

# Labour hire = Super exploitation

Anna Pha

**Labour hire has become a business model where workers are paid less and denied rights that other workers have. The Albanese government plans to address some of the gaping inequalities under labour hire arrangements with Same Job Same Pay legislation under the Fair Work Act. Without seeing any legislation, employer bodies have launched a multi-million-dollar campaign based on lies to protect inequality.**

Around 80 per cent of labour-hire workers work full-time hours yet do not have full-time jobs – their ongoing employment is insecure. Almost 85 per cent of labour hire workers do not have paid leave. Most have no guaranteed minimum hours.

Usually a labour hire company supplies workers to undertake work at a host employer's business. The workers are not directly employed by the host company they work for. Their employer is the labour hire company.

Another, more insidious form is where the labour hire company supplies "independent contractors" or "self-employed" workers to a host company.

In both instances labour hire can be a means to deunionise workplaces, drive down wages and deny workers rights hard-won over decades of struggle.

Labour-hire companies are big business, hiring mainly casual and temporary workers on behalf of large organisations such as the public service and government agencies. The 12 largest labour hire outfits are among the top 30 largest commercial employers with combined revenues of about \$20 billion.

They are essentially a law unto themselves with few regulatory restrictions and little clarity over the carve-up of responsibilities between themselves and the companies that use their services. Labour hire workers have few rights and can be sacked with an hour's notice even after two or three years in a job.

The ACTU estimates that at least 600,000 workers are employed through labour hire. Workers are treated like a commodity to be sold by a labour hire company and bought by another company where they work. The purchasing company takes no responsibility for their wages and other entitlements. There is no transparency. They are cheap labour, quite often migrant, visa, and other vulnerable workers.

In the construction industry it is not uncommon for 90 per cent of workers on a building project to be labour hire. While they are not employed directly by the host company, they are under instructions from

that company in relation to what they do, how they do it, and what hours they work.

Labour hire is also common practice in logistics, cleaning, stevedoring, mining, manufacturing, education, nursing, the public service, government agencies, and numerous other sectors of the economy.

## SUPER EXPLOITATION

Labour hire workers are paid lower wages, and denied entitlements and protections that other workers doing the same job and working alongside them have. It can severely weaken the negotiating power of trade unions through deunionisation.

The ACTU cites the example of two truck drivers working the same hours for the same company where the one directly employed by the company is paid \$40,000 per annum more than the labour hire employee.

## BUSINESS MODEL

BHP claims the proposed legislation will cost the company an additional \$1.3 billion extra per annum for labour. That says it all! It shows the extent to which its labour hire workforce is being ripped off and could benefit if the proposed legislation does not have loopholes and is enforced.

"If you close a loophole to stop workers being ripped off, it will result in an increase in the wages budget of any company that was using the loophole. We make no apologies for that," Workplace Relations Minister Tony Burke said.

According to the ACTU, Qantas uses around 14 labour hire companies, many owned by the airline itself. It illegally sacked 5000 employees and replaced them with 9000 part-time workers employed through its own subsidiaries and other labour hire firms. Qantas no longer hires any new permanent ground operations workers.

Qantas now has flight attendants on less than \$3 per hour through labour hire companies in Thailand.

Companies such as Serco, ISS, and Stellar have taken over many functions and operations of the public service and government agencies. There is no transparency as to the extent this has occurred and how much more it is costing the public purse as these parasites make huge profits.

## CONSULTATION PAPER

In April the government released a consultation paper on Same Job Same Pay which sets out guiding principles for the legislation. These include:

- Business able to access labour hire for genuine work surges and short-term needs
- Labour hire workers paid at least the



Photo: Ben Kerckx – pixabay.com

same as directly engaged employees doing the same work

- Targeted anti-avoidance measures.

The legislation defines "same job" in terms of duties set out in or covered by an enterprise agreement or award that applies to the host employer.

"Same pay" means the labour hire worker should get at least the same full rate of pay, which includes incentive-based payments and bonuses, loadings, monetary allowances and overtime or penalty rates.

There is no suggestion that workers with different skill sets or years of experience must be paid the same. Wage rates and responsibilities based on qualifications and years of service are usually specified in awards or agreements.

This puts the lie to the outrageous campaign being waged by employers. (See page 5)

## REFORMS

Same Job Same Pay is a step in the right direction, but its sole focus is on labour hire. It does not address the hundreds of thousands of workers in the gig economy who have even fewer rights than labour hire workers.

ACTU President Michele O'Neill says 45 per cent of transport workers in the gig economy are paid less than the minimum wage. Like other gig workers, they are usually responsible for their own insurance, workers' compensation, superannuation, PAYG tax and other payments. They have no leave entitlements.

