



# MAY DAY

## Statement by the Central Committee Executive Communist Party of Australia, CPA

The international working class continues to commemorate the struggles and gains achieved over 134 years since the first May Day commemoration in 1889 which remembered the martyrs of the Haymarket violent confrontation that took place on 4th May 1886 in Chicago, Illinois. On May Day we pay tribute to all those workers who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the struggle for workers' rights.

The Communist Party of Australia stands in solidarity with all workers in Australia and internationally. It joins millions of workers who demand changes to improve the lives of working people and their families.

### CRISIS-RIDDEN SYSTEM

Capitalism is failing the people. Decades of neoliberalism have taken their toll with an ongoing redistribution of wealth in favour of big business and the wealthy.

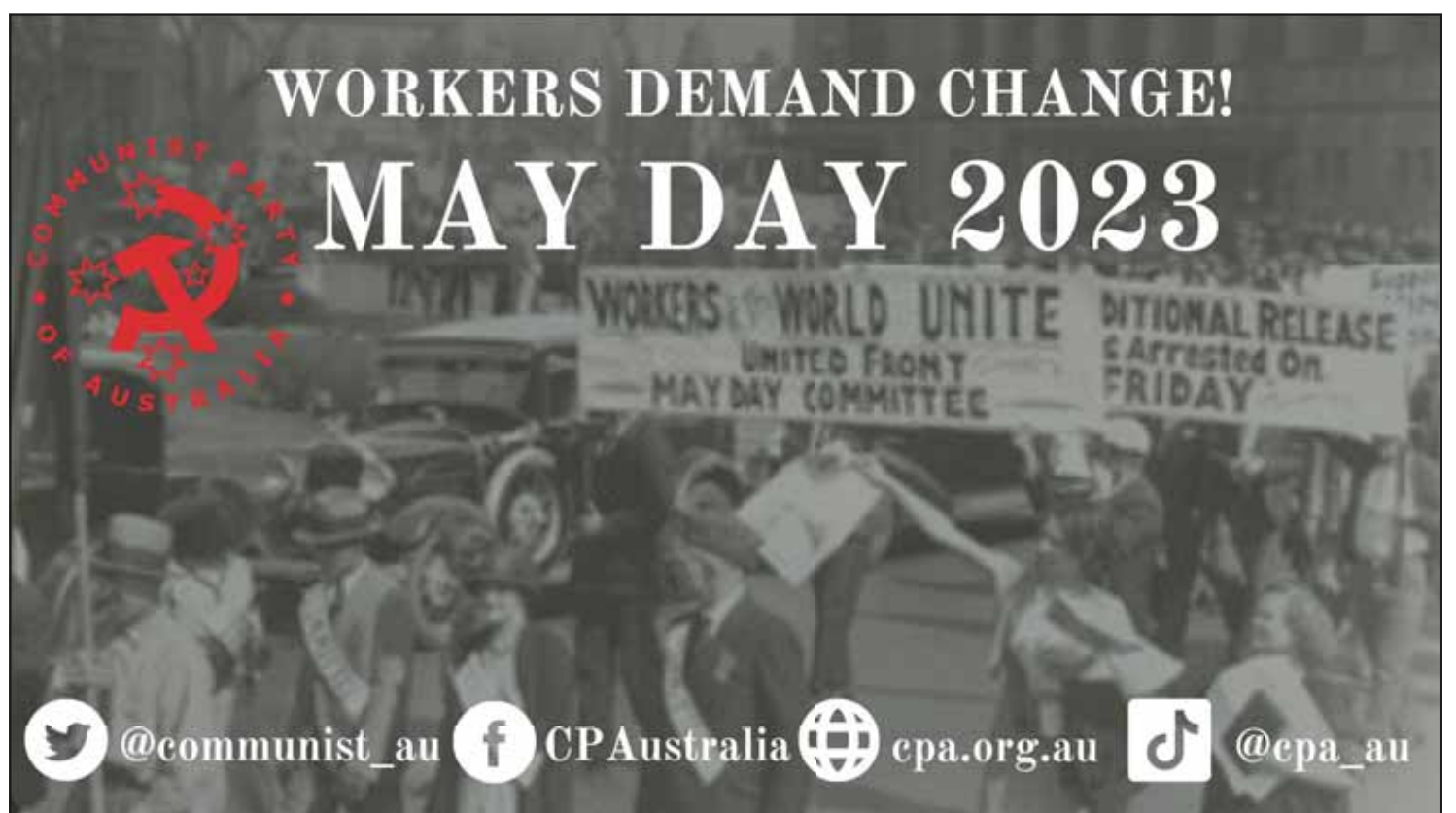
- Redistribution of wealth: budget cuts and tax cuts for the rich and businesses are hurting working people and social security recipients.
- Cost of living: People struggle with mortgages and rents as interest rates and prices of essentials continue to rise.
- Workers' incomes: Incomes do not stretch enough to last until the next pay.
- Climate crisis: Drought, bushfires, floods, mass fish kills, and extreme weather events are all taking their toll on people and ecosystems in Australia and around the world.
- Wars and war preparations: With all their brutality, destruction, and environmental pollution humanity and the environment are being pushed to the brink.

Australian workers are under constant attack from bosses always looking to boost profits by increasing the exploitation of workers. Wage theft, unpaid labour, cutting corners on safety – they do whatever it takes. Workers demand change!

While corporations post record profits, workers' living standards are going backwards. Real wages are falling. Wage rises of 3.3 per cent are less than half that of 7.8 per cent inflation.

### FAIR WORK (SECURE JOBS, BETTER PAY) BILL 2022

The Albanese Labor Government introduced into law the Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill 2022. Positive changes to IR laws are rare from governments. This new legislation is



only partly an exception to that rule with a range of sweeteners and regressive elements that will ultimately undermine any union that uses industrial action as a bargaining tool and strategy.

There has been much said of the positive changes but not much said or certainly limited, muted criticism of the dire situation in which the new laws place workers and unions who engage in struggle to protect and extend their rights, wages, and conditions.

The IR changes got rid of the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) and the Registered Organisations Commission (ROC) but their functions and funding were allocated to the Fair Work Commission (FWC) and Ombudsman. It is time to take the next step of legalising trade union rights such as the right to take industrial action; the unrestricted right of entry of trade union representatives; and the right to organise. Collective bargaining by trade unions across workplaces should be a right in all industries.

One of the main issues facing workers in struggle are the "intractable" bargaining provisions. As a tool to ward off aggressive employers and allow workers who are not in

a position or are not being led into struggle to get an arbitrated outcome in the FWC it may sound reasonable. But for those prepared to fight, it could not work as a nine-month limitation on bargaining that takes struggle out of the hands of workers onto the State, leaving the FWC to decide. Considering the basic political control of the State rests with the employing class – the capitalist class – this is a bad law that will favour bosses and outlaw class struggle by workers and their trade unions.

There must be a campaign to remove the intractable bargaining provisions. The Communist Party advocates for Industry bargaining. The CPA will support and be active in that campaign as a Party that has policies that are in the interests of working people.

### COST OF LIVING

The mythical threat being thrown at workers is that a rise in their wages will cause inflation by fuelling price hikes. This refers to the age-old capitalist claim that wage rises cause price rises or inflation.

But is this true? Wage rises are NOT driving inflation. Real wages fell by 4.5 per cent last year.

Let us look at the current round of inflation:

- Inflation involves a massive transfer of wealth from workers, pensioners, and others on fixed incomes to monopoly corporations. It reduces the purchasing power of wages – wage reductions by stealth.
- Profit-gouging is driving it up.
- The Reserve Bank of Australia has raised interest rates ten consecutive times since May 2022. No consideration is being given to the obscene profits reported by corporations which clearly are the main source of inflation. Banks also report increases to profit margins, forecasting \$33 billion in profits this year.

The taxes on our declining wages are not being used in workers' interests. Public health and education are in crisis, the lack of housing is having a critical impact with workers unable to house themselves and their families, and many more at risk of being pushed towards mortgage crisis risking even more people moving into homelessness.

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NSW: More people sleeping rough

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Politics in the Pub – Leederville Alliance against AUKUS

## The Guardian now has a podcast

Search for "Communist Guardian Podcast" or use the QR code



# Guardian

Issue 2049

24th April, 2023

## People's power in the 21st Century

As year 2000 ticked over, the leaders of the United States claimed the 21st century as an "American Century" but it is unfolding more like an American nightmare, a century of people's actions and people's power that will transform societies and overthrow capitalism in many more countries.

The break-up of the Soviet Union 30 years ago opened the doors to unprecedented attacks on the rights and conditions of working people throughout the world. It also opened the way to the overthrow of socialist societies in East Europe and then to the wars to break up the state of Yugoslavia. Then followed the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, all steps towards the long-held US objective of world domination.

A savage attack was launched on the rights and working conditions of hundreds of millions of people worldwide and on the public sector. This involved the privatisation of publicly owned enterprises and the undermining of public education and public health in favour of for-profit corporate provision. Behind the "American Century" is the power and wealth of the transnational corporations.

But this capitalist offensive is only half the story. The wars and the attacks on working people are bringing counter action and strong opposition.

This was most dramatically shown when the world witnessed the unprecedented demonstrations against the war in Iraq in 2003. Nothing like it had ever been seen before. The exposure of the US leadership confirmed that Bush, Blair, and Howard lied about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

Their justification for the invasion and occupation of Iraq was a lie.

While this expression of people's power did not prevent the invasion, it did show that millions of people had woken up to the despicable character of their leaders, and that these leaders serve the profit interests of the armaments, oil, and other corporations, and not those of the people. And now to AUKUS and the sell-out of independence and sovereignty.

In Australia, there is the intensified struggle of Indigenous Australians, reflected in the opposition to the Indigenous Voice to parliament by the parliamentary representatives of corporate Australia.

There are the actions of teachers and students in the defence of public education and health workers for more funding for the system.

These struggles are all part of the growing people's movements and they are multiplying.

At present, in Australia, they do not challenge the capitalist social system, but as time goes on it will become more widely recognised that band-aid solutions by governments do not go far enough. The real source of the attacks on rights and conditions, the worldwide poverty and the wars that cause so much misery and thousands of deaths is to be found in the system of capitalism and imperialism.

In Latin America the people's struggles have reached a high level. Socialist Cuba has survived 64 years of threats, blockades, attempted assassinations, and other covert actions. The people of Venezuela defended the revolutionary government of Hugo Chávez while the people of Brazil have re-elected a left-progressive government. The people of Colombia continued to wage an armed struggle against fascist-type governments backed by US money and arms, and now have a progressive government.

The emergence of BRICS, an economic block made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa and of trade agreements between all the African nations beneficial to each, are but two examples of a shift in global power.

