundreds at pubs still possible under the law.

Bezos makes \$18 billion in a day

AMAZON CEO Jeff Bezos's wealth grew by \$18 billion in one day in July thanks to the company's surging shareprice.

The pandemic has seen the total sharemarket price of the online retail giant increase by \$570 billion this year, with smaller retail stores going bust in their thousands as consumers stay at home.

It took his total fortune to \$265 billion, close to annual GDP of the whole of New Zealand.

Queen encouraged Whitlam's sacking in 1975 coup



THE RELEASE of the "palace letters" has shown how the Queen encouraged the sacking of elected Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in 1975. The dramatic constitutional crisis saw the unelected, supposedly non-political Governor-General, John Kerr, dismiss the government from office.

The Liberals under Malcolm Fraser had blocked supply in the Senate, ruthlessly disregarding convention in an effort to force Whitlam out. The ruling class was panicked as an international economic crisis hit Australia, bringing recession for the first time in 30 years.

Kerr knew that Whitlam was planning to call a half-Senate election to try to break the impasse. Instead, he brushed aside the wishes of the elected leader and parliament, and used the Queen's "reserve powers" to sack him, install Malcolm Fraser as caretaker Prime Minister and call a double dissolution election.

The 212 letters, mostly through the Queen's private secretary Sir Martin Charteris, reveal that Kerr discussed his options with the Palace in elaborate detail. The Palace told Kerr in a letter on 24 September 1975, that "if supply is refused this always makes it constitutionally proper to grant a dissolution". As law professor Chris Wallace has put it, the palace provided, "not just comfort but actual encouragement to the governor-general in his sacking of the government." Yet there is still dispute about whether the Governor-General even has such powers in Australia.

Kerr officially informed the Queen of his decision to sack Whitlam only after he had acted. But the Palace itself had approved such an action beforehand.

This showed not just that the British monarchy continues to have an undemocratic role in Australian politics—but that in a serious crisis Australia's ruling class is willing to disregard democracy.

Millionaires still managing to avoid tax

SEVENTY-THREE MILLIONAIRES managed to pay no tax in 2017-18, according to tax department statistics. The group all either claimed enough tax deductions or offsets to get themselves below the tax free threshold of \$18,200.

More than 2000 others earning between \$100,000 and \$1 million achieved the same feat and avoided paying tax.

In total there were 14,907 Australians who declared an income of more than \$1 million for the year.

Send suggestions for INSIDE THE SYSTEM to solidarity@solidarity.net.au

Aboriginal grandmother thrown in maximum security prison

AN ABORIGINAL grandmother in WA was jailed for six days in a maximum security prison after spraying a neighbour with a garden hose.

The 86-year-old, who has dementia, was charged with breaching a "misconduct restraining order" following a dispute with the neighbour over a fence. A magistrate refused her bail despite no lawyer being available and the woman repeatedly answering "no" when asked if she understood the charges.

She was eventually released when a Legal Aid lawyer was able to apply for bail and she was eventually released with no conviction recorded on 17 July after being found unable to plead due to Alzheimer's disease. Even the state's Attorney-General John Quigley was forced to comment that, "I have to ask myself whether an elderly white woman with dementia in a wealthy suburb would have found herself in prison in such circumstances."

Just two interviewed for Morrison's sports rorts review

JUST TWO people were interviewed as part of the investigation Scott Morrison ordered into the government's "sports rorts" scandal. Prime Minister's Department head Phil Gaetjens told a parliamentary inquiry that he spoke to only former Sports Minister Bridget McKenzie and the head of Sports Australia.

Gaetjens was asked to look at whether McKenzie had breached ministerial standards. There were "significant shortcomings" in the way she decided on grants, he admitted. But although his investigation lasted just two weeks, he disagreed with the auditor's general's ten month investigation which found the process biased.

EDITORIAL

Liberals invoke Thatcher, but we won't pay for this crisis

THE LIBERALS want workers to pay for economic recovery through attacks on workplace rights and poverty level payments for the unemployed.

That's the message from Treasurer Josh Frydenberg's economic statement on 23 July.

The government is cutting back both JobKeeper and JobSeeker payments after September, despite the renewed lockdown in Melbourne showing the COVID-19 crisis is far from over.

Both payments will continue for another six months with a cut of \$300 each. JobKeeper will drop below the minimum wage to \$1200 a fortnight.

The payment has flowed to elite private schools and hundreds of priests across the major churches, despite their millions in assets. Yet the government still refuses to allow university staff, casual workers and anyone on a migrant work visa to access it, imposing thousands of job losses.

JobSeeker will be cut to \$815 a fortnight, despite Treasurer Josh Frydenberg's admission that unemployment is set to rise further to 9.25 per cent by December. The Australia Institute estimates this will throw 370,000 people into poverty.

Workers' rights are facing attack in order to deliver more "flexibility" to employers. Temporary industrial relations changes since April have allowed companies relying on JobKeeper payments to cut workers' hours and change their duties.

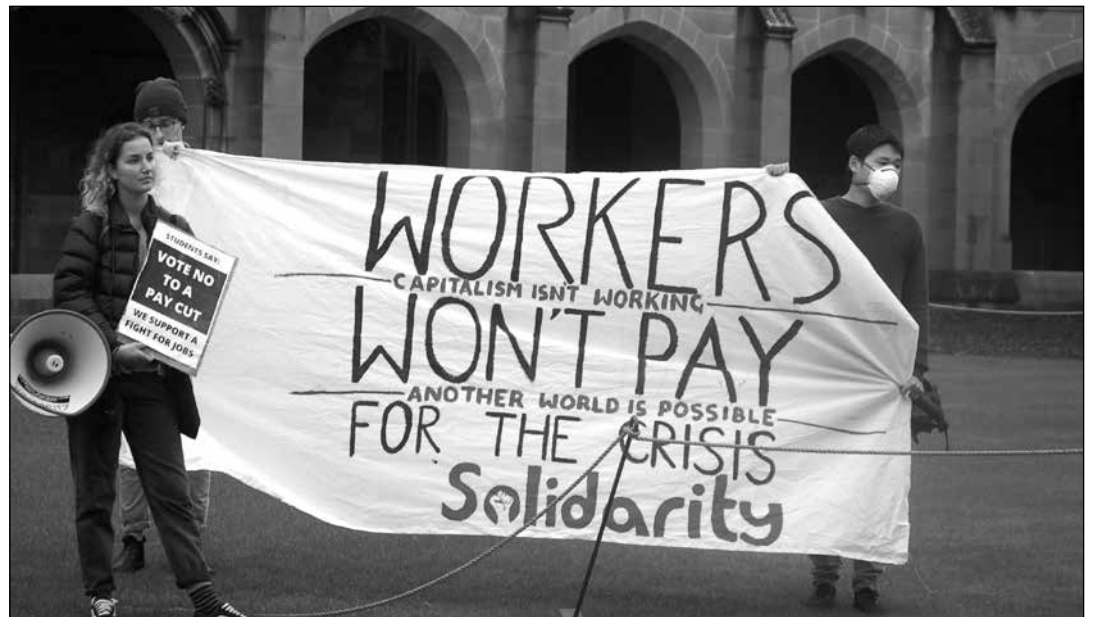
Now Josh Frydenberg has announced that he wants these changes to continue after September—even if a company no longer needs JobKeeper.

Labor and the unions have opposed the move, with ACTU president Michele O'Neil saying, "there is no justification whatsoever for changing workers' rights for business that are no longer struggling".

Bosses want workers even more casualised and disposable, so they can cut shifts and move workers around their business in order to maximise profits.

Already there are calls from employer groups such as the National Retail Association to extend the powers to all employers. This all has to be stopped.

Further attacks on workplace rights are coming. Frydenberg has declared that, "for the [industrial relations] system to deliver more jobs, it



Above: Workers shouldn't pay for the crisis

will need to evolve".

Industrial Relations Minister Christian Porter's five working groups examining changes to workplace laws are due to wrap up in September. While the ACTU is involved in the process, the government has made it clear that it will press ahead with changes anyway if the unions don't agree.

Funding for jobs

There is no reason that reviving the economy has to come at the expense of wages, conditions, and workers' rights.

Record low interest rates mean the government could borrow money on a much larger scale to fund jobs. The government has already committed to \$289 billion of measures.

But Josh Frydenberg is still clinging to the neo-liberal dogma against budget deficits, declaring he was inspired by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan and that the debt was already "eye-watering".

But the scale of the economic slump is also the biggest since the 1930s, with the economic decline this year estimated at 60 times that of the 2007-8 crisis globally.

Even Reserve Bank Governor Philip Lowe has argued that, "debt across all levels of government in Australia, relative to the size of the economy, is much lower than in many other countries".