This is only a small part of the world-wide picture, but it gives enormous encouragement to all who are on the side of the people and against the power of the transnational corporations and the despicable governments that they impose.

Rather than the claim of US leaders that the century is theirs, the 21st Century is a century of people's actions and people's power.

# Sudanese Communist Party A Statement to the Sudanese People

**The intense violent military clash between the generals of the Security Committee and their forces is exposing the masses of our people to danger, to the recklessness of the counter-revolutionary forces' ambitions and to more bloodshed.**

This clash is a result of the deviation of the military and civil forces that assumed the leadership and rule of the country since the beginning of the Revolution in April 2019.

The victims of the continuing violence and counter-violence are the people who have been striving for the continuation of the Revolution and achieving full democratic civil power. The way back to normal life begins with an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire, the departure of armies and militias from the cities and villages, and keeping them far from citizens' gatherings in towns and rural areas.

What is happening now is a continuation of the struggle over power and the country's wealth, encouraged by some foreign powers, and carried out by armed groups subservient to these foreign powers. These bloody clashes and their continuation is what our Party has been warning about, and they are spreading confusion and fear among citizens.

In this context, the Communist Party considers it necessary to expedite the dissolution of all militias, collecting the weapons deployed in cities and rural areas, and rebuilding a unified professional national army.

The Sudanese Communist Party calls for unity to demand an immediate ceasefire, the exit of armies and militias from cities, and to save the country from the bloody infighting among the generals.

The unity of our people, all the patriotic forces, the Forces for Radical Change and the Resistance Committees in support of the goals of the Revolution and restoring peace, security and stability is an urgent task. It is the only basis to end the current crisis, reclaim the Revolution and establish the power of the people.

In this context, the Communist Party calls upon our people to protect the neighbourhoods and residential areas.

The Sudanese Communist Party also calls upon the peoples of the world and the democratic and Communist forces to raise the banners of solidarity with the struggle of the Sudanese people and to restrain the forces hostile to the glorious December Revolution.

**Central Committee  
Sudanese Communist Party  
15th April 2023**

## MAY DAY

### CC Executive CPA Statement

Continued from page 1

Public housing stock has been run down by Labor and the Coalition – sold off to their developer mates. Planned public housing programs alongside the necessary infrastructure are the only way forward. The private sector has failed on housing, just as it has in health, aged care, the NDIS and wherever else it sinks its profit-gouging claws.

Workers demand a stop to the war on workers!  
Workers demand an immediate rise in real wages!  
Workers have the right to withdraw their labour!

#### PEACE

The government continues to syphon off more and more taxpayer money to support US military interests. This makes peace workers' and unions' business.

Workers must reject the Australia, UK and US AUKUS deal. Workers must stand against the arms race that robs the working class of a crucial \$368 billion plus that could be used to bring real security to families. These funds could be redirected to addressing the climate crisis, for disaster relief and rehabilitation, and planning/adaption to prevent future disasters and to provide education, health, housing, and fund the NDIS and aged care.

Australia is not threatened by any country despite

the warmongering propaganda. The path to peace is disarmament. If you prepare for war, you get war.

The massive increase in military expenditure on war preparations is contributing to inflation. The military-industrial complex makes super profits while syphoning off and pushing up the price of materials used in the production of other goods and services.

#### VOICE

The Communist Party of Australia stands with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their demand for a Voice to Parliament.

In the upcoming Referendum the CPA calls on all workers to vote YES to establish a Voice to Parliament as a step forward in the struggle for Treaty and Truth Telling and the key demand for Land Rights.

**Socialism is the only alternative to rapacious capitalism, so join the Communist Party of Australia in the struggle for a better future for all.**

Real wage rises now! Fight back now!  
Remove the intractable bargaining provisions!  
Join your union! Join your Party. ✪

### May Day Events

**Adelaide:** Monday 1st May, Drinks 3:30 pm Semaphore Workers Club, Dinner 6:30 pm Waterside Workers Hall

**Brisbane:** Monday 1st May, 9:30 am, corner Turbot/Wharf Streets, Spring Hill

**Fremantle:** Sunday 30th April, 10:30 am - 2:00 pm, Fremantle Esplanade

**Melbourne:** Sunday 7th May, 1:30 pm, Vic Trades Hall, corner Lygon and Victoria Streets, Carlton

**Port Adelaide:** Saturday 29th April, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm, Tarntanyangga (Victoria Square)

**Port Kembla:** Saturday 6th May, 12 Noon, Wentworth Street, Port Kembla

**Sunshine Coast:** Sunday 30th April, 10:00 am, Caloundra Sharks Rugby League Club, Gregory Street, Golden Beach

**Sydney:** Monday 1st May, 11:00 am - 2:00 pm, Belmore Park (along Eddy Avenue, next to Central Station)

### Rally for Palestine – Sydney

#### 75 years of Al-Nakba

On 15th May, Palestinians commemorate Al Nakba: the massacres, ethnic cleansing and seizure of Palestinian land by Zionist militants to create the state of Israel. Each year, rallies and other events are held globally to commemorate this tragic and reprehensible act.

Join the rally in Sydney to show your support for Palestinians' right to self-determination!

**Saturday, 13th May 2023, 1:00 pm Sydney Town Hall**

More details: [facebook.com/syd.bmbc](https://facebook.com/syd.bmbc)

# NSW: More people sleeping rough

Denis Doherty

**Homelessness in Sydney has been steadily growing. Years of NSW neo-liberal governments have created a perfect storm of conditions that lead to homelessness.**

It is obvious that the numbers of homeless people in Sydney are growing. Martin Place in the central business district is a busy thoroughfare during the day, but as night approaches the homeless with their trolleys and bags of belongings fill the square.

Sydney has several events that highlight homelessness.

The City of Sydney does an annual head count of people sleeping rough. This year, the count was 277 people. That's a 23 per cent increase since last year.

In several States, the St Vincent's Society organises business leaders who sleep in the open to raise money for homelessness services. The new NSW Labor Premier Chris Minns joined this year's sleep out in Sydney.

While their intentions may be good, dealing with homelessness requires real structural change at government level. Governments must give priority to investing in constructing far more public housing. More than 57,000 people are on the waiting list for social housing in NSW, a massive indictment on years of neoliberal governments.

Homelessness is not the fault of individuals but is an indicator of our society's lack of care for those who struggle to find a home. Current high rents and the growing cost of living are factors in the rise in homelessness.

"These figures won't go down unless we



One of the many arches that are part of the aqueduct that goes over Wentworth Park Glebe. These arches are filling up with the homeless while just a short distance away public housing remains empty.

tackle the causes of homelessness," Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore said.

"The pandemic exposed and exacerbated existing inequality, and highlighted how precarious access to housing, food and financial support is for many," the Lord Mayor said.

Public housing is cost effective. The homeless become entangled in the health and justice systems as their well-being

deteriorates. Once a person has a home, a base from which to engage with or retreat from the world, their physical and mental health improves.

The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) has been campaigning for years for governments to invest in public housing as this is where the housing crisis can be solved.

The CPA knows that public housing can provide a home for people who have

sunk below the poverty line. It can also be opened to essential workers and those on low incomes. The present policy of restricting public housing to the most disadvantaged is creating pools of disadvantage.

It is an outrage that we are told that public housing must pay for itself, but the public purse is ripped off for billions of dollars for nuclear submarines. ☼

## NT: Jailing your way out of crime never works

**Lawyers are concerned that new bail laws recently passed in the NT will not reduce crime and will disproportionately affect Indigenous people. The Criminal Lawyers Association NT has described the laws as having a risk of "real injustice."**

"There is no evidence that locking people up reduces crime. If the government was serious about reducing knife crime, it would be looking at the causes of crime, and working with and resourcing communities appropriately," said Greg Barns SC, national criminal justice spokesperson, Australian Lawyers Alliance.

"The bottom line is this – jailing your way out of crime never works. There is no empirical study anywhere in Australia that suggests this is the case. Furthermore, jailing vulnerable people, including women and Indigenous people, will lead to serious harm. There are many instances of harsh

bail laws leading to those detained self-harming or suiciding in prison."

The Australian Lawyers Alliance also warns against expanding the bail reforms to encompass "offensive" weapons.

"If the Opposition's amendments had been accepted, the laws would have been even more unjust. A person carrying a drink bottle would find themselves locked up!" said Mr Barns.

"We are also very concerned about the presumption against bail for alleged co-offenders even if they do not possess a weapon themselves. This is self-evidently unjust. It means that police will have no incentive not to charge in weak cases. Further, it will mean people serving more time on remand than if they had been sentenced.

"The courts should be given full discretion to determine the risks to public safety or re-offending in determining bail." ☼

## NO to AUKUS! YES to Medicare!

Anna Pha

**Medicare as a public health insurance scheme offering universal access to bulk-billing, and funded through central revenue is becoming a distant memory. GPs are fully booked, public hospitals are in crisis, and health care is increasingly unaffordable for many families.**

GP practices have been sending out letters to patients who have a Centrelink Health Care or Pension Card saying they will no longer bulkbill them. While they might be offered a concessional fee with a smaller gap payment than other patients, these patients still take a hit. Many of them have chronic conditions and will face putting off visits which could see a worsening of their health, and even put pressure on public hospitals.

The crisis in health care was taking its toll before COVID and the cost-of-living crisis hit millions of struggling families.

A survey of more than 4000 practices covering around 21,000 GPs by Cleanbill found that "Just 42.7 per cent of these clinics offer bulk billing (no out-of-pocket fee) consultations to all of their patients. Outside of Sydney and Melbourne, fewer than 1 in 3 GP clinics will bulk bill all patients, while in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, this number approaches 1 in 20."

Cleanbill found that the average out-of-pocket cost at more than 55 per cent of GP clinics that do not bulk bill all their patients is \$40.25 for a standard 15-minute consultation. This amount, paid by the patient, is on top of the \$39.75 Medicare rebate paid to the GP by Medicare.

Out-of-pocket expenses are even larger for longer consultations. These can be double or even triple the amount for a 15-minute consultation. How can a family, an unemployed person or age pensioner afford such costs? They can't.

Medical practices are finding it increasingly difficult to absorb rapidly rising costs with Medicare rebates failing to keep up after being frozen or stagnant for decades.

There is a serious shortage of GPs and medical graduates are turning to other areas of specialisation. Cleanbill found that almost one in ten clinics were not taking on new patients, further limiting people's ability to access primary care in their area.

As a result emergency departments at public hospitals are having to deal with thousands of additional patients requiring care but unable to access a GP. Public hospitals are overstretched, with long waiting lists, understaffing and lack of resources. *The Guardian* has heard stories of a major hospital running out of cannulas used by doctors for draining fluid and administering medication.