There could be a big increase immediately in the aged care workforce to ensure those most of risk from the coronavirus are protected. Ending casualisation and understaffing would allow any

worker with the slightest symptoms to stay home, reducing the risk of the virus getting into aged care homes. In Victoria, the AMA is warning that aged care is already on the brink of collapse with so many workers infected with the virus or required to self-isolate.

And there are hundreds of thousands of jobs that could be created in tackling climate change, from building renewable energy generation to retrofitting buildings, switching to public transport and improving land management.

Making sure workers do not pay for this crisis will require a fight. Workers at Woolworths' distribution centre in Wyong in NSW are showing the way, striking for 24 hours to demand wage parity with other Woolworths' centres, only to be faced with a three day lockout from the company.

The CFMEU in NSW is also pushing for a 5 per cent pay increase, after securing pay increases, albeit lower than in the previous years, in Victoria.

Students and staff are also fighting fee increases and job cuts at universities, including government imposed funding cuts.

It is crucial we don't accept the way coronavirus restrictions are being used to shut down protests.

The continued Black Lives Matter rallies against deaths in custody have shown that large numbers can still be mobilised on the streets.

We have to organise, demonstrate and strike to demand that the government, the bosses and the rich pay for the crisis.

.....
Workers' rights are facing attack in order to deliver more "flexibility" to employers

Melbourne towers lockdown racist authoritarianism

By Chris Breen

THE LOCKDOWN imposed on public housing residents in Melbourne was a piece of racist authoritarianism.

The “hard lockdown” of nine public housing towers in Kensington and North Melbourne was imposed without warning. Dozens of police had already arrived before any announcement was made to the residents.

They were left without food, without baby formula, without medicine such as insulin for diabetes, and cut off from work and income.

When the government organised to deliver food it came late, was poor quality, and ignored dietary and cultural requirements. Frozen food was left in corridors to thaw, and residents went hungry.

“We’re treated like criminals pretty much, and they’re only targeting the flats”, resident Tekeste Hailu told the ABC. “Mostly the people that live in the flats are from migrant backgrounds. I just feel like, why only us?”

Just like Prime Minister Scott Morrison’s denial of JobKeeper payments to millions of casual and migrant workers, Premier Andrews’ hard lockdown has made it clear that we are not all in this together.

Surrounding areas received notice that lockdown restrictions would begin only at midnight following the announcement—and were still allowed out for grocery shopping, work and school.

But in the towers, over 500 police were deployed, with officers on every floor of the working class housing blocks to lock down 3000 residents. Two of the towers were even locked down despite having no cases.

The majority of the residents have migrant or refugee backgrounds, and police have a history of racial profiling, violence, and harassment against residents of the public housing estates.

A police response to the health crisis is counter-productive. What is needed is hundreds of health workers, nurses, social workers, and cleaners, not more police.

Australia’s acting Chief Medical Officer, Paul Kelly, backed the lockdown, calling the towers “vertical cruise ships”. But the hard lockdown risked creating exactly such cruise-like conditions. Residents were trapped at close quarters with no escape. It was days before those with COVID-19 started being removed to isolation hotels.



Above: Hundreds of police were sent to lock down the towers

Instead of imposing a lockdown in unsafe, crowded housing, the government should fund accommodation for residents in safe conditions.

Adequate testing, along with contact tracing and quarantine of confirmed cases of the virus, would make lockdowns unnecessary.

Green ban saves heritage and Sydney Powerhouse

NSW PREMIER Gladys Berejiklian has backflipped over the move of the Ultimo Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta, announcing plans for a museum on both sites. After ongoing community opposition, the last straw was a NSW CFMEU construction union green ban against the demolition of heritage buildings in Parramatta to make way for the Powerhouse.

This means the historic Willow Grove, a former maternity hospital, and St Georges Terrace, a row of housing terraces, will be protected. Darren Greenfield, the union’s secretary, said, “This is the first Green Ban the CFMEU has put in place since the recent passing of Jack Mundy who inspired a generation of unionists and community activists to fight for our shared built, cultural, and environmental heritage.”

In recent years union green bans have helped save the Bondi Beach Pavilion, and boosted the fight to preserve The Rocks’ iconic brutalist Sirius building.

The first greens bans were launched in the 1970s by the NSW Builders and Labourers Federation under Jack Mundy. They fought for historic areas and support local communities fighting to save the local

area from yet another skyscraper or car park. The union much preferred to build community-needed items, like hospitals and schools, not “ugly unimaginative architecturally-bankrupt blocks of concrete and glass offices”, Munday argued.

Eventually, 40 green bans were implemented in that short time period, with the best known being in The Rocks. Jack Munday, Bob Pringle and Joe Owens fought for such spaces to be saved, as many highrises and “get-rich-quick” buildings were the focus for the government at the time. They fought to save green spaces and historical sites not only in Sydney, but wider NSW, opposed by the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority, chaired by one Owen Magee, who described unionists as “thugs”, “drunkards” and “conspirators”.

Union action and powerful green bans make saving our historic and green spaces possible. Parramatta’s sites are irreplaceable. As Suzette Meade of the North Parramatta Residents Action Group put it, “Parramatta deserves a genuine museum and continued cultural funding from the State Government - but it does not need to be at the expense of more of Australia’s heritage being destroyed.”

Emily Thompson

Andrews’ hard lockdown has made it clear that we are not all in this together

Andrews' failures produced Melbourne outbreak, not distancing let-up

By Chris Breen and James Supple

THE NEW wave of infections in Melbourne is the first large-scale community spread of coronavirus Australia has seen. The whole of Melbourne is now back in “stage three lockdown”.

Premier Daniel Andrews claimed the reason the lockdown had to be reintroduced was the “creeping complacency” of people disregarding social distancing. “We all know someone who has done the wrong thing”, he added.

This is part of a government offensive designed to shift blame onto ordinary people. But it is Andrews' own failures that are to blame for the spread of the virus.

Victoria's second wave of COVID-19 has been traced to mistakes at the government-run quarantine hotels. Its Chief Health Officer Brett Sutton has admitted that “every case” it is now seeing likely traces back to lapses at the hotels in late May and early June.

Genomic evidence from virus infections points to hotel security guards as the source.

This is the result of outsourcing the operation of the hotels to private security companies. Some companies even subcontracted the work to other security firms. By contrast NSW stationed police at its quarantine hotels.

Security guards were given as little as five minutes' training on the health and PPE measures necessary in the hotels, one guard told Nine's Today show. They were allowed to share lifts with guests in quarantine while escorting them outside for exercise, given inadequate PPE and rostered on for 12-hour shifts.

It has also emerged that MSS Security, which had the contract for the Stamford Plaza hotel, where an outbreak among security guards has grown to 43 cases, also provided security for the North Melbourne and Flemington public housing towers. Industry insiders have claimed that subcontractors for MSS Security worked at both the quarantine hotel and the towers.

This should never have happened. Quarantine facilities should be run directly by government health workers, employed on secure conditions.

An adequate system of testing and contact tracing should have been able to prevent the surge of cases we are now seeing across Melbourne.

But investigations by *The Australian* have highlighted the run-down of Vic-



Above: Dan Andrews' government is responsible for the failures that have led to the outbreak

toria's public health workforce due to inadequate funding before the pandemic. “The public health workforce started from a lower base in Victoria than in NSW,” Melbourne University epidemiologist Tony Blakely told the paper.

“You have fewer people to take the calls coming in, to organise contact tracing, to oversee—and I'm speculating—the set-up of quarantine. That can happen when your workforce is spread thin and you don't have established expertise.”

This may have compromised its contact tracing operation.

The Andrews government has also pointed the finger at large family gath-

erings as a source of the spread. This is code for migrant communities—and has fed racist efforts to blame them.

The Murdoch press singled out Muslims, blaming one cluster on a family celebration to mark Eid, on the basis of unconfirmed information from a medical centre receptionist. Yet Victoria's Chief Health Officer has admitted the state government did not put enough effort into communicating with migrant communities.

Well-funded health services able to ensure testing, tracing and isolation of confirmed COVID-19 infections are the key to keeping the pandemic under control.

Organise and fight for safe workplaces

PREMIER DANIEL Andrews has admitted that about 80 per cent of Victoria's new infections, “are being driven by transmission in workplaces, including private-sector aged care”.

Abattoirs, where workers operate crammed close together in humid conditions, are a particular risk. Somerville Meats has 95 cases while the JBS Abattoir has 71. Health workers are also being infected in large numbers, with another 250 staff in isolation as close contacts.

COVID-19 is a class issue. Essential workers are the most at risk—since they cannot work from home. Workers need to organise at a workplace level to ensure all necessary safety measures are implemented.

The United Workers Union has produced a list of demands on companies where there is a confirmed case of COVID-19, calling for a three-day workplace shutdown to allow a deep clean

of the site and testing of all workers, as well as paid pandemic leave.

The union is encouraging members to cease work under health and safety laws where bosses refuse to implement these steps. At two separate food processing companies, workers ceased work in July after the companies refused to do so, and won the demands.

The JBS Abattoir also closed temporarily due to the cluster of cases there, but the company simply stood down its 1230 workers without pay.

In June, Daniel Andrews announced payments of \$1500 for anyone required to isolate by the health department, after admitting that casual workers without sick leave had been forced to go into work, potentially spreading the virus. But such a minimum wage payment does not go close to providing the paid pandemic leave unions are calling for.

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Security guards were given as little as five minutes' training on the health and PPE measures

Strategy needed to halt uni bosses' job cuts

By Miro Sandev

AROUND THE country, university Vice-Chancellors are launching massive attacks on jobs, on top of their previous cuts to casuals and fixed term staff.

University of New England is targeting 200 job cuts by the end of the year, the latest in a line of attacks. UNSW management want to axe close to 500 jobs and both University of Melbourne and Sydney University have threatened job losses to plug budget holes mostly caused by the loss of international students due to the pandemic.

Rather than lead a national fight-back the NTEU leadership offered to help managers implement cuts to wages and conditions through their Jobs Protection Framework (JPF). Both argued that the only way to save jobs was for university workers to voluntarily give away their pay and conditions in exchange for vague promises on job security.

The JPF was rightly defeated by a massive rank and file revolt.

Nonetheless, the NTEU leadership supported similar concessionary agreement variations at individual campuses like La Trobe and Monash Universities among others.

It's clear now that the concessions have not saved jobs, as we were promised by the bosses and the union officials. Monash has announced that it is pushing ahead with 300 job cuts.

At La Trobe, after members voted for a variation that cut pay by up to 10 per cent, and a round of voluntary redundancies, management are still pushing for between 215 and 415 further redundancies. And that will not be the end of it as La Trobe seeks further cost cuts.

Further concessions will only embolden VCs to increase their demands that workers pay for the crisis, and take the pressure off the Morrison government to fully fund higher education.

Build the resistance

But it is possible to organise even in the face of these attacks and the rising unemployment more generally.

Organising by the University of Sydney casuals network and by student activists has forced the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences to scale back cuts to courses and casuals' hours. Crucial subjects have been saved.



Above: Protesting outside the admin building at Sydney Uni

Demands on management—small and large—are key. At RMIT unionists are fighting over members being forced to return to unsafe workplaces. This campaign has been linked to opposing voluntary redundancies—with the local Branch demanding a health risk assessment be conducted of the workload impacts on remaining staff.

A demand that sacked staff get six months' access to their emails, software and library resources has brought dozens of less active members into campaign networks. Wage theft disputes over a 25 per cent cut to marking rates and unpaid time to provide HR with massive amounts of documents has helped galvanise non-ongoing members.

Unionists at Melbourne Uni defeated management's non-union agreement variation, holding over 20 local area meetings and several on campus speak-outs.

But even at campuses where the branch presidents supported the concessionary JPF, determined organising can win the branch to a fighting position that puts real demands on the bosses.

At UTS, the branch has rejected a management-driven proposal to alter leave provisions after the university refused to guarantee funding for all casual jobs. The branch is now committed to a campaign to defend casuals' jobs and oppose any other attacks from management. This is a step forward and opens the prospect of more serious union campaigning, although further rank-and-file organising will be necessary to ensure this.

Many NTEU members can see that making concessions to management without a fight leads down a dead end. But how to build a fight from the ground up is not so obvious. What's required is three things: taking every opportunity to put member-led demands on managers; building local rank and file networks out of these disputes; and arguing for ways to relate to a wider layer of union members and build towards taking industrial action.

The union campaign also needs to target the Liberals' funding cuts, fee hikes and denial of JobKeeper payments to universities.

The National University Staff Assembly on 24 August provides a good opportunity to do this. Hundreds of workers will come together to condemn both the Liberals' and the Vice-Chancellors' attacks on staff. NTEU branches and casuals' networks around the country have been endorsing the action.

The assembly has the potential to build up the militant sentiment for mobilisations over the next few months. It can extend the argument and win further layers of staff to the idea that we will eventually need strike action in order to win big gains or fight off substantial attacks.

We need to organise to defeat any concessionary variations and job cuts on any campus. Alongside this we also need national days of action against the Liberals' funding cuts, ideally organised together with any student campaign to defend education. These mobilisations can build up the confidence of workers to organise and strike.

.....
Further concessions will only embolden VCs to increase their demands that workers pay

Fight begins against Liberals' new cuts and fee increases

By Manon O'Neill

THE MORRISON Government is hoping the Senate will agree to its university fee increases when parliament resumes from 24 August.

In a sickening act of hypocrisy, Scott Morrison, who got his degree for free, is doubling the fees for students in the humanities. This is at a time when the Liberals have announced \$270 billion in military spending. This sum of money could fund free universities for decades.

The government's aim is to cut per student funding to universities and force students to make up the difference through higher fees. It expects to save \$770 million in base funding by increasing students' HECS debts. However, these government cuts will not be fully covered by the fee increases, and universities will be left with a \$280 million a year overall funding shortfall. Government spending on higher education is already way below that of other OECD rich nations, at only 0.8 per cent of GDP. These cuts will decrease funding levels even more.

The funding shortfalls are going to push universities to increase their austerity measures by further cutting courses, cutting staff jobs, and decreasing the quality of education and working conditions. This is a blatant attack on university education that follows the government's failure to extend JobKeeper payments to university staff.

The plan would increase student fees for humanities, law and economics while reducing them for courses such as engineering, nursing and teaching.

Students now have an average HECS debt of \$20,300 but with Morrison's changes this is set to jump. A three year course in law, economics or the humanities will cost \$43,500 under the changes, and popular five year double degrees will leave students with a debt of \$72,500.

Students should not be finishing their studies with so much debt. And in 2019 the government also dropped the minimum income at which HECS debt has to be paid off to \$45,000.

Dan Tehan, the Minister of Education, said in his announcement, "What this is about is incentivising people to look at teaching, to look at nursing, to look at allied health, to look at engineering, to look at IT", implying



Above: Students rally against the fee increases in Sydney on 18 July

that the government wants to drive students away from arts courses.

This is an attempt to force universities to create a "job ready" labour force that fits the needs of Australian capitalism.

Universities are being run more and more as businesses themselves, not as educational institutions. The management teams of universities are perfectly willing to implement austerity. Currently the Vice Chancellor of Sydney Uni sits on a salary of \$1.5 million, yet is still making cuts to courses and staff.

Fightback

Students and staff have been fighting these measures for months. Students from the History faculty organised an action on campus in early July calling out the proposed cuts to seven subjects. Opposition from staff and students to cutting the 'Fascism and Anti-Fascism' course was successful, with History lecturer David Brophy telling the rally, "Thanks to the campaign... we have won back a subject that was on the chopping block. That's one junior academic whose job has been saved for another semester".

Organising within the faculty highlighted the importance of opposing the cuts to courses as action can win.

Lydia Fagaan, a history student, spoke on her personal experience of another subject that is facing the axe

called "The history of protest in Australia". She also noted the irony of considering cutting a course on the American slave trade given the current explosion around racism in the US through the Black Lives Matter movement.

The Liberals' changes continue an attack on universities that has been occurring for 30 years, dismantling the system of free university education introduced under Gough Whitlam. Both Labor and Liberal governments have attacked university funding.

It was Labor that ended free education, introducing fees for domestic students and creating the HECS loan scheme to force students to pay part of the cost of their degrees. Since then, fees have increased repeatedly.

But student and staff resistance has also blunted the fee hikes. John Howard's Liberal government introduced full upfront fees for domestic students in 1997. This was met with massive protests across the country including the occupation of university administration buildings. They were eventually scrapped after Labor returned to government in 2007. The Liberals' efforts to deregulate fees in 2014 were also stopped.

Mass protest is the type of action we need to stop the latest fee hikes. University staff and students must come together to oppose the Morrison government's attacks as well as the austerity measures on campus.

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The Liberals' changes continue an attack on universities that has been occurring for 30 years

Coalition's new climate policy a roadmap to nowhere

By Caitlin Doyle

AS THE triple crises in health, the economy and the climate rage on, the Coalition government continues to subsidise fossil fuel projects and avoid seriously cutting emissions.

While the consequences of last summer's catastrophic, climate-induced bushfires are still being felt, scientists are warning that Australia is nowhere near on track to meet the already abysmal targets set out in the Paris agreement.

It is now clear that the Emissions Reduction Fund, the federal government's flagship climate program established in 2015 and costing over \$2.3 billion so far, has done virtually nothing to reduce Australia's emissions.

Yet the government has clearly felt the pressure generated by the climate movement and wants to be seen to be doing something.

In May, it released its "Technology Investment Roadmap" discussion paper, which sets out the priorities for government investment in developing new low-emissions technologies. Energy Minister Angus Taylor has claimed the roadmap will help boost jobs and economic growth in the wake of the coronavirus crisis and deal with climate change at the same time.