Mental health services are in short-supply and unaffordable. Dental care is not even included under Medicare, although it is an integral part of a person's health.

In rural and regional Australia there are some communities where there are no GPs, let alone bulkbilled services.

Wait times to see medical specialists run into months and bulkbilled specialists are a rare commodity.

The recent Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Review chaired by Labor Minister for

Health and Aged Care, Mark Butler, does not give much hope for the future of bulkbilling. Its only mention of bulkbilling was to say it was in decline.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers offers little hope of providing the necessary expenditure when he says Australians must steel themselves for potentially rocky times ahead and refers to "choppy waters to navigate" in the budget context.

"Our government has committed \$750 million to the Strengthening Medicare Fund, which will be the start of a major revamp of the primary care system," Butler said.

\$750 million is peanuts and will hardly scratch the surface. This is from a government that remains committed to the \$254 billion in tax cuts for the rich and to \$386 billion (before cost blow-outs) on AUKUS.

The tax cuts should be cancelled. Apart from being regressive, cutting them has popular support. As for AUKUS it will not bring security. The nuclear-powered submarines, hypersonic missiles and other materiel will only increase tensions in the region and lead Australia into yet another US war.

AUKUS will cost lives. Medicare saves lives.

Fully fund Medicare! Cancel AUKUS and the tax cuts!

**Footnote:** There is one positive development. As of 1st January, 2023, the maximum price of most PBS medicines for non-concessional patients was reduced from \$42.50 to \$30. But it is still too high. However, the concessional fee has been increased from \$6.80 to \$7.30. ☼



Sydney Vigil

**STOP USA BLOCKADE  
ON CUBA**

**Join us in Sydney to demand that  
the USA stops the blockade on Cuba  
with the right to self determination.**

**Also stop other blockades like  
Venezuela and Gaza.**

**4:15 pm Wednesday 17th May  
50 Miller Street North Sydney**

# Education: Labor kicks the can down the road

**2023 is the year the Albanese government was expected to deliver on its election commitment for public schools to have a pathway to a minimum of 100 per cent of the funding they need under the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS).**

Instead, education minister Jason Clare announced a review, delaying the new four-year funding round of the National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) by a year.

At the recent Australian Education Union Federal Conference, Clare reaffirmed the ALP's promise to deliver fair funding for public schools, and committed to considering equity at every benchmark.

This will require significant changes to funding arrangements, which have entrenched and increased funding inequality for a decade.

AEU federal president Correna Haythorpe says it's time for action. Resources delayed are resources denied.

"A promise was made to the children of Australia, which has never been delivered because the Coalition government systematically destroyed the funding architecture to deliver that promise."

In the last four years, public schools have been underfunded by more than \$6.6 billion while private schools were overfunded by more than \$800 million. In 2017, the Coalition arbitrarily capped the Commonwealth contribution to public school funding by 20 per cent and made special deals with the independent and Catholic sectors.

Economist Adam Rorris says the SRS is not aspirational, but "the minimum funding required to achieve learning outcomes."

Exacerbating the disadvantage for public schools is the loss of a further 4 per cent in funding the states and territories can claim for capital depreciation, which means

these funds are not delivered to public schools.

This trick was never applied to the private schools. "This was only done for the public schools," Rorris says.

## LISTEN TO TEACHERS

Haythorpe acknowledges there are wins already on the board for public education since the election of the new federal government.

"But the Albanese government needs to get on with the business of delivering on their election promise and fixing the funding mess left by Scott Morrison. As Professor Pasi Sahlberg says: 'Schools cannot fix inequities in education alone. No society can be called a democracy while some social groups are discriminated against in the provision of education or ... other public services.'"

The review and the resulting delay in the four-year funding agreement means public schools are missing out on another 12 months of fair funding, says Haythorpe.

The Coalition government's legacy for public education was inequitable funding, increased workloads and a workforce shortage crisis, she says. The Productivity Commission's recent report confirms that government funding to private schools per student increased at 1.7 times the rate of the public school increase per student.

"The Commonwealth now invests \$16 billion a year in private schools. Calling them private when they are funded by the taxpayer to that level is, frankly, a joke," says Haythorpe.

## MONEY MATTERS

The problem, says Rorris, is that "we've spent 10 years sending money to the wrong schools".

Public schools educate the majority of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, students

recognised by the original Gonski review as needing extra funding to ensure that they reach their full potential.

The latest figures show that 41 per cent of students in public schools are in the bottom quarter of that socio-economic index, compared with 3 per cent of students in Catholic schools, and one per cent in private schools. 63 per cent of students in private schools are in the top quarter, compared to 10 per cent of public school students.

Money matters to public schools but they have been denied funding equity. It delivers extra teachers to keep class sizes smaller, it provides specialist resources for teaching and learning, and it provides extra help for students who need it. It also provides much-needed support to teachers and education support personnel, ensuring workloads can be managed and wellbeing is considered. This is essential at a time when the teacher shortage crisis is causing thousands of vacancies.

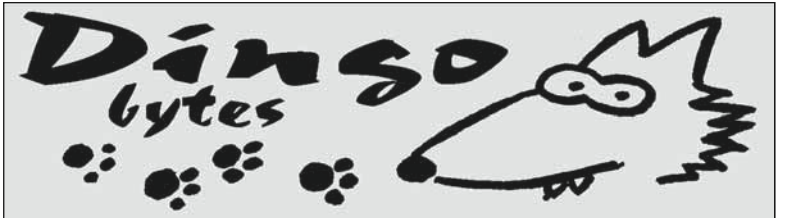
Australia has never delivered on the Gonski review's promise of needs-based, sector-blind school funding, says Haythorpe. "Public schools are underfunded on average by \$1800 per student, every year and it is our members who make up this shortfall through unsustainable workloads, unpaid additional hours, stress, and burnout," she says.

"And it is our schools that now must wait a further 12 months while the federal government conducts a review.

"But we won't wait. We will hit the campaign trail now, so that the federal government understands the urgency of meeting their promise," says Haythorpe.

Jason Clare agrees that the current system is not fair. "The last decade has been a lost decade [for school funding]," he says. "It's what comes next that matters," he told the AEU Federal Conference.

*Australia Educator* (edited for reasons of space) ✪



The latest Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report into mesothelioma was released today. Mesothelioma is an aggressive form of cancer in the mesothelium – the protective lining on the inside of body cavities and the outside of internal organs. The main cause of mesothelioma is exposure to asbestos, but it takes 20-40 years on average. Despite asbestos being banned in all forms nearly 20 years ago, cases continue to increase. Australia has one of the highest measured incidence rates of mesothelioma in the world: between 700 and 800 people are diagnosed with mesothelioma per year. On average, two people are diagnosed with mesothelioma in Australia each day. Exposure through the built environment is still having a legacy effect. The new report showed for the 1,028 participants assessed as having possible or probable asbestos exposure: 78 per cent of men provided information indicating occupational exposure, and 99 per cent of women provided information indicating non-occupational exposure. As long as asbestos stays in buildings, the threat of mesothelioma remains. ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O'Brien warned that "Mesothelioma is not going away. Asbestos remains the biggest killer of workers in Australia, and as long as we have materials in our buildings that contain asbestos, this terrible disease will stay with us for decades to come. The prioritised, safe and coordinated removal of asbestos from buildings must be a priority for this government. We reiterate our calls for a worldwide ban on this toxic material. The Australian data highlights that despite banning asbestos in all forms we continue to see rising cases of mesothelioma and asbestos related disease. Knowing what we know about mesothelioma, it is the disease not one more person should experience."

**PARASITE OF THE WEEK:** Tugboat operator Svitzer has finally agreed to abandon its reckless and implausible legal action to cancel the EBA of almost 600 tugboat workers around Australia. The Maritime Union of Australia said this action would have led to pay cuts of 47 per cent, the loss of crucial safety and fatigue management measures, and destroyed job security for the hard-working, skilled crews upon whom our national supply chains depend. "The Svitzer EBA termination action is dead," said MUA Sydney Branch Deputy Secretary, Paul Garrett. "This is a significant moment, as Svitzer have agreed to discontinue their EBA termination case, in full." "Tugboat workers have been denied a pay rise for over four years as this process has been deliberately strung out by Svitzer's managers and lawyers, with the added threat of complete termination hanging over their heads," noted the MUA's Assistant National Secretary, Jamie Newlyn. "Removing this threat will allow us to move forward constructively, and the three maritime unions will now work towards finalising a new agreement with Svitzer that delivers a fair pay rise along with the safety and job security measures our members depend on."

# Aged care employers fail older Australians

**The country's largest union and professional nursing organisation, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) says that aged care employers are in the way of the 24/7 nursing staff our nursing home residents need. The union and its members are committed to work with the government and the aged care industry to ensure that elderly nursing home residents are provided with 24/7 nursing staff.**

ANMF Federal Secretary Annie Butler said that difficulty in recruitment and retention of suitably qualified staff has been a long term issue in aged care. This is due to the persistently poor wages and conditions and chronic understaffing in the sector.

"The Fair Work Commission (FWC) has rightly acknowledged the severe undervaluation of aged care workers under the current award system, which is why it's now crucial that providers pass on the full 15 per cent to workers," Ms Butler said.

"However, many employers continue to say that unless they are 'legally required' to pass the money on, they will simply use their discretion about how they spend it. There is no way this can be considered a successful recruitment strategy.

"ANMF members have told us that with legislated

requirements for Registered Nurse (RN) 24/7 and mandated care minutes in place accompanied by a wage increase, they will return to work in the sector.

"Rather than recognising what matters to nurses, aged care employers are attempting to hide behind their own mismanagement and failure to create work environments where nurses want to work to avoid meeting the government's new legislative requirements.

"Any organisation which fails to recognise the real causes of staff shortages in aged care and how to address them is also failing to recognise the urgent and critical need to improve care for older Australians.

"Better staffing in aged care was the key recommendation of the Royal Commission, and the ANMF will continue to support the government and our industry stakeholders to ensure that elderly Australians living in nursing homes get safe, quality care, around the clock," Ms Butler said.

The government says that almost 80 per cent of the country's aged care facilities already meet 24/7 nursing requirements, with "another 9 per cent" close to meeting the nurse to patient-ratio-target. The government has a plan to assist others in the transition to meeting the target. It remains to be seen if it will work.

14th April 2023 ✪

Australia Cuba Friendship Society presents

## Sydney A MAY DAY TOAST TO CUBA



**WHEN:** 11.30am, Sunday 30 April 2023

**WHERE:** First Floor, MUA Building, 365 Sussex St Sydney

Join us for an afternoon of celebration, food, music and speeches!

### SPEAKERS

Dr John Falzon OAM

Paul Keating (MUA)

Lucy Nunez (Cuban 'Yes, I Can' Adult Literacy Campaign)

Dr Peter Ross (UNSW)

Ms Tanieris Diéguez, Cuban Ambassador to Australia

And featuring a performance by the Trade Union Choir!

Lunch will be provided.

**TICKETS:** \$50 solidarity / \$30 waged / \$20 concession

**RSVP:** sydneyacfs@gmail.com by Thursday 27 April

This event is raising funds for the upcoming national speaking tour of Cuban immunologist Marianniz Diaz.

Review by Ron Hall

# Road to War

A documentary film  
by David Bradbury

As Australia's most outstanding documentary film maker with 21 films and many awards to his credit, David Bradbury has created another monumental and relevant work in *Road to War*. Before the Adelaide screening of *Road to War*, Bradbury had a radio interview with Peter Goers where he reflected on his religious parents giving him the auspicious name of David, as he has now become locked in a David and Goliath struggle against huge vested interests, and is trying to rescue humanity from the disaster of war.

Bradbury, a graduate in political science from the Australian National University, gained recognition early in his career for his documentary *Front Line* that laid bare the horrifying reality of the Vietnam War through vivid images of the conflict by cameraman Neal Davis.

David Bradbury went on to produce 21 exposé documentaries such as *Public Enemy Number One* about Wilfred Birchett, the first journalist into Hiroshima after the atomic bomb detonation, who later visited Ho Chi Minh in North Vietnam, forbidden to bearers of Australian passports.

In addition, there was *Chile Hasta Cuando* daringly filmed under the noses of Pinochet's murderous secret police. Closer to home was *Jabiluka* about the struggle of the Mirarr people for environmental justice over uranium mining in Kakadu National park.

Clearly illustrating how Pine Gap in the heart of Australia could become a prime nuclear target in the event of conflict with China, *Road to War* compellingly draws upon the expertise of authorities, including Dr Richard Tanter, a defence analyst who explains with horrifying clarity the devastation that even a minimal localised strike would have on our nation, and above all on First Nations Australians.

Aboriginal voices could have featured more prominently in the film's narrative as their lands stand to be used extensively as military training grounds, not to mention



for nuclear waste storage facilities, while their communities contemplate influxes of hosts of military personnel along with all their heavy equipment.

However, reference is made to the Yolgnu people on the Gove Peninsula whose bauxite mining agreement offered notable benefits to their community. By contrast, the question remains wide open as to whether any advantages would accrue to Aboriginal people whose land became subject to military as opposed to mining intrusions!

In the event of a single nuclear strike on Australia, Dr Tanter suggests that US retaliation would be unlikely as no US homeland base or city would be involved. In the context of the Australian-US alliance, John Lander, a former Deputy Ambassador to China, quotes Henry Kissinger's warning, "To be an enemy of the United States is dangerous. To be a friend is fatal."

Ominously, the film presents stark portrayals of future scenarios of wide scale devastation. According to Dr Sue Wareham of the Medical Association for the Prevention of War, even a limited nuclear exchange would be utterly devastating, inducing a global famine possibly affecting two billion people.

Bradbury's extensive use of news footage is a great strength reinforcing the film's stark commentary on the world's future

prospects, and adding a sense of urgency to the issues confronting us now. The threat is here and now, not some time in the future! In addition, current bias in the media is well illustrated by comparing the intense coverage given to the devastation in the Ukraine to the meagre attention accorded to the horrific consequences of the conflict in Yemen.

*Road to War* challenges the sanity of the AUKUS agreement which fails entirely to serve Australia's national interest, in particular, by potentially turning our best trading partner into our worst enemy. A collapse of our trade links with China accompanied by the inevitable loss of revenue as well as the creation of widespread unemployment, would obviously minimise our ability to meet the huge price tag attached to each AUKUS nuclear submarine.

At the moment, Australia is embarrassingly unable to train sufficient doctors, nurses, teachers, technicians, and others to meet its present needs. At the same time the nation is experiencing glaring shortfalls in housing, and other vital infrastructure construction, all required for our society's most basic needs.

Such glaring shortcomings of the nation's capitalist economy raise questions about the capacity of Australia to come even close to training all the nuclear engineers and other specialised workers required to service and maintain a fleet of nuclear submarines, without even considering the possible development and manufacture of these monstrous weapon systems here in Australia in the near future.

The film concludes on a grim note. The narrator, Tony Barry, a noted Australian actor and pro-Indigenous and environmental activist, is lying on his death bed lamenting why "Albo" is contemplating war. All of us should ask this very question, too. Do weapons really prevent war or ultimately promote conflict? One poster caught by David Bradbury's camera urges, "NO WAR – Negotiate."

*Road to War* certainly confirms Bradbury not only as one of Australia's greatest documentary film makers, but also as a powerful voice to stir the conscience of our nation. Such a thought-provoking presentation commands all of us to view this film in a serious frame of mind and endeavour to thoroughly comprehend its message. ✪

## PEACE NOTES

Hannah Middleton

There is a slogan "*Peace is Union Business*" which remains significant today.

Workers in their trade unions have a unique capacity to work for peace, to prevent the development of conflict, and to deal with its aftermath.

We should take this understanding and this commitment to the streets on May Day this year!

The Australian labour movement has a long and proud history of standing against war and oppression, in solidarity with the workers of nations throughout the world.

In 1938, Waterside Workers' Federation members refused to load scrap iron onto ships bound for Japan. The union's industrial action was based on anti-war and anti-imperialist principles. They knew that iron exports to Japan would likely end up in bombs targeting Australian workers.

In the 1960s the Australian labour movement was a significant part of the resistance against Australia's involvement in Vietnam. Australian trade unions opposed the war in Vietnam even before Australia's commitment of troops to the war in April 1965. Thousands of union members participated in strikes that shut down ports.

When Laurie Carmichael, then-secretary of the Australian Engineering Union, was arrested for protesting against the war, 500 workers at Naval Dockyard in Williamstown, Victoria, and 700 metal workers stopped work.

Australian unions have expressed active solidarity with the struggle for independence in Timor Leste, campaigns for human rights and independence in Palestine, supporting resistance to dictatorships in Latin America, in the struggle to restore democracy in Myanmar, and, most recently, in opposition to the AUKUS deal for Australia to spend \$368 billion on nuclear powered submarines.

In Australia today, the media, politicians and academics are beating the drums of war against China. However, AUKUS will undermine Australia's sovereignty, threaten peace and stability of the region, destroy the economic well-being of this and future generations, and prop up US and British arms corporations.

The United States has massive stockpiles of nuclear weapons, and a minor escalation could easily lead to a major incident that kills thousands, if not millions, of people.

Australian workers are beginning to understand that a war with China is not in Australia's interest. Nor is it in the interest of the global community of workers. They are beginning to throw their powerful weight behind the campaign to stop AUKUS.

Conflicts have their roots in economic and social exploitation and deprivation. Devoting resources to creating employment opportunities is an essential element in addressing the causes of conflict.

The work of trade unions not only benefits union members but is positive for society as a whole. Several studies show a strong connection between a high degree of union affiliation and income-equal societies.

More egalitarian societies, especially socialist societies where workers hold political and economic power, show greater trust between people and create less social unrest, and political instability.

The history of Australian trade union anti-war campaigns makes it clear that a united union movement requires workplace organising with a clear anti-war message that highlights the major causes of war and builds bonds of solidarity that unite workers across the world regardless of national identity. Unions can build on worker anti-war education in the workplace to develop industry-level and labour movement-wide anti-war campaigns, and connect workers with broader anti-war and pro-peace movements through participation in demonstrations and other protests.

Trade unions can play a crucial role in reducing tensions around the world. If we want to build societies that are characterised by peace, security and social justice, we need many more people to stand up for trade union rights.

Peace is trade union business!

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# Palestine: the view from Cyprus

Vera Polycarpou

**As the Cypriot parliament is debating how to deal with the four-monthly exam system and quite justifiably pupils, parents and teachers are anxious because it directly concerns their children's future, not far from us a school attended by 66 children is in danger of being demolished in less than 60 days.**

Any rational person would be in disbelief that anyone could demolish schools. However, this is precisely what is going on before the very eyes of humanity.

This is the case of the Challenge 5 school in the village of Beit Ta'mar, just five kilometres south-east of Bethlehem – yes, the Bethlehem that we all know.

The decision was taken by an Israeli court following a complaint filed by an Israeli NGO because the school was allegedly built without a permit, which is the usual pretext for demolishing Palestinian property to expel Palestinians from their land and subsequently confiscate it.

Unfortunately, it is not the only school in danger. Others have already been demolished, such as the school of the Bedouin community in Khan al-Ahmar near Jerusalem.

The ultimate goal is the expansion of Israeli settlement – colonisation.

Next to Beit Ta'mar is the archaeological site where, among other things, the tomb and palace of Herod are to be found, a cultural heritage which the Palestinians of the region have been associated with for centuries. Moreover, this land also belongs to them.

On 14th July 2020, the Israeli occupation forces fenced off the area under the pretext that it is a "national archaeological park" – except that the land belongs to Palestinians.

Today this land is controlled by Israel's antiquities department, depriving the Palestinian community of significant revenue from tourists visiting the area.

Israeli settlements have been built in the surrounding area for the last 20 years or so, again on Palestinian land.

And there is no need to explain to Cypriots what colonisation means and that it constitutes a flagrant violation of international law.

At the end of the day, what are human rights and who is entitled to enjoy them? Isn't the right to education – I would add to free and high-quality public education – a human right?

Isn't every child, regardless of ethnicity or religious or class origin or sex, entitled to enjoy the right to education? Or do the 66 children in the school in Beit Ta'mar not have this right?

Do they not have this right because they were born on their ancestral land that some people feel they have the right to take away from them and destroy their school? To deprive them of the right to live in safety with their families? To deprive them of the right to study and contribute to the development of their country?

Let every one of us just consider how deeply these events are etched into the souls and memories of these children and what the impact will be on their lives.

Unfortunately, all this is happening in the West Bank and Gaza, which have been under occupation since 1967.

In the West Bank and Gaza where, since

the beginning of 2023 alone, 95 Palestinians, mostly young people, have been killed by Israeli forces.

Where in the month of Ramadan the occupation forces enter the al-Aqsa mosque at night, the third-holiest place of worship for Muslims, arresting, beating and shooting Palestinians.

What does the international community have to say about the violation of the right to worship?

What does the international community have to say when members of the far-right government of Israel make inflammatory statements full of hatred against the Palestinian people when houses and entire neighbourhoods are being set on fire?