But the scheme has rightly been described as a "roadmap to nowhere". It contains no references to emissions reductions targets or how they will be met, and prioritises fossil fuel technologies like gas and carbon capture and storage (CCS). The Coalition has also changed the rules to allow its Emissions Reduction Fund to invest in this dubious technology.

Even "emerging" nuclear technologies are being considered, despite the admission they still face serious "engineering, cost and environmental challenges".

CCS has been promoted for years by the fossil fuel industry as a magic answer allowing the continued burning of coal and gas, where carbon released by burning fossil fuels is simply captured and stored underground. But as Friends of the Earth put it, "Despite decades of research and \$1.3bn of public funds, carbon capture and storage is still unproven". Even Robert Murray, CEO of giant US coal company Murray Energy has admitted, "It is neither practical nor economic".

And there are doubts amongst



Above: The Coalition are pushing gas in a further effort to obstruct renewable energy

scientists that CCS can safely keep carbon stored underground without it escaping into the atmosphere.

The Morrison government's embrace of CCS is a clear admission of its unwillingness to rein in the fossil fuel industry and its determination to prioritise profits over the future of the planet.

Renewable technologies like wind and solar are included in the roadmap, but there is no discussion of large scale public investment, despite the admission that renewable energy is now the cheapest option. And while a real transition would require massive public investment, the entire scheme is premised on private ownership, including of energy transmission and distribution.

Submissions on the roadmap from the Clean Energy Council, the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering, the ACTU and the Grattan Institute recommending investment in renewable energy, modifications to the grid and household energy efficiency, have so far been ignored.

The direction of the government's new climate policy is also clear in the work of the National Covid-19 Co-ordination Committee (NCCC). The NCCC, appointed by Prime Minister Scott Morrison to guide an economic recovery out of the coronavirus crisis, is stuffed full of individuals with ties to the fossil fuel industry, including billionaire former CEO of Fortescue Metals, Neville Power and Andrew Liveris, a former Trump advisor.

The committee has been pushing for a gas-led recovery, with the aim of boosting Australia's fossil fuel

exports, and has reheated a previously discredited proposal for a trans-Australia pipeline that would link Western Australia with the East-coast gas market.

An expansion of the gas industry will mean opening up vast swathes of land to fracking and delaying the shift to renewables. While gas has been touted as a lower emissions alternative to coal, the methane that leaks out into the atmosphere during mining is 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide over 20 years.

Labor

In a further slide to the right since losing last year's election, Labor leader Anthony Albanese has moved to further embrace the Coalition's climate policy, saying that he wants to establish a bipartisan approach to climate and that the roadmap is a "largely factual" document.

Labor has even shown support for CCS and extending the lives of coal-fired power stations.

However reports produced by groups like Climateworks, the Climate Council and Beyond Zero Emissions have shown that a transition to renewable energy could create tens of thousands of new jobs. And a climate movement that orients to workers could demand that these be proper, union jobs with good conditions.

In the lead up to the budget in October, climate and union activists will have to pressure the government to invest in renewable energy as a response to the unemployment crisis, not obsolete fossil fuel technologies.

.....
There are no references to emissions reductions targets or how they will be met

Morrison's military billions fuel conflict with China

By Michael Douglas

AUSTRALIA WILL spend \$270 billion over ten years to recalibrate its military strategy and project more power across the Indo-Pacific region, which Prime Minister Scott Morrison says is now “the focus of the dominant global contest of our age”.

The spending spree includes long-range anti-ship missiles, satellites to establish an independent communications network, a massive high-tech underwater surveillance system, unmanned submarines, and cyber-attack systems. This is in addition to new submarine and fighter jet programs already underway.

Morrison says, “We have not seen the uncertainty now being experienced in our region since the 1930s and 1940s” adding, “we need to prepare for a post-COVID world that is poorer, that is more dangerous, and that is more disorderly.”

These weapons will target China. They come on top of Morrison banging the drum for an international inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus.

At a time when countries should be cooperating to overcome the pandemic, climate change and species extinction, these announcements highlight the sick priorities of a system based upon racist divide and rule, and competition between states for markets and resources in pursuit of profit.

The \$270 billion for weapons could almost cover the cost of converting the entire Australian economy to 100 per cent renewable energy—estimated at \$300 billion in a recent report.

Shamefully, opposition leader Anthony Albanese agrees with Morrison on the coronavirus inquiry. And says that, not only does he support the weapons splurge, but that Labor thought of it first!

Australia's ruling class has always seen the south Pacific as its own backyard and shown racist contempt for the countries of the region—treating them variously as quarries, sources of cheap labour or slaves, military staging posts, and refugee prisons.

Laughably, Morrison claims, “We want an Indo-Pacific free from coercion and hegemony.” But he has no objection to the US military bases in Guam, American Samoa, Hawaii, Japan, South Korea, Thailand and Australia. The US has also re-estab-



Above: Morrison's \$270 billion in spending will buy Super Hornet planes and long-range missiles

lished bases in the Philippines and is busy expanding its base on Wake Island in the mid-Pacific.

France has a military presence in New Caledonia and conducted nuclear weapons testing on Mururoa Atoll up until 1996.

All this passes without Australian complaint. Along with the US alliance, keeping rival powers out of the region is central to its military and strategic concerns.

In 2018 Australia and the US commenced a naval base upgrade on Manus Island in northern Papua New Guinea. The same year Australia outbid China to fund the upgrade of Blackrock Camp military base in Fiji.

And Australian soft power in the form of regional aid still exceeds that of China. The Lowy Institute estimates that in 2016 China was only the fourth largest aid donor in the Pacific—well behind Australia and trailing New Zealand and Japan.

But the global balance of power is tipping as China's economic growth translates into military might.

China has accelerated its program of building military bases on islands and reefs in the South China Sea. China also claims sovereignty over Taiwan.

Last month Chinese and Indian troops were involved in deadly clash on their border.

The US is desperate to contain China. But Trump has also torn up the Trans Pacific Partnership trade deal aimed at providing regional allies with an economic alternative to China. And he has signalled the US may be less willing to foot the military bill to

protect allies.

Australia still considers the US alliance as central. But concern about whether it can rely on the US means the Australian ruling class is expanding its own military.

Morrison is also exploring new alliances that might help restrict China's advance. Australia and India signed a military pact in June. And Morrison will soon visit Japan to sign an agreement for co-operation between space agencies to, “directly contribute to warfighting outcomes in the space domain.”

Just like other countries, Australia is pursuing its own economic interests and geo-political goals. Far from creating “regional security”, all this is producing growing imperialist tensions across the Indo-Pacific.

The left needs to oppose Australian imperialism along with that of the US and China. But because socialists are against imperialism everywhere, it can be tempting for socialists in Australia to see American and Chinese imperialism as identical—and to devote equal energy to opposing both. This is a mistake.

American and Chinese imperialism are not equally posed in the context of Australia being an ally of American imperialism, and the attempts to use anti-Chinese scaremongering to boost Australian and American imperialism across the Indo-Pacific region.

For socialists in Australia the main enemy is at home. That means building movements against Morrison's warmongering, racism, and neo-liberalism is more vital than ever.

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Far from creating “regional security”, this is producing growing imperialist tensions

Draconian new security law imposed on Hong Kong

By Jason Wong

WITH THE passage of a new national security law, the Chinese government is attempting to quash Hong Kong's protest movement. The new law came into effect on 30 June, just before the 23rd anniversary of Hong Kong's handover from the UK to China.

Thousands have donned masks and defied protest restrictions to challenge the law on the streets. Police again attacked protesters with water cannon, tear gas and pepper spray.

By 1 July they had arrested 370 people, almost half of whom were students from schools and universities. One man has already been charged under the national security law for driving a motorcycle into a crowd of police while carrying a protest flag.

The law allows China to bypass Hong Kong's legislature, and specifically targets anti-government protest activity with sweeping police powers. People found guilty under the law could be jailed for life.

Marches against the law have been banned, and several opposition parties have disbanded out of concerns for their members' safety. Authorities have outlawed the popular protest slogan "Liberate Hong Kong, Revolution of Our Time".

But even under the crackdown, a mood of defiance persists. A week after the law came into force, over 610,000 people participated in the opposition camp's primaries, with strong results for radical and "localist" candidates ahead of September's Legislative Council elections.

The national security law is not only a disaster for civil liberties, it will choke the ability of workers to organise even on workplace issues. China is taking advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to ram through a law meant to intimidate the people into submission. Mass protests are needed to stop it, as they did over the extradition bill last year.

West no friend of democracy

Western leaders have posed as defenders of democratic rights in Hong Kong, with US secretary of state Mike Pompeo saying the introduction of the new law was a "sad day for freedom-loving people".