The only solution is to end the occupation so that the Palestinian people can live freely and develop their country as they wish. But it is also the only way for children in both Palestine and Israel to live and create in security and peace.

Morning Star ✪

## India

### Mass rally of farmers and workers

**On 5th April, tens of thousands of farmers and workers from across India came to the capital New Delhi to protest against the central government's anti-farmer and anti-labour policies. The rally was held at the Ramlila Maidan grounds.**

The rally was jointly organised by some of India's biggest organisations representing farmers, workers, and agricultural labourers – All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), and All India Agriculture Workers Union (AIAWU), respectively.

The protesters demanded relief from inflation, a legal guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP) on major crops, a minimum wage for all workers at Rs 26,000 (AU\$472)

per month, debt relief, a pension for all farmers above the age of 60, repeal of the four anti-labour codes, and the withdrawal of the Electricity Amendment Bill 2020, among other measures.

Unions have highlighted several issues plaguing Indian farmers such as stagnant wages, price rises, unemployment, job insecurity, and low returns for farm produce. According to a joint statement, 100,000 farmers have committed suicide in the last eight years. The unions also have raised alarm over the unprecedented increase in the number of suicides by daily wagers – 112,000 in just three years from 2019 to 2021.

Particularly since the historic farmers' movement in

India in 2020-21, farmers across the country have played a key role in protests against the government's policies.

Protesters accused the Modi-led government of creating a livelihood crisis for all sections of the working class. KN Umesh, CITU National Secretary, told NewsClick that the fight might be multipronged, but the campaign generated much confidence among workers.

"Wherever we went, people said they were fed up with this government and it should go," he said. "[The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party] may have a majority in Parliament, but people are on the streets." ✪

## Peru

### Protests demand change

**On 29th March, Peru's de facto government, led by Dina Boluarte, announced the "definitive withdrawal" of its ambassador from Colombia following statements from Colombian President Gustavo Petro in support of ousted Peruvian President Pedro Castillo.**

The Peruvian Foreign Ministry stated that the decision was made in response to "the repetitive interventionist and offensive comments" from President Petro, arguing that he had been "distorting the reality" by ignoring what happened on 7th December 2022.

On that date, Castillo was ousted in a legislative coup and subsequently arrested after he tried to dissolve Congress and rule by decree. He has since been imprisoned in the Barbadillo prison in Lima.

Boluarte's 29th March decision came days after Petro lamented Castillo's absence at the Ibero-American Summit, which took place on 24th and 25th March in the Dominican Republic. Petro said, "[Pedro Castillo]

should have been here, [but] he is in prison. They took him out with a coup."

Since Castillo's forcible removal and illegal arrest, Petro has called several times for the former president's immediate release and criticised the Boluarte government for violating his political rights.

Petro has also been vocal against the brutal repression unleashed by the Boluarte government against the tens of thousands of Peruvians who have been in the streets for the past three and a half months demanding her resignation, the closure of the right-wing-dominated Congress, advanced general elections by the end of the year, and a referendum on a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution.

Leaders of other nations have also supported Castillo against the Peruvian right wing, including Cuba, Bolivia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Argentina. *Globetrotter* ✪

## Argentina & Brazil re-join UNASUR

**The governments of Argentine President Alberto Fernández and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva have officially re-joined the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), a regional integration organisation founded in May 2008.**

Between 2018 and 2020, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay, under the leadership of conservative heads of state, withdrew from UNASUR due to their alignment with US interests.

In November 2019, following the coup against democratically elected

president Evo Morales, the de facto government led by Jeanine Áñez withdrew Bolivia from UNASUR. In November 2020, after the election of President Luis Arce, the country re-joined the regional body.

In August 2021, the government of former Peruvian President Pedro Castillo also announced his country's reincorporation into the bloc. However, following his ouster and arrest in December 2022, Castillo's successor Dina Boluarte suspended Peru's membership.

On 5th April, Argentine Foreign Minister Santiago Cafiero announced the country's official return to the body after four years of absence.

Likewise, on 6th April, President Lula signed a decree making official Brazil's return to UNASUR, also after four years.

The measure marked a step in Lula's drive to reposition the country's politics after the four years of conservative former president Jair Bolsonaro, who withdrew Brazil from the bloc in April 2019.

Brazil's decision came a day after the member states of the Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Countries against Inflation (APALCI), including Brazil and Argentina, agreed to join efforts to face the inflation crisis and strengthen regional integration and trade. ✪

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**SCOTT BURCHILL**

Dr Scott Burchill is Honorary Fellow in International Relations at Deakin University. He is the author of *The National Interest in International Relations Theory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), *Misunderstanding International Relations* (Palgrave Macmillan 2020) and co-author and editor of *Theories of International Relations* 5th ed Palgrave Macmillan 2013).

He has also taught at Monash University, the University of Melbourne and the University of Tasmania, and is a regular commentator on ABC Radio and TV.

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# Lula promotes peace, US pushes war

John Wojcik

**The follies of US plans for war and more war were exposed by Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva during his visit to China. On the day that the *Washington Post* reported the US is planning to continue pouring weapons into the Ukraine war well into next year, Lula was in China backing that country's peace plan for Ukraine by calling for an immediate ceasefire and negotiations.**

China's Foreign Minister Qin Gang declared last week that his country supports that approach and will send no weapons to either side in the Ukraine war. The US, simultaneously, was busy carving military landing strips in the jungles of Tinian, a small Pacific island, to be used against China if it makes any moves to claim its own territory – the island of Taiwan.

The military airstrips are close to where the US launched the bombers that carried the atomic bombs dropped during WW2 on the people of Japan. US militarisation of Asia is driven by the increasing economic importance of the region, upon which both the US and Europe have become dependent. In the view of powerful capitalist interests in the US, the region now needs to be controlled by the West militarily and economically. Hence the efforts by the US to drive a wedge between Europe and China, just as it drove a wedge between Europe and Russia.

The US' anti-China and anti-Russia policies – along with the sanctions and threats of sanctions against them – have put the two countries in a position of shared resistance.

At the same time that Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Russia recently, Japan's leadership was in Kiev, reflecting that the US, as it did with Germany in Europe, is pushing Japan to get involved in military activity against China and Russia.

Both Germany and Japan have been encouraged to give up their post-WW2 pacifism and trade it in for militarisation – with Germany's armed forces turned eastward toward Russia and Japan's against China.

The public in both Germany and Japan, remembering the horrors of fascism in the last century has not been as quick as the US would like in trading pacifism for war preparations. Peace demonstrations in both countries are growing larger by the week.

In addition to supporting China's peace plan for Ukraine, Lula is joining with Beijing in a strong push to eliminate US economic penetration of the entire global South. One of the most powerful actions that can be taken against US control of the Asia-Pacific region is, in Lula's eyes, economic action.

Key to this are efforts by Brazil and China to end the global South's reliance on the US dollar in trade and other financial transactions.

The two countries have agreed to carry out bilateral trade in their own currencies and ditch the dollar. Work is now underway on developing a new currency for the global South.

The New Development Bank, based in Shanghai, will play a major role in this process [see article page 10]. Former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, a close adviser to Lula, just became the bank's new head, and her successor attended her swearing-in during his visit.

The institution will provide an alternative to the US-controlled International Monetary Fund and World Bank, being focused on the BRICS group of developing nations – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

Some 99 loan projects have already been issued by the new bank, totalling \$34 billion in new infrastructure.

"The New Development Bank is the product of a partnership among BRICS countries with a view to creating a world with less poverty, less inequality, and more sustainability," Lula said.

The efforts by Brazil and China to end the global South's reliance on the US dollar is not just in trade but in many other financial transactions, the Chinese and Brazilians say.

During his meeting with Xi, Lula also discussed investment, reindustrialisation, energy transition, climate change, and peace agreements, according to the Brazilian government.

"As comprehensive strategic partners, China and Brazil share extensive common interests," Xi said, according to information about the meeting released by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

China is Brazil's biggest export market, each year buying tens of billions of dollars of soybeans, beef, iron ore, poultry, pulp, sugar cane, cotton, and crude oil. Brazil is Latin America's biggest recipient of Chinese investment, according to Chinese media.

One of at least 20 bilateral agreements that Lula has signed in China already is for the construction of a sixth satellite under a binational program to monitor conservation and illegal logging in areas such as the Amazon. Under former President Jair Bolsonaro, the rainforest saw significant deforestation by the right-wing leader's corporate allies.

When discussing the ceasefire and negotiations to end the Ukraine war, Lula saw the US, Russia, and Ukraine as all having shared responsibility for ending the war.

He said Ukraine should consider offering to relinquish its claims on Crimea which has a majority Russian, not Ukrainian, population. Before Russia's invasion, Ukrainian President Zelensky had said that the status of Crimea and even other Russian ethnic majority areas were negotiable.

Subsequently, Britain and the US signalled "not so fast" to Kiev and increased the seemingly endless military aid being shipped to Ukraine. Zelensky, though he has previously expressed interest in China's plan for a ceasefire, now says ideas such as the proposal by Lula are unacceptable.

In any case, Lula said there has never been a war in which a ceasefire and negotiations were an unreasonable approach. He turned down requests by the US that he send weapons to Ukraine, saying he was interested instead in working for peace.

Lula is putting Brazil at the heart of issues crucial to the whole planet. The Asia-Pacific region is home to 60 per cent of the world's population and accounts for 65 per cent of the world's gross domestic product.

This is something too important for imperialism to pass up and explains why the US military, NATO, and the Pentagon want to focus on this region – in addition to Europe, Ukraine, and Russia.

*People's World* 🌍



## Global Briefs

**YEMEN:** A prisoner exchange took place between Houthis and government forces. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said that planes carrying detainees took off from the Houthi-held capital Sanaa at the same time as planes from the government-controlled city of Marib. The three-day exchange involved nearly 900 detainees. The next round of peace talks was expected to start on 21st April. Meanwhile, the prisoner exchange is a welcome step towards settling the conflict.

**SUDAN:** Violence erupted in the Republic of Sudan earlier this month. A disagreement between the Rapid Support Force (RSF) and the military over-integrating the RSF into the military as part of the transition towards civilian rule led to violent clashes between the two rivals. It was the first flareup of violence between the two sides since they joined forces to oust former leader Omar al-Bashir in 2019. The governments of Egypt and South Sudan have offered to mediate between the fighting parties. The Arab League called for a ceasefire in Sudan. In its final statement issued after an emergency meeting to discuss the recent developments it stressed the need for a return to peaceful negotiations and "to establish a new phase that fulfils the ambitions of the brotherly Sudanese people and contributes to reinforce political and economic security and stability in this important country."

**POLAND:** Poland and Hungary declared bans on grain and other agricultural products from Ukraine to protect their own agricultural sectors. Huge quantities of Ukrainian grain finished up in Europe instead of Asia or Africa where it was most needed. In Poland the ruling nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party is facing elections. The party's support in rural areas is usually high but angry farmers could present a political problem for the government. The European Union bureaucrats were not amused with Poland's decision. "We are aware of Poland and Hungary's announcements regarding the ban on imports of grain and other agricultural products from Ukraine," said the EU statement. "In this context, it is important to underline the trade policy is of EU exclusive competence and, therefore, unilateral actions are not acceptable."

**UK:** The UK plans to permanently deploy a warship to the Indo-Pacific region, according to a government source. "The future is in Asia. We've got to have a presence in the Pacific to prevent China from doing something ridiculous like invading Taiwan." The UK plans to deploy at least one Type-31 frigate.

## CPA Quake Appeal for the Türkiye & Syria earthquake victims

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# Scourge of depleted uranium

Kate Hudson

**LONDON: In a shocking development, the British government has announced it will be sending depleted uranium (DU) rounds to Ukraine along with Challenger 2 tanks.**

As we know from several wars in the past few decades, the negative health consequences for Ukrainian civilians will be high. DU is a chemically toxic and radioactive heavy metal, and it is a by-product of the enrichment process used to make reactor-grade uranium.

Due to its high density, DU is specifically used in the manufacture of ammunition that can, exploding on impact, penetrate the steel of conventional tank armour. Because of its heaviness, DU has also been used as ballast in airplanes, notably in hundreds of Boeing 747s – the early jumbo jets – that were built before 1981.

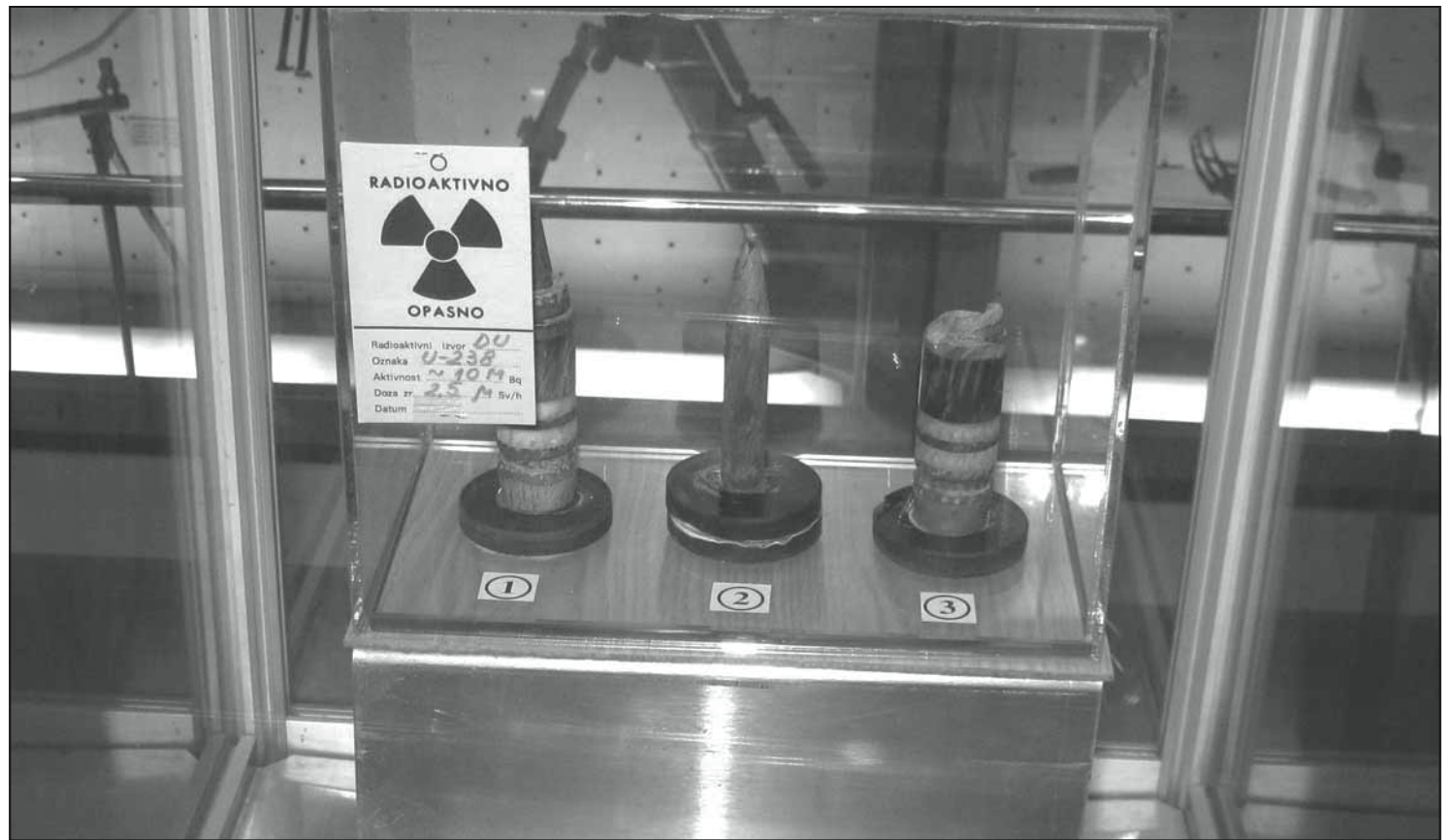
The risk of DU is not in its capacity to cause a nuclear explosion. The danger is that the end result of its use is the release of a highly toxic, radioactive dust into the atmosphere. When this dust is subsequently inhaled or ingested in other ways, it has very significant negative health consequences.

After the first Gulf War in 1991, the US Department of Defence Office of the Special Assistant for Gulf War Illnesses (OSAGWI) identified several DU exposure scenarios, including through wounds caused by DU fragments, inhalation of airborne DU particles, ingestion of DU residues, or wound contamination by DU residues.

DU munitions were used on a large scale by the US and Britain in the Gulf War in 1991 and in Iraq in 2003. Their use has caused a sharp increase in the incidence rates of some cancers, such as breast cancer and lymphoma, where it has been used.

It has also been implicated in a rise in birth defects from areas adjacent to the main Gulf War battlefields. Other health problems associated with DU include kidney failure, nervous system disorders, lung disease, and reproductive problems.

A report funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2013 showed that more than 400 tons of DU ammunition



Depleted uranium (DU) ammunition, Military museum Belgrade. Photo: Boksi – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 3.0).

were estimated to have been used in 1991 and 2003, the vast majority by US forces.

The report showed that the Iraqi government's Radiation Protection Centre had identified between 300 and 365 contaminated sites by 2006, mostly in the Basra region in southern Iraq.

As well as warning of contamination being spread by poorly regulated scrap metal dealers, which includes children, it also shared evidence that DU munitions were fired at light vehicles, buildings, and other civilian infrastructure, including the Iraqi Ministry of Planning in Baghdad. This was despite official assurances that only armoured military vehicles would be targeted.

Its use in the former Yugoslavia by NATO forces in 1995 and 1999 led to similar

consequences. It was also used by the US in Syria in 2015. The negative impacts have not been confined to local populations – they have also affected the troops involved in or in close proximity to their use, including military clean-up teams sent to deal with the impact of the DU contamination.

The severe health consequences have led to the terms “Gulf War syndrome” and “Balkan syndrome” entering our vocabulary. The UK Ministry of Defence disputes the risks of DU, yet it recommends “ongoing surveillance” for veterans with embedded DU fragments.

No treaty explicitly banning the use of DU is currently in force, yet it is clear that its use runs counter to the basic rules and principles of international humanitarian law.

In 2006, the European Parliament strengthened its previous calls for a moratorium by calling for an introduction of a total ban, classifying the use of DU, along with white phosphorus, as inhumane.

Since 2007, repeated UN General Assembly resolutions have highlighted serious concerns over the use of DU weapons. Britain, together with the US, France, and Israel are the only states that have consistently voted against the resolutions.

The British government must put an immediate end to its use of DU. Inflicting it on the people of Ukraine is the last thing they need.

*Morning Star* ✪

## Two banks, two world views

Vijay Prashad

**In late February 2023, US President Joe Biden announced that the United States had placed the nomination of Ajay Banga to be the next head of the World Bank, established in 1944. There will be no other official candidates for this job since – by convention – the US nominee is automatically selected for the post.**

This has been the case for the 13 previous presidents of the World Bank – the one exception was the acting president Kristalina Georgieva of Bulgaria, who held the post for two months in 2019. In the official history of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), J Keith Horsefield wrote that US authorities “considered that the Bank would have to be headed by a US citizen in order to win the confidence of the banking community, and that it would be impracticable to appoint US citizens to head both the Bank and the Fund.”

By an undemocratic convention, therefore, the World Bank head was to be a US citizen and the head of the IMF was to be a European national (Georgieva is currently the managing director of the IMF). Therefore, Biden's nomination of Banga guarantees his ascension to the post.

A month later, the New

Development Bank's (NDB's) Board of Governors – which includes representatives from Brazil, China, India, Russia, and South Africa (the BRICS countries) as well as one person to represent Bangladesh, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates – elected Brazil's former president Dilma Rousseff to head the NDB, popularly known as the BRICS Bank.

The BRICS Bank, which was first discussed in 2012, began to operate in 2016 when it issued its first green financial bonds. There have only been three managing directors of the BRICS Bank – the first from India (KV Kamath) and then the next two from Brazil (Marcos Prado Troyjo and now Rousseff to finish Troyjo's term). The president of the BRICS Bank will be elected from its members, not from just one country.

Banga will come to the World Bank, whose office is in Washington, DC, from the world of international corporations. He spent his entire career in these multinational corporations, from his early days in India at Nestlé to his later international career at Citigroup and Mastercard.

Most recently, Banga was the head of the International Chamber of Commerce, an “executive” of multinational corporations that was founded in 1919 and is based in Paris, France. As Banga says,

during his time at Citigroup, he ran its microfinance division, and, during his time at Mastercard, he made various pledges regarding the environment. Nonetheless, he has no experience in the world of development finance and investment. He told the *Financial Times* that he would turn to the private sector for funds and ideas. His resumé is not unlike that of most US appointees to head the World Bank.

The first president of the World Bank was Eugene Meyer, who built the chemical multinational Allied Chemical and Dye Corporation (later Honeywell) and who owned the *Washington Post*. He too had no direct experience working on eradicating poverty or building public infrastructure. It was through the World Bank that the United States pushed an agenda to privatise public institutions. Men such as Banga have been integral to the fulfillment of that agenda.