The British government has announced that Hong Kong residents born before the handover in 1997 will be eligible to move to the UK.



Above: Protest against the new national security law in Hong Kong

Australia, the UK and Canada have suspended their extradition treaties with Hong Kong.

Scott Morrison has also announced a raft of visa changes. But these are a cynical attempt to cash in on the expected exodus. Morrison has refused to allow any easier path for Hong Kong protesters to flee as refugees. Instead his changes are transparently aimed at attracting skilled workers and businesspeople.

Morrison said the changes were designed to increase economic "productivity" and explicitly included incentives for companies to relocate their regional headquarters to Australia.

Some Hong Kong activists see the West as the lesser of two evils. Some activists spent months last year touring Europe and the US to speak in favour of sanctions against China. The US has passed a version of these sanctions, but this has had no effect so far.

The West is no ally in the fight for democracy. The US supports autocratic regimes where it suits it such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt. It simply wants to use Hong Kong in its imperialist competition with China. It will help only those Hong Kongers who are of service to it, and only as long as they are politically useful.

The US, Britain and Australia lock up refugees fleeing other autocratic regimes, and have actively stoked anti-migrant racism throughout the pandemic.

Lausan Collective, a group of left-

wing activists in Hong Kong, reports that all through last year's protests, the US government continued to supply Hong Kong police with training and weapons.

It is only action by workers and ordinary people in both Hong Kong and across China that can win full democratic rights. Mobilising workers on a mass scale requires linking the fight for democracy to economic demands that address the huge inequalities that exist in Hong Kong.

And unless the movement recognises the united interests of the working poor of Hong Kong and the mainland, it will become rapidly isolated.

This requires confronting xenophobic currents within the movement. Some of these right-wing "localist" groups couch their arguments for self-determination in anti-mainland and anti-communist language, and have attacked ordinary mainland Chinese people in Hong Kong during protests.

The Chinese government has exploited this to whip up nationalist paranoia to justify its crackdown, painting all protesters as violent racists who are plotting "secession" and "collusion with foreign forces".

The liberation of Hong Kong is bound up with the liberation of the workers of mainland China, where the very same government cracks down on factory strikes, feminist activists, and human rights campaigners. Only by linking up these struggles across borders can the movement hope to achieve its goals.

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It is only action by ordinary people in both Hong Kong and across China that can win full democratic rights

Trump desperate and dangerous as his COVID death toll grows

By James Supple

DONALD TRUMP is growing desperate as his hopes for re-election fade, following his chaotic blundering over the COVID-19 crisis. He has fallen 15 per cent behind his Democratic rival in a poll for ABC News and the Washington Post.

Infections have reached new daily records as outbreaks surge across new parts of country in the South and West. Around 5000 people are dying each week—and almost 150,000 in total.

Trump's boasts that the US has "maybe the lowest mortality rate anywhere in the world" and his repeated claims that the virus would simply "disappear" now look ridiculous and inept.

Decades of neo-liberalism and cuts, combined with one of the most expensive and dysfunctional health systems in the developed world, have left the US completely unable to organise the testing, tracing and isolation measures needed to control the virus.

New York's disaster in March and April, where so many died that hospitals had to set up makeshift morgues, showed why the threat needed to be taken seriously. But as Barry Bloom, a public health professor at Harvard University told the *Financial Times*, "the political attitude was that the only thing that counted was keeping the economy going... It is so frustrating because it didn't have to happen."

Trump pushed to end the lockdowns across the country, determined to get the economy going again to boost his election campaign. He is also trying to stop further funding to increase testing.

Republican governors in states like Texas, Florida and Arizona reopened their economies well before any capacity to control the virus was in place, while infections were still rising.

Testing capacity has scaled up since the beginning of the pandemic. But the scale of the demand is still overwhelming medical facilities. The waiting time to get test results is at least seven days, lab companies have admitted.

This makes testing almost useless in containing the spread, because it takes so long to notify close contacts of anyone infected.

Cases are increasing in 43 out of 50 US states. Even Democratic-run



Above: Trump has sent federal officers to Portland in an effort to feed polarisation and create chaos

California, which locked down early, has lost control. Counties across the state reopened in May despite not meeting statewide guidelines for the number of contact tracers employed.

Hospitals are close to being overwhelmed in Texas, where patients are waiting ten hours to get into packed emergency rooms. Florida has over 9000 COVID-19 patients hospitalised, with intensive care beds near capacity.

Black Lives Matter

Trump has also stepped up his abuse of the Black Lives Matter protests, labelling the slogan a "symbol of hate" and attempting to beat up a law and order crackdown.

This has encouraged the far right, with a number of people attempting to drive cars through protesters. One activist, 24-year-old Summer Taylor, has already been killed in Seattle.

But Trump's desperate efforts to mobilise his supporters have failed to halt the success of the protests. A Pew Research poll in June found two-thirds of Americans support their aims, including 60 per cent of white Americans.

Protests still take place almost daily in cities like New York and Minneapolis.

In Portland, hundreds of protesters still confront police almost every night. Trump has sent in heavily armed federal officers dressed in military fatigues, who have snatched protesters off the street and bundled them into unmarked cars.

This has generated shock across the country. "With every act of vio-

lence they commit, our numbers seem to grow, people seem to get more angry," activist Luis Enrique Marquez told the *New York Times*.

Some Democratic politicians have bowed to the pressure to defund the police and agreed to reduce police budgets, including in New York City, Los Angeles and Minneapolis. These concessions show the power of protest to force change.

The Democrats no doubt hope to channel the protest movement into electing Joe Biden in November's presidential election. But Biden has made it clear he won't offer serious change, stating clearly, "I do not support defunding police."

That change will require deepening the movement on the streets, and drawing in the power of organised workers.

Workers have already taken part in the protest wave. In June, the ILWU shut down ports across the US West Coast in solidarity with the demonstrations. And on 20 July, thousands of workers in fast food, nursing homes and airports stopped work in a "Strike for Black Lives". Workplaces went on strike either for a full day or for a symbolic eight minutes and 26 seconds—the length of time police officer Derek Chauvin pressed his knee on George Floyd's neck.

The Black Lives Matter protests have been fuelled by the impact of the pandemic on Black workers. The fight against racism needs to be linked to the misery workers are facing due to growing unemployment and loss of wages due to COVID-19.

.....
The waiting time to get test results is at least seven days, lab companies have admitted

RACIST ASSAULT ON SELF-DETERMINATION FUELS DEATHS IN CUSTODY

Paddy Gibson examines how racist government policies have led to the surge in Indigenous imprisonment and deaths in custody

THE BLACK Lives Matter movement that exploded onto the streets across the US in the wake of George’s Floyd’s murder has inspired some of the biggest protests against the killing of Aboriginal people in police and prison custody in Australia’s history.

There is nowhere in the world that needs a Black Lives Matter movement more than Australia. Indigenous people in this country are incarcerated more than anyone else on the planet and are ten times more likely to die in custody than non-Indigenous people.

These horrific numbers have massively increased since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC), which delivered its final report in 1991. This was the outcome of the last major wave of campaigning on this issue in the 1980s and there were high hopes it would deliver change.

Its final report said that the main reason for deaths in custody was that “too many Aboriginal people are in custody, too often”.

In 1991, an average 2140 Indigenous people were in prison. By the March quarter of 2020 however, a staggering 12,902 Indigenous people were in prison, an increase of over six times.

This can only be explained by the intensifying racism, poverty and over policing faced by Aboriginal people in all aspects of their lives.

Police forces across Australia perpetrated a genocide against Indigenous people during the initial colonisation of Australia.

Police had extraordinary powers to control Aboriginal lives throughout the “Protection” era in the 20th century. Hyper-surveillance and constant brutality have continued into the present day.

The Royal Commission called for “an end to domination and a return of control over their lives and communi-

ties to Aboriginal hands”.

But recent years have seen the complete opposite—a war on self-determination.

The most graphic expression of this was the NT Intervention in 2007, which introduced explicitly racist controls over Aboriginal life reminiscent of the “Protection” era.

Across Australia, Aboriginal controlled services have been systematically defunded, forced to toe the government line or broken up and replaced by mainstream agencies or NGOs.

Police and welfare agencies that forcibly remove Aboriginal children are given unprecedented budgets, while the Federal government has completely abandoned support for Aboriginal housing and employment programs and many remote communities have even had funding for essential services withdrawn.

Racist violence and neglect

Since RCIADIC reported in 1991, there have been 438 Indigenous deaths in custody, yet not a single police officer or prison guard has ever been held criminally liable.

Many of these deaths are the direct result of violence at the hands of authorities.

In November 2019, 19-year-old Warlpiri man Mr Walker was shot dead by police officer Zachary Rolfe, while resting at his grandmother’s house in the remote NT community of Yuendumu.