Dilma Rousseff, meanwhile, comes to the BRICS Bank with a different resumé. Her political career began in the democratic fight against the 21-year military dictatorship (1964-1985) that was inflicted on Brazil by the United States and its allies.

During Lula da Silva's two terms as president (2003-2011), Dilma Rousseff was a cabinet minister and his chief of staff. She took charge of the Programa de Aceleração do

Crescimento (Growth Acceleration Program) or PAC, which organised the anti-poverty work of the government.

Because of her work in poverty eradication, Dilma became known popularly as the “mãe do PAC” (mother of PAC). A World Bank study from 2015 showed that Brazil had “succeeded in significantly reducing poverty in the last decade”; extreme poverty fell from 10 per cent in 2001 to 4 per cent in 2013.

“[A]pproximately 25 million Brazilians escaped extreme or moderate poverty,” the report said. This poverty reduction was not a result of privatisation, but of two government schemes developed and established by Lula and Dilma: Bolsa Família (the family allowance scheme) and Brasil sem Miséria (the Brazil Without Extreme Poverty plan, which helped families with employment and built infrastructure such as schools, running water, and sewer systems in low-income areas).

Dilma Rousseff brings her experience in these programs, the benefits of which were reversed under her successors (Michel Temer and Jair Bolsonaro).

Banga, came from the international capital markets and has managed the World Bank's net investment portfolio of \$82.1 billion since June 2022. There will be considerable attention to the

work of the World Bank, whose power is leveraged by Washington's authority and by its work with the International Monetary Fund's debt-austerity lending practices.

In response to the debt-austerity practices of the IMF and the World Bank, the BRICS countries when Dilma was president of Brazil (2011-2016) – set up institutions such as the Contingent Reserve Arrangement (as an alternative to the IMF with a US\$100 billion corpus) and the New Development Bank (as an alternative to the World Bank, with another US\$100 billion as its initial authorised capital).

These new institutions seek to provide development finance through a new development policy that does not enforce austerity on the poorer nations but is driven by the principle of poverty eradication.

The BRICS Bank is a young institution compared to the World Bank, but it has considerable financial resources and will need to be innovative in providing assistance that does not lead to endemic debt. Whether the new BRICS Think Tank Network for Finance will be able to break with the IMF's orthodoxy is yet to be seen.

Rousseff chaired her first BRICS Bank meeting on 28th March. Banga will likely be appointed at the World Bank-IMF meeting in mid-April.

*Globetrotter* ✪

# Politics in the Pub – Leederville WA

## Alliance against AUKUS

Richard Titelius

Since the Labor government of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced the funding of the \$368 billion (and counting) contract to buy six nuclear submarines under the AUKUS Agreement, opposition has been building in the community around Australia amongst peace, anti-war, and anti-uranium mining groups.

The Communist Party of Australia is a member of the Australian Anti-AUKUS Coalition, joining forces with many like-minded groups and individuals officially campaigning for the cancellation of the AUKUS agreement and the contract to buy and/or build up to eight nuclear submarines.

AUKUS will create insecurity rather than build security and peace in the Indo-Pacific region. In WA the Greens were there from the beginning when Stop AUKUS WA was being set up, and they continue to be vocal in their opposition to AUKUS and the submarines.

One of the most public rebuttals of AUKUS occurred on 27th March 2023, when Western Australian Greens Senator, Jordan Steele-John on the ABC's Q&A rebuffed Country Liberal Party Senator for the Northern Territory, Jacinta Price's claims that AUKUS would protect Australia's national security interests.

On the contrary, insisted Steele-John, AUKUS would make Australians feel less secure and the money would be better spent on issues on which people feel really insecure – homelessness, climate change and dental care – which the Greens are seeking to be brought into Medicare. Senator Steele-John said the Greens oppose the AUKUS deal and believe the \$368 billion could be better spent elsewhere than on a pathway to an escalation of tension in our region.

It was with great interest then, that I attended a Politics in the Pub at which Senator Steele-John and three of his colleagues would speak; Senator Dorinda Cox (WA), Senator Janet Rice (Vic) and Senator Larissa Waters (Qld), at The Garden Bar in Leederville, Western Australia.

The chair for the event was Senator Steele-John himself. He gave his colleagues three minutes to talk about themselves and an issue they were passionate about. Steele-John said he was passionate about bringing dental care into Medicare.

Janet Rice named climate change and the environment, and said she wanted to see the amended Safeguard Mechanism to reduce pollution ensure that most of the 116 planned coal and gas projects did not go ahead.

Dorinda Cox, Yamatji-Noongar woman, and the first Indigenous woman to represent Western Australia in the Senate, was also passionate about the Safeguard Mechanism as many of the proposed coal and gas projects are on Aboriginal land. As per the Uluru Statement from the Heart, Dorinda Cox believes the Voice is a pathway to Truth and Treaty and if successful can show all Australians that a vote for a Republic and a new Constitution is possible.

Larissa Waters was in Perth to lobby for better abortion access for women.

### Q&A

With the introductions over, it was time to put our elected representatives to work. The first question was about Federal Resource Minister Madeline King's speech at the Powering the Future Conference at which



Photo: matthrac.com.au – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0).

she urged young people to work in the resource sector as a way of addressing climate change.

The Greens responded by saying their party needed to go into the dens of rich white male power and make these institutional spaces of our society more responsive to the needs of all Australian people.

A question was asked about how to address transphobia and abuse being suffered by transgender people across Australia. The Greens responded that transgender rights are also human rights, and that increased education and awareness are needed.

Dorinda Cox answered a question about more realistic levels of wages and welfare by saying we need to empower communities as this was one way to eradicate poverty. Among Aboriginal people this would ensure greater transparency and action on Closing the Gap targets of which only 4 out of 18 are on track.

In regard to a question on the proposed tax cuts for the wealthy which the ALP government are still intent on approving, Larissa Waters said, "[The a new government [is] still doing the same thing as the previous government ... we need to get rid of the tax cuts and use that money to fund housing, health and education." Janet Rice added that she is in Perth as part of an enquiry into poverty in Australia and has heard of many Australians experiencing housing stress which often meant decisions being made to either pay the rent or having enough food on the table.

Another question was on the independence movement of West Papua. The Greens advised that they supported freedom for West Papua, and that the problem of Indonesia was one of race. As in Australia, they said, Indonesia also needed to show greater acceptance and respect for the wishes of its Indigenous peoples. Steele-John also believed in ongoing dialogue and has been talking with representatives from both Indonesia and West Papua.

On climate change Steele-John responded to a question about the diminishing activism in the community since the pandemic, which saw only about 100 people attend the latest action on School Strike for Climate Change in Perth, by saying communities needed to be empowered to make choices that are best for people in those communities to become more sustainable and resilient.

There also needed to be other sources of information on what is happening in the world to counter the powerful narratives of the corporate/capitalist media which would see us run lemming-like over the climate change cliff, if it would help the capitalist system continue making a profit.

The Communist Party of Australia supports and continues to work with the Greens on many progressive issues including Stop AUKUS, The Voice to Parliament, Climate Change, Stopping Tax Cuts to the rich, lifting the incomes of the lower paid, and the right to housing. ✪



### Hitler (just like)

By now, everyone has heard of "Godwin's law", an internet saying amounting to this: if you compare someone to Hitler or the Nazis, you've lost the argument. Not quite everyone, however. Lawyer for the WA industrial registrar, Cav Saraceni, has described the WA branch of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) standing up to the industrial registrar and voting on a strike as being like Hitler. No apology was given, but Saraceni explained that it was the first thing that came to her mind, and instead compared the union to Karl Marx. We're too polite here to say what the first thing that came into our mind was on hearing about this, but it's nicer to be compared to Marx, so we suppose Saraceni gets points for trying.

### Actively

Rental app Snug is supposedly there to help make life easier for would be tenants and estate agents. Recently, an ABC report found that desperate tenants have paid \$80 just to promote their applications with Snug and another such app, before getting into rent bidding by offering \$80 more than a listed rental to actually get a roof over their heads. Snug explained that they actively discourage rent bidding. The active approach didn't extend to telling anyone what they did to discourage it. Snug is presumably actively hanging on to the money the couple paid to make themselves "stand out from the pack".

### Mature

Normally this word is a euphemism, as when you want to say something about someone's grey hair, but don't want to say "old" (hint: saying nothing at all is always an option). David Littleproud has described Dutton's decision to appoint Jacinta Nampijinpa Price as his shadow minister for Indigenous people as "mature." Price got the job because Julian Leaser discovered some principles and resigned to support the Yes vote for the Voice to Parliament. Replacing him with a right-wing ally and Voice opponent is not so much "mature" as "expedient". Given the rate at which Liberals are leaving the sinking Dutton ship, we think Littleproud might be just trying to be polite about "desperate."

### Self-reliant

The word is a weasel word in the topsy-turvy world of serious Australian political commentary. The Nine-Fairfax's war-monger-in-chief, Peter Hartcher has penned an admiring piece about Penny Wong's response to Paul Keating's criticisms of our craven foreign policy. Keating, Hartcher implied, wants Australia to "attach itself to a great power." In Wong/Hartcher world, we'd be attaching ourselves to China by not stapling ourselves to the USA's foreign policy. "We will always pursue greater self-reliance," said Wong. Wong's government is being self-reliant but mortgaging our future so we can become an American submarine base. We're self-reliant in the same way that my dog is a submarine designer.

### Indispensable

Foreign Minister Penny Wong, busy standing up for Australia's freedom to ask "how high?" when the USA says "Jump!" is on a mission. Unfortunately for Australian workers, it's a mission to prove that the Labor Party can be just as slavish towards the US as the Liberal-National Coalition is. In pursuit of this goal, Wong has described the USA as "indispensable." We're not so sure. Our phones are indispensable because we'd be lost without them. But we like phones! Our subservience to the US is "indispensable" in the sense of being something both our bourgeois governing parties feel they can't do without. I'm allowed to leave my phone at home if I want to, but the Labor and Liberal parties just know we're not allowed to go without the "indispensable" USA, whether we like it or not. No, Australians, we do not get to choose under the current system.

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# “Ocean is at stake”

Olivia Rosane

**This month in Kingston, Jamaica, the United Nations’ International Seabed Authority (ISA) conducted a second week of negotiations that could shape the future of the deep ocean.**

In 2021, the Pacific nation of Nauru triggered something called the two-year rule, which gives the ISA until 9th July to establish regulations to govern the controversial practice of deep-sea mining. This 28th session, which launched on 16th March, is the body’s penultimate meeting before that deadline.

“The ocean is at stake,” University of California, Santa Barbara deep-sea biologist Dr Diva Amon, who is representing the Deep Ocean Stewardship Initiative in Kingston, told *EcoWatch*.

But beyond the looming threat of commercial mining, something else was different about these negotiations. Influential civil society groups including Greenpeace, the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and WWF (World Wildlife Fund) have given up their seats to a large coalition of Indigenous Pacific activists who have come to share their vision of the high seas, a vision that contests the nationalist perspective that they are “nobody’s land.”

“What we want to express is that we don’t view this as nobody’s land because it is part of our country,” Hawaiian Indigenous speaker and activist Solomon Kaho’ohalahala told *EcoWatch*. “This is where we have lived and thrived and have inhabited the largest area of ocean and islands on planet Earth.”

## “PART OF OUR COUNTRY”

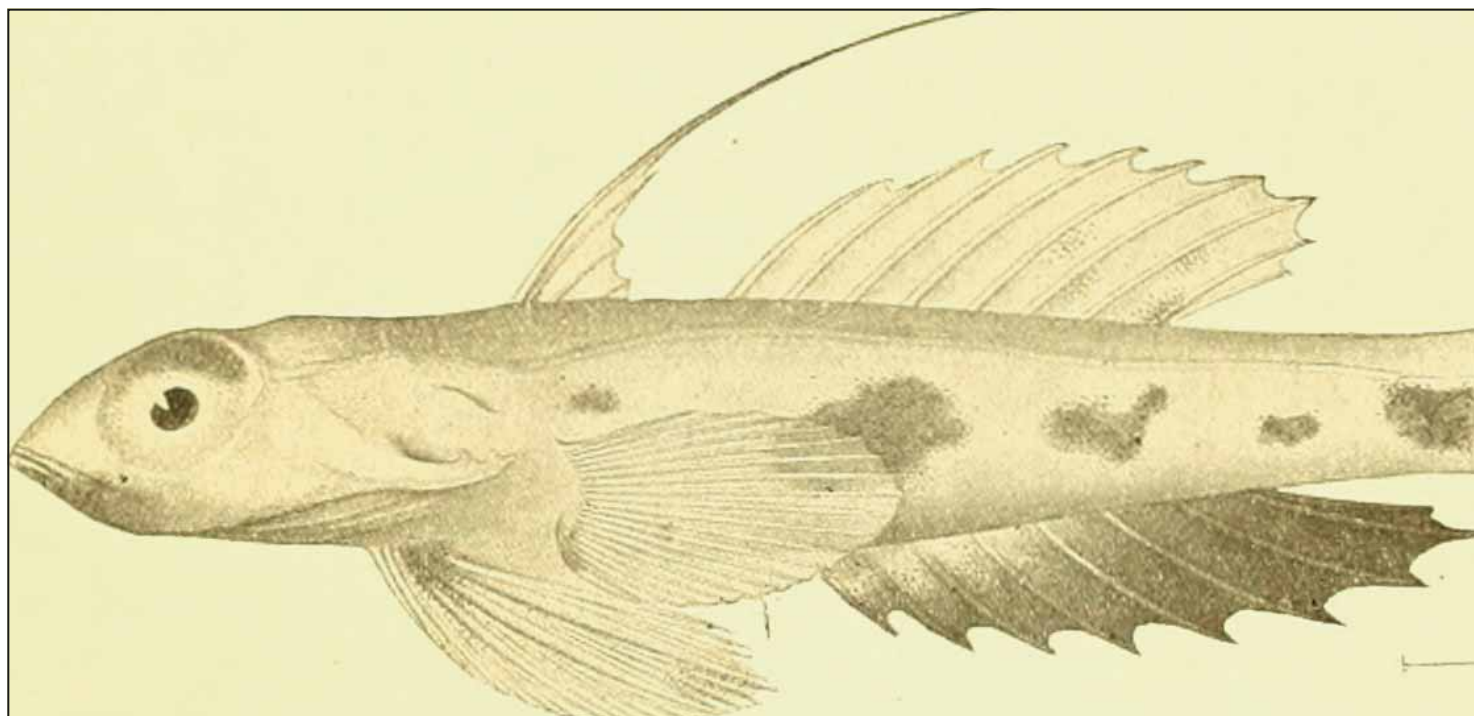
Kaho’ohalahala hails from the Hawaiian island of Lāna’i, where he has worked to establish marine conservation areas and to protect the native dryland forest. He has also joined efforts to protect Hawaiian marine biodiversity as a whole as part of the Maui Nui Makkai network and the Native Hawaiian Cultural Working Group that championed the expansion of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument into the world’s largest Marine Protected Area, under then President Barack Obama. In addition to his advocacy against deep-sea mining, he is also now campaigning for the expansion of the Pacific and Remote Islands National Monument, which President Joe Biden recently told the Secretary of Commerce to explore.

Now, he has travelled to the ISA negotiations with other Pacific activists onboard the Greenpeace ship *Arctic Sunrise*. On 20th March, he joined more than 1000 Indigenous people from 34 countries and 56 communities in signing a petition to the ISA calling for a ban on deep-sea mining. As the advocates presented the petition, he offered a traditional chant for ISA delegates called an Oli.

At a discussion on underwater cultural heritage two days later, he told a story explaining his people’s relationship with the ocean. “From a Native Hawaiian perspective we have a story that is partly our genealogy and it’s called the Kumulipo,” Kaho’ohalahala told *EcoWatch*.

This creation story tells how Kumulipo, the first male, and Poole, the first female, gave birth to the first living creature in the deep sea: the coral polyp.

“From there all other things evolve and are created,” Kaho’ohalahala said. “So from the deep sea to the nearshore waters, into the land, into the mountains and then even taking flight and even into the heavens above.”



The tiny Hawaiian dragonet (*Callionymus rubrovinctus*). Image: Public domain.

This includes the Hawaiian people who, once they arrive on “Island Earth,” are tasked with caring for their ancestors, including the coral polyp or “first grandparent,” he added.

This is a radically different view of the ocean from the exploitative, nationalistic model that gives rise to ideas like deep-sea mining.

“It’s been a game changer,” Greenpeace USA senior oceans campaigner Arlo Hemphill said of the Indigenous presence at negotiations.

One aspect that perspectives like Kaho’ohalahala’s have revolutionised is the concept of cultural heritage, which most nations thought of as shipwrecks from famous battles or swallowed villages and not the shared genealogy with the non-human world represented by the Kumulipo. It’s a worldview that ISA delegates have welcomed, however. The ISA’s new cultural heritage working group invited Kaho’ohalahala to join, and the ISA is considering creating an Indigenous forum.

“This has set off a new dialogue in the ISA that’s never existed before,” Hemphill said.

## “A NEW SAIL PLAN”

One of Kaho’ohalahala’s leading concerns is that when Nauru triggered the two-year rule on behalf of Nauru Ocean Resources Inc (NORI) – a subsidiary of a Canadian company The Metals Company – the place it pin-pointed for mining was the Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ) between Hawaii and Mexico.

“It is quite clear to me that if we say nothing then we have done nothing to preserve our own cultural heritage and our genealogy that describes who we are and where we are and where we come from,” Kaho’ohalahala said.

Stretching for 3100 miles (4990 kilometers), the CCZ is home to unique deep-ocean ecosystems whose particularity makes them especially vulnerable to the mining that might take place there. “Between 70 to 90 per cent of the species scientists have found there were previously unknown to them,” Amon said, “while 25 to 75 per cent have yet to be observed at all.”

At the bottom of the seafloor there is mostly shifting sediment, so more than 50 per cent of deep-sea animals larger than

one centimetre that call it home – animals like sponges, anemones, or corals – use the nodules scattered about as a stable surface to attach to. This is a problem because it is exactly these nodules that corporations like The Metals Company want to mine for copper, nickel, cobalt, iron, manganese, and rare earth elements. “Without the presence of the nodules, the ecosystem will not function in the way it once did,” Amon said. “It will be severely compromised.”

Another concern about deep-sea mining is the plumes of sediment it will release into the ocean. This would threaten the CCZ, in particular, because for much of the zone, particulate matter rarely travels between the seafloor and the surface, leading to “incredibly crystal-clear waters in the deep ocean,” Amon said. The ancient ecosystems of the CCZ have evolved to thrive in this clarity. Who knows how they would manage in murkier waters?

“There’s a lot of concern about the fragility and vulnerability of the Clarion Clipperton Zone and its ability to recover from these impacts,” Amon said.

Kaho’ohalahala is also worried about the increased turbidity in the water that will result from dredging the deep sea and releasing some of that material into the water column.

“Our pelagics and all of the phytoplankton and the zooplankton that are part of the water column are definitely all going to be impacted, and then the food chain in itself is going to be impacted. And if that is the case, then perhaps even the ability for us to subsist and sustain our life in our country, the ocean is now being threatened,” he said.

That is why he is sharing a different view of the ocean, one that emphasises the long-term benefits of protecting it for everyone rather than permanently destroying habitats for short-term mining profits.

“I want to propose a new sail plan with a new horizon,” he said.

## LESSONS FROM AOTEAROA

Another Pacific advocate who travelled to Kingston with Greenpeace is Phil McCabe of Aotearoa (New Zealand), who is part of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition.

“I’m a lifelong lover of the ocean,” McCabe told *EcoWatch* in an email. “As a surfer and a coastal resident, my community revolves around our local marine environment.”

McCabe is also a veteran of the fight against deep-sea mining in his home country, serving as the Chairperson of Kiwis Against Seabed Mining (KASM) between 2012 and 2017. In 2013, Aotearoa finalised a legal framework for deep-sea mining, triggering three different applications.

“The summation of our experience is that the proposed new activity of strip-mining vast areas of the seabed is socially, environmentally, and legally inappropriate and unacceptable,” McCabe told *EcoWatch*. “New Zealand’s experience is a precautionary forerunner to what is playing out here at the ISA.”

Amidst opposition from Indigenous and coastal communities and commercial and recreational fishers, New Zealand’s Environmental Protection Authority rejected two of the mining proposals. The third squeaked through but was rejected by New Zealand’s Supreme Court in 2021, which ruled it would cause “material damage” to the environment, as McCabe detailed at the time.

McCabe is hoping that the ISA will follow in New Zealand’s footsteps amidst mounting international pressure.

“There was no social [licence] then in New Zealand and there is no social licence now in the international context either,” he said.

He would like to see the body do three things:

- Pass a moratorium on deep-sea mining;
- Refrain from finalising the rules for mining that would give The Metals Company the go-ahead in July;
- Pass reforms to open the meetings of its Legal and Technical Commission – a 41-person body that supervises mining and develops environmental management plans, among other duties – to outside observers.

“The ISA should focus on the other part of its mandate, which is to ensure the protection of the marine environment rather than pushing the world toward mining,” McCabe said.

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