Walker’s bleeding body was dragged into a police station, where police locked themselves in for hours before heavily armed re-enforcements arrived by plane.

Protests began in Yuendumu that night, with young relatives making signs that read “Black Lives Matter”. This sparked an unprecedented wave of protest across NT communities, culminating in a convoy of more than

The Federal government has completely abandoned support for Aboriginal housing and employment programs

150 cars from Yuendumu to Alice Springs for a rally.

The night of the convoy, it was announced that Rolfe had been charged with murder.

Shortly after, the WA Department of Public Prosecutions announced that a police constable in WA would be charged with the shooting death of Yamitji woman Joyce Clarke in Geraldton in September 2019.

These charges are a breakthrough and a testament to the power of protest. A shameful history of acquittals of police, however, demonstrates there will need to be ongoing mobilisation for there to be any chance of conviction.

Racist negligence also routinely kills Aboriginal people in custody.

Tanya Day, a 55-year-old Yorta Yorta woman, was arrested after she fell asleep on a train from Echuca to Melbourne in 2017.

She was targeted due to racial profiling, arrested for being drunk in a public place and left to die after falling in her cell.

A courageous family-led campaign forced recognition by the Coroner that racism played a role in her arrest and police conduct been referred to the DPP to consider charges.

In NSW, the inquest into the death of 36-year-old Nathan Reynolds is set to begin in the spring. Nathan was left to die from an asthma attack in a minimum security prison.

Despite his asthma being well known, guards took 20 minutes to respond to his calls for help before calling a nurse.

It took 40 minutes before an ambulance was called. Nathan was dead by the time it arrived.

On 13 July, another Indigenous man, this time just 19 years old, died in custody in Acacia prison in WA in an apparent suicide. But it is the negligence of a racist system, that left him without the support he needed, that

continually allows this to happen.

The inquest into the death of Tane Chatfield, which concluded in Sydney on 17 July, is likely to declare his death another suicide.

But Tane should have never been in prison. He had served two years on remand awaiting trial for a crime his family maintain he did not commit.

Continuing the momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement will be crucial to pushing for successful prosecutions over deaths in custody. And ending the violence and oppression suffered by Aboriginal people from police and the prison system is closely linked to the struggles to win back stolen land, to win self-determination and to end grinding poverty.

Ultimately, the prison walls must come down and the system that relies on racist police violence uprooted.



Chatfield family: ‘the prison system killed our son’

This statement was read by Nioka Chatfield on behalf of the family of Tane Chatfield following the coronial Inquest 17 July

ON 20 September 2017 our lives were changed forever. Our son Tane had been on remand for two years in Tamworth prison for a crime he did not commit. Tane was 22 years old with one son. He was a proud Gamilaraay, Gumbaynggirr and Wakka Wakka man.

The night Tane was supposed to have broken the law, he was home in bed with his partner Merinda and his young son. But like so many thousands of Aboriginal people, he was thrown into prison without trial—a decision that would be a death sentence.

We have waited three years with no answers about our son’s death and this has taken a huge toll on our family. Why was the initial investigation done by Corrective Services themselves and by the police? We all know that these systems work to protect their own.

We need a completely independent body set up to carry out the immediate investigation into any death in custody. And in Aboriginal deaths in custody, our people must be centrally involved. The family must be given all information straight away and allowed to share our own experiences and views to inform the investigation.

Tane’s father Colin was in and out of prison for much of the time that the

children were growing up. They were robbed of that time with their father. Colin suffered from terrible bashings, from psychological abuse, extreme racism and segregation.

Colin got to know about all the Corrective Service officers and had to be on guard the whole time, as you never knew when they would strike. Aboriginal inmates were targeted and were far more likely to be locked in segregation and Colin suffered this all the time. Colin’s cousin Douglas Henry Pitt was bashed and hung in the jail.

One thing that has been totally missing from this inquest is any understanding of Tane’s experience in the prison system. It hasn’t given any insight into the struggle of a young man on remand for two years who fought for his innocence. Just like his father, Tane too was bashed by guards. On many visits, and on phone calls, he would tell us of this treatment. Tane’s sister has even witnessed him being assaulted by guards when she went for a visit.

That’s why we say that the prison system killed our son. No matter what happened in that cell on the morning he was found. The constant pressure, the violence, being away from the family he loved, we saw him change after the time he spent inside. He was pushed to breaking point.

We don’t want any more men, women or children on remand in the NSW system because it can be a death sentence.

We have seen that Corrective

Above: The Chatfield family attend a march calling for justice for Tane

Services staff and Justice Health staff breached policies and procedures. They assumed things about my boy without checking the proper paperwork. I believe that if the reports had been read, if my son was allowed to contact his family, or if I was contacted when Tane was first hospitalised the night before he died, I wouldn’t be standing here today without my son, we could have all been at home together as a family.

Aboriginal people are less than 3 per cent of the population. Here in NSW we are almost 30 per cent of the prison system. And more than one third of those prisoners are on remand—many will be found not guilty or won’t be sentenced to any time in prison at all. We are the most incarcerated people in the whole world. How much more blood does Australia want? What will it take to stop locking up and brutalising our people?

We say that the prison system itself is destructive and the bars must come down. There is no rehabilitation, there is no making society any safer. People have their mental health destroyed. They develop no skills and get no opportunities to better contribute to society. We say build communities not prisons.

We can see from the evidence in this inquest that Black Lives still don’t matter in the NSW prison system. We need change now and we need justice for Tane and everyone who has been killed in custody. We ask you all to join us in our fight to make that change.

MALCOLM X— FIGHTING RACISM BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

Cooper Forsyth looks at the ideas of one of the US's most uncompromising fighters against racism, and what they have to teach the Black Lives Matter movement today

THE RACISM of US society is being laid bare by a huge rebellion against police brutality.

This is not the first time that a mass movement calling for justice for Black Americans has shaken the US to its core. One of the most heroic of these struggles was the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, which ended desegregation and led to equal rights for Black people.

Malcolm X was one of the most uncompromising and principled fighters of this time. He grappled with many of the same questions that are still thrown up today: of violence or non-violence, the role of white people in Black struggle, and reform or revolution. For this reason his legacy remains important for anyone looking to fight racism today.

He was born Malcolm Little, in 1925 in Nebraska, in the US Midwest. At this time, Blacks in the Southern states of the US were living under Jim Crow laws, which enforced an apartheid system of segregation.

Racism was used to divide the working class in order to better exploit them, and to suppress labour struggles. It operated to the detriment of all workers, despite Black workers facing the most intense exploitation at work, as well as vicious racism.

In the North, things were not much better. While there was no Jim Crow, Blacks still lived apart from whites in overcrowded ghettos, suffering constant racism, lynchings, and massive exploitation as factory workers.

In the North racism was also used to suppress class struggle, such as during the strike waves of 1919, when Blacks were blamed by employers and the government for taking white jobs, with desperate Black workers from the South being used as scab labour.

From an early age Malcolm

experienced racist violence first hand. When he was four, his family's house was set on fire by a racist gang, and his father was killed by the Klu Klux Klan when he was six.

Nation of Islam

Malcolm was pushed into petty crime and served six years in prison from 1946.

It was here that he changed his name to Malcolm X, and joined the Nation of Islam.

The group combined Black Nationalist politics with ideas taken from Islam—calling for a separate nation of Black Muslims.

Its insistence on the greatness and potential of Black people was deeply attractive in the face of the humiliating position American society gave them. For this reason, it found a ready audience in the Northern ghettos, growing to 100,000 members in the 1960s.

However, while extremely militant against racism, and unafraid to call out the timidity of more moderate Black activists, the Nation of Islam was extremely sectarian and essentially abstained from political action.

They had a reputation for talking radical, but not actually turning up to act, let alone working with other groups.

They attacked the civil rights movement for working with white anti-racists. Instead of recognising the way racism is a product of capitalism, they called for more Black-owned businesses; hoping Black capitalism would be a solution to Black impoverishment.

Malcolm quickly became a key spokesperson for the Nation of Islam, agitating for their ideas around the country. He was a powerful orator and was deeply committed to the organ-

Malcolm X argued that Black people had every right to resist the violence that they faced

isation that had helped him find clarity and purpose at the lowest point of his life.

Malcolm X gained notoriety in 1959 when he was interviewed for a TV documentary.

Rejecting moderate, legal challenges to racism he said, "When someone sticks a knife into my back nine inches and then pulls it out six inches they haven't done me any favour. They should not have stabbed me in the first place." The media immediately presented him as a "racist in reverse" and extremist fanatic.

This was a time of massive unrest in the Black population. The civil rights movement, along with other radical movements, was beginning to break the conservative atmosphere that had dominated politics. It opened up space for the emergence of a new left.

Martin Luther King's strategy of non-violent resistance rested on the idea that Black people's willingness to endure violence could demonstrate the moral superiority of the civil rights movement.

He aimed to push the Democratic Party leaders in the North to intervene against the racist Governors and police in the South. But in the face of the brutal, racist violence against the movement and Black people in general, many began to insist on the right to self-defence.

Malcolm X argued that Black people had every right to resist the violence that they faced. Even those formally committed to non-violence began to recognise its limitations. At a 1964 Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee meeting everyone was asked if they believed in non-violence. They all put up their hands. But when they were asked who had a gun they all put up their hands as well! The reality of the violence they faced meant

it was common sense to be armed in response.

And in the North, where Black people already had formal legal equality, they were still ghettoised, terrorised by racists and police, kept out of solid jobs and in serious poverty. This showed that winning legal rights alone would not be enough to end racism, raising the question of how to achieve more radical change.

Rethinking

Malcolm gradually became disillusioned with the Nation of Islam's sectarianism. He wrote in his autobiography that he privately felt that the group could be a, "greater force in the American Black man's overall struggle—if we engaged in more action".

In 1962 he attempted to launch a national campaign in response to the killing of seven Black Muslims by the Los Angeles Police.

Malcolm attempted to work with Blacks of other faiths, but was stopped by the Nation of Islam's leader, Elijah Muhammad.

In 1964, Malcolm left the group. He abandoned its extreme sectarianism, but remained a Black Nationalist, believing that the solution to racism was for Blacks to organise separately from whites.

However, he also maintained an uncompromising hostility to the right-wing of the movement, which placed its hopes in the courts and the Democratic Party to bring change, as well as those who promoted non-violence as an unshakable principle.

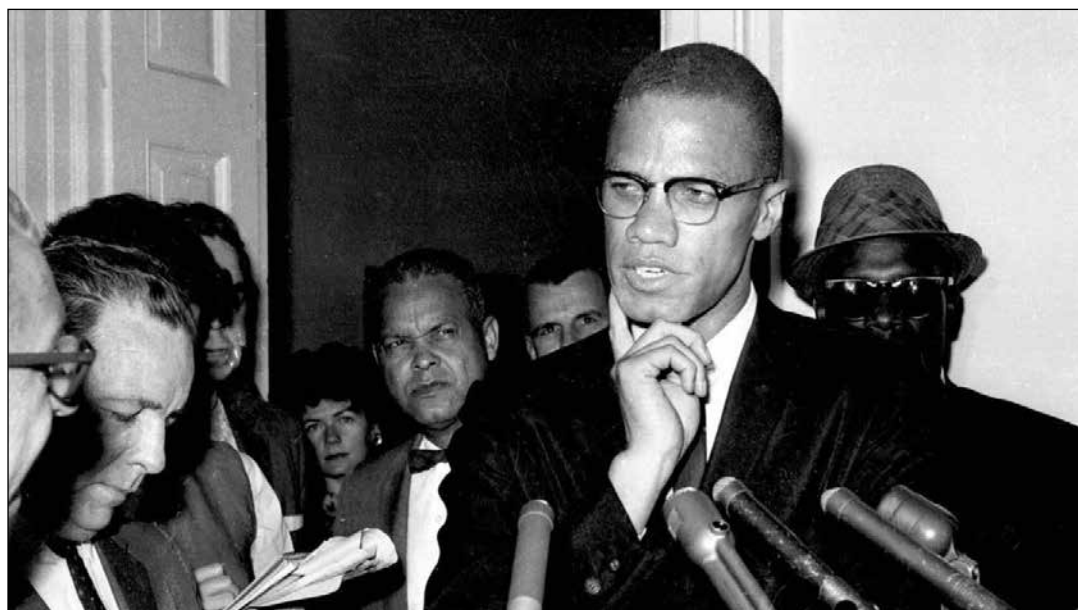
His pilgrimage to Mecca the same year had a deep effect on Malcolm, who saw "blonde, blue eyed" Muslims, treating people of all races equally. Afterwards, as he travelled through Africa, he met Algerian independence leaders with white skin.

On his return to the US, he formed an organisation called the Organisation of Afro-American Unity, deeply inspired by anti-colonial struggles in Africa.

It argued for all Black Americans to unite regardless of religion and was on the radical wing of the civil rights movement. However it still essentially adopted "Black capitalism" as a solution.

The organisation was restricted to Black membership, as Malcolm argued that Blacks first needed to unite amongst themselves before they could unite with others.

However, Malcolm's politics continued to develop, and he began to argue that some "sincere, well mean-



ing" white people could play a role in the struggle against racism.

He criticised the Democrats and Republicans, not from simply a Black Nationalist standpoint, but as the representatives of a mostly white establishment, representing the interests of the ruling class.

He began to talk of racism as a problem of the entire system, famously saying, "you can't have capitalism without racism", and that the Black movement was not simply part of a racial conflict between Black and white, but a rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, and the exploited against the exploiters.

This is the closest he came to a class analysis which sees the system as to blame, and the uniting of all oppressed people as the only solution.

Tragically, Malcolm X was assassinated in February 1965, just before the Black movement and the radical struggles of the 1960s in the US reached their height.

But his ideas retain all their relevance today. Critics of the Black Lives Matter movement have condemned the rioting and property damage in response to George Floyd's murder, failing to instead condemn the social conditions which lead to such outbursts of rage.

Malcolm X argued passionately against this perverse logic, which sees oppression as order and resistance as violence, arguing that Black people should fight racism by any means necessary.

Today's Black Lives Matter movement first emerged under a Black President, Black Attorney General, and Black Secretary of Homeland Security, and is living proof of the failure

Above: Malcolm X—one of the most uncompromising fighters against racism in the US in the 1960s

of "Black capitalism" or of working through mainstream political institutions like the Democratic Party.

Channeling energy into getting Black people into positions of power has produced a growing Black middle class, but has achieved little for the largely working class Black population.

Today, there have been promising calls to defund and disarm the police. But again the Democrats, including racist Joe Biden, a man responsible for the Violent Crime Control and Enforcement Act, are attempting to co-opt the movement into campaigning to elect Biden as president in November. Malcolm would have rejected this dead end electoral road to change.

However, Malcolm X never quite grasped the possibility of uniting Black and white workers to both fight racism as well as the class oppression they have in common.

In the last month there have been a number of examples of workers taking action in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement.

Transport workers have refused to carry arrested protesters and health workers have walked out to join protests. Ports on the West coast were shut down and on 20 July thousands took strike action in support of the movement.

Strike action forces workers to unite in solidarity across racial lines and has the power to shut down the economy to force real change. It can challenge the economic system which creates the poverty and degradation that Black people suffer the most.

And ultimately, it holds the hope of building a new world, where racism and oppression are obsolete.

ENTERING ‘THE NEXT PHASE’ WHO WILL PAY FOR THE CRISIS NOW?

A global pandemic has exposed just how fragile the world economy already was. **Tomáš Tengely-Evans** examines why capitalism constantly creates economic crises

A MAJOR slump is coming. Whether bosses or workers pay the price is up for grabs.

The credit crunch of 2008 was followed by brutal austerity assaults on public services and working class living standards. Globally it left millions of people living in poverty and hunger.

But mainstream economists say that the crisis now could be far worse. They say it might be more like the great depression of the 1930s.

This was an era of mass unemployment and the rise of fascism—as well as titanic workers’ struggles.

This year global GDP is expected to fall for the first time since the Second World War.

The scale of the economic contraction in the developed economies is estimated to be greater than that of the 2008 crisis and the recession in 1974-5 combined.

The coronavirus crisis has exposed the inability of the free market to meet human need. And many ordinary people won’t want a return to the “normal” of austerity and inequality afterwards.

But that will mean breaking from a system that has crisis built into it. Commentators talk of economic crises as external upsets to a free market system that would otherwise work properly.

But global capitalism was already weak before coronavirus and the lockdowns. It never recovered properly from the global crash of 2007-8.

And while that crisis ripped through the banking sector and the housing markets, it was only a symptom of a much deeper crisis of profitability.

Overproduction

Economic crisis flows from how capi-

talism—based on production for profit not human need—is organised.

The revolutionary Karl Marx argued that capitalism has “anarchy” in the marketplace and “despotism” in the workplace.

While there is planning inside businesses, there is no planning between firms, sectors or across the economy as a whole.

This leads to overproduction of commodities that aren’t bought and to scarcity of others.

The bizarre news of oil prices turning “negative” for the first time in history in April is one example of this anarchy.

There’s a flood of oil that no one wants to buy on the market—and, in the US, nowhere to store it.

Oil prices began falling when the Chinese government was forced to impose a lockdown in Wuhan and other provinces in January. Within weeks China, the world’s largest importer of oil, saw its consumption fall by 20 per cent.

But at the same time Saudi Arabia launched a price war against Russia to grab a bigger slice of the market.

This meant that just as demand was collapsing, production increased because the Saudis wanted to damage a rival.

Competition doesn’t just create overproduction. It can lead to a crisis of low profitability, which is the root cause of economic slump.

What’s becoming more evident under the lockdowns is that it’s not billionaires who make wealth. It is workers’ labour that creates value.

As Karl Marx wrote in 1868, “Every child knows a nation which ceased to work, I will not say for a year, but even for a few weeks, would perish.”

Workers are forced to sell their

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Economic crisis flows from how capitalism—based on production for profit not human need—is organised

labour power—their ability to work—for a wage in order to make a living.

But they don’t get paid back the full value of what they create. This gap is what Marx called “surplus value” and it is the source of capitalists’ profits.

How much of this surplus value bosses grab for themselves depends on how efficient their firm is. Corporations and states are locked into competition with one another and to outdo each other they plough profits back into investment, not just into bosses’ personal wealth.

Competition forces capitalists to invest in more efficient methods of production—whether that’s the latest IT technology or new factory equipment—to get ahead of or match their rivals.

While investing in new technology can help a firm gain big profits, it has bad consequences for capitalism as a whole.

Marx said that it is workers’ labour that creates new value. But most of the new investment goes into technology and machinery, not labour.

Over time the proportion invested in technology and machinery as opposed to labour increases.

You can see this trend in manufacturing. While manufacturing is still an important part of the economy, the number of workers employed in the sector has massively declined.

Individual bosses still make billions. But, because workers’ labour is the source of value, the amount of profit compared to the amount of investment falls.

How can bosses respond to low profitability? They can try to ramp up the rate of exploitation—longer hours, less pay, worse terms and conditions—to squeeze more surplus value out of workers.

Often this is accompanied by austerity and attacks on public services from governments.

There's another option—to clear out inefficient chunks of capital through bankruptcies and set the system up for the next boom—and the next bust.

As capitalism grew, Marx argued there was a “concentration and centralisation” of capital. A few large firms dominate the market.

If they went bust, it would leave gaping holes in the economy and could trigger a depression.

That's why banks and other large corporations are deemed “too big to fail” and receive huge bailouts.

Bailouts

The underlying cause of the 2008 crash was a crisis of profitability. In response governments pushed through punishing austerity to squeeze workers and pay for the bailouts of banks and corporations.

Central banks slashed interest rates and pumped cheap credit into the economy.

Rather than clearing out unprofitable bits of capital, it fuelled the growth of “Zombie firms”.

These are companies on life support that wouldn't survive without credit.

In North America and Europe, between 10 and 20 per cent of companies were zombies.

Global debt has grown to over 300 per cent of GDP.

This meant recovery was weak and global capitalism was already vulnerable before the pandemic.

Once again states have responded to the coronavirus crisis with more bailouts for businesses.

But they have less room for simply pursuing the same policies of cheap credit that they did in 2007-8. Interest rates are already at historic lows.

While there will be bankruptcies, these are likely to be mainly among smaller rather than big business. So this will not do very much to deal with the underlying crisis of profitability.

There will need to be a battle about what comes afterwards and who pays for this almighty slump.

Direction

Some sections of the ruling class can see ordinary people's anger at how society is run. The bosses' *Financial Times* newspaper argues its “time for a reset” for capitalism.



“Radical reforms—reversing the prevailing policy direction of the last four decades—will need to be put on the table,” says one editorial.

“The leaders who won the Second World War did not wait for victory to plan for what would follow. The UK published the Beveridge Report, its commitment to a universal welfare state, in 1942.

“That same kind of foresight is needed today.”

In Australia too the federal government introduced welfare payments for families, widows and the unemployed.

But capitalism's capacity to give reforms within the confines of the system is diminished.

Huge chunks of capital had been destroyed in the war and this unleashed an unprecedented period of economic boom.

Today is a time of slump, and bosses are trying to squeeze workers more.

While bosses can argue for state intervention on the side of business now, they will demand workers pay the price later.

Finance Minister Mathias Cormann said the government had “no alternative” but to spend billions on programs like JobKeeper to prevent economic collapse.

But the Treasurer Josh Frydenberg has also warned that after the crisis there would be a reckoning, with government “paying for years to come” to

**Above:
Unemployment is
expected to reach
9.25 per cent by the
end of the year**

reduce the debt.

Many people talked about the “death of neo-liberalism” after the 2008 crisis because free market policies were exposed. Yet austerity followed to protect profits.

There were impressive struggles—for example the Arab Spring and the revolts against austerity in Europe. But in general the radical movements were eventually blunted and thrown back.

Again many working class people are angry. And the coronavirus crisis has raised fundamental questions about how society is run.

But class struggle to win big changes is not inevitable.

Ensuring bosses don't make workers pay means encouraging struggle to shape the outcome of the crisis—now.

We have to reject the appeals for sacrifice and the idea that unions and bosses have any common interest in how the crisis is solved.

Struggle will be crucial to resisting the bosses and to impose a social-ist solution onto the crisis.

Unless we break from the logic of the profit system, there will be further crises that bosses try to make our class pay for.

Socialist Worker UK

EIGHT YEARS ENOUGH— PROTEST BUILDS TO FREE THE REFUGEES



By Ian Rintoul

The 19 July marked seven years since the Rudd Labor government infamously declared that no asylum seeker who arrived by boat and was sent to offshore detention in Manus Island or Nauru would ever be settled in Australia.

Rudd's disgraceful shift to the right was the last in a long line of concessions to Tony Abbott and the Liberal Party's relentless campaign to "Stop the Boats". Rudd lost the 2013 election and gifted the Liberals with a policy that enshrined offshore detention, to which they ruthlessly added the turning-around of asylum boats.

This began seven years of detention and uncertainty that has been described as "tantamount to torture" by Amnesty International. Of the 2700 victims of that policy, there are around 380 asylum seekers and refugees still on Manus and Nauru. Another 200 refugees brought from offshore for medical treatment in Australia are being held onshore in closed detention in hotels and detention centres.

But pressure has been building on the government to free the hundreds being held onshore. Hundreds of refugee supporters held physical and online protests in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne on 19 July.

Two days later, the Brisbane demonstration was followed-up with the Queensland Council of Unions calling for union members to join an evening picket of the hotel. Unionists are convening again on 28 July to re-launch "Unions for Refugees" in Queensland. Pressure is set to escalate with

refugee activists, who have been blockading Brisbane's Kangaroo Point hotel since 11 June, declaring a demonstration and sit-in to block the Storey Bridge on Saturday 8 August.

The Brisbane blockaders are demanding "free movement" for all those detained to exercise and walk outside the compound, and for their release into the community by Christmas.

The blockade is also calling for the end of forcible transfers from Kangaroo Point, where refugees hold very visible protests from the hotel's balcony, to Brisbane's detention centre where they are invisible behind the detention fences.

The Brisbane protests have also won support from local Labor MP, Peter Russo, a state MP, who called for the federal government, "to free the detainees into the community."

Darebin City Council has also voted unanimously to begin an investigation of whether the use of the Bell City Mantra Hotel in Melbourne to detain refugees is in breach of local planning regulations. Among other things, the council is questioning the use of hotel rooms as COVID-19 isolation cells and its general compliance

Above: Refugees supporters rally outside the Kangaroo Point hotel in Brisbane on 19 July

with quarantine regulations.

"This place [the Mantra Hotel] has metamorphosed from a hotel into a prison," Darebin Councillor Gaetano Greco told local media following the passage a council motion that has also called for a commercial boycott of the Mantra hotel group.

The UNHCR has also broken its usual silence on offshore detention, revealing that its shadowy agreement with the Australian government to facilitate the US resettlement deal included an understanding that Australia would resettle "some" cases, particularly those with close family ties, in Australia. The UNHCR says that Australia had finally told them that they had reneged entirely on any undertaking to resettle in Australia.

The UNHCR had also flagged Australia's undertaking in 2017 with the Turnbull government, to no avail. But it helps explain why there are refugee fathers from Nauru in Australian detention still separated from partners and children.

"Eight Years Enough" was one of the chants on 19 July, re-stating the movement's determination to free the refugees, onshore and offshore.

Unions for Refugees re-forms in Queensland

UNIONISTS HAVE been playing an increasing role at the Kangaroo Point hotel protests. The ETU Youth crew mobilised for the 21 June rally, and were there again on 21 July, as part of a union-called rally and blockade with around another 50 unionists from ETU, Together, NTEU, IEU, MEAA, CPSU, Queensland Nurses and Midwives and other unions.

In Queensland, unions played a crucial role in 2016 blockading Lady Cilento hospital to prevent baby Asha and her family from being returned to Nauru. In 2018, teachers in Victoria and Queensland became the first unionists in Australia to explicitly take industrial action over refugee policy, as part of the movement demanding "Kids Off, Everyone Off, Nauru". The open support for the Kangaroo Point blockade has been a shot in the arm for the campaign to free the refugees.

Solidarity