It is left open whether the legislation will cover so-called "self-employed" contractors and subcontractors who must also pay for their own insurance, workers' compensation, leave, etc.

Same Job Same Pay needs to be extended to all workers regardless of their form of employment with guaranteed job security for ongoing work. It should also go beyond pay to cover working conditions, and leave entitlements including long service leave, and workplace health and safety.

What is needed is: Same Job, Same Pay, Same Conditions.

Ultimately, the contradiction between labour and capital will only end with the organisation and struggle of labour and the elimination of the exploitative wage system. ✪

3  Bring back the CES

7  Thomas Mayo on The Voice to Parliament

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# Guardian

Issue 2058

26th June, 2023

## Fill up the ABC tank!

There is not a lot left in the tank at the our national broadcaster, either financially or morally.

Financially, the Albanese government has not reversed the funding cuts of a previous near-decade of Liberal governments that seemed to hate the ABC for existing at all. Under the Liberals a funding freeze that amounted to a cut of \$84 million forced the ABC to slash jobs and cut back programming last year. A total of \$783 million was removed from ABC funding between 2014 and 2022. It was estimated that without change, the ABC's accumulated lost funding from 2014 to 2024 would reach \$1201 billion. Labor has slowed the decrease, but has not reversed the cuts.

Morally, the ABC's independence faced sustained pressure from Liberal governments, also not properly reversed by an ALP that is also afraid of being too left-wing. Appointing far right hacks to the board resulted in pressure to promote right-wing voices far above their actual significance or representation in the population at large.

More insidiously, this pressure has had an effect on other ABC staff. People respond to pressure from the organisation they work for, and ABC staff are no exception. Star interviewer Sarah Ferguson devoted an entire program to interviewing white nationalist and Trump advisor Steve Bannon, assuring him that he wasn't racist (Spoiler: Bannon is racist), while on the Triple J "Hack" program Tom Tilley platformed an Australian Nazi. The pressure also manifests less openly in a willingness of ABC programs to "both sides" an issue, placing a false equivalence between two positions just because they *are* two opposed positions and the program-maker, like the ABC doesn't want to appear too "left wing."

The latest news on the ABC is not good. 120 roles are being made redundant, 41 of them are in news. Naturally management is selling this as a positive. Managing Director David Anderson is pitching the redundancies as part of an "integrated digital operation," arguing that future audience engagement will "predominantly be through our digital products." Digital is obviously important (that's why this paper has a podcast), and the ABC has done a heroic job with digital given its' meagre resources.

In a sign of the times, former Netflix executive, Chris Oliver-Taylor has been appointed to the new role of Chief Content Officer. Oliver-Taylor has gone from a start at the ABC to success with NBC and Fremantle Asia Pacific. The Managing Director of the ABC has described him as a "content leader."

ABC news and the ABC are not just content. We don't say this out of any Luddite-Boomer opposition to change. Communists appreciate the power of change, and are not about pointless nostalgia.

But anything on a screen can be "content." If all the ABC did was provide more content, there wouldn't be much point to it. Large companies already exist that fill our screens with content that passes the time.

The ABC should be something more. The ABC is there to inform Australians. It exists in order to help us see the world as it is. The ABC should be something more. The ABC is there to inform Australians. It exists in order to help us see the world as it is. The ABC charter talks about contributing to a sense of national identity.

The Communist Party of Australia's *Political Resolution* of 2022 calls for "objective, dispassionate reporting and investigation" and for a "democratically controlled anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist media infrastructure." When the ABC is good, it comes close to this.

Our national broadcaster should not have to choose between journalism and being a digital content provider. A properly resourced national broadcaster could add to Australia's actual independence – maybe that's why the American controlled NewsCorp hates it so much. A fully funded ABC could enhance all areas of our culture.

Fund the ABC!

# Dancers act

**For the first time in more than a decade, dancers at Australia's premiere national dance company, the Australian Ballet, are taking protected industrial action in a bid to ensure future pay is not eroded by rising living costs.**

In a recent protected action ballot overseen by the Fair Work Commission, 91 per cent of dancers voted in favour of taking industrial action following a breakdown of negotiations between their union, Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), and the Ballet's management for the company's next enterprise bargaining agreement.

They began industrial action with a social media campaign to highlight their concerns.

MEAA Equity Director Michelle Rae said negotiations began in September 2022 but have stalled after management sought to strike out a financial safety net that ensures dancer pay keeps pace with inflation.

This lifeline in the agreement has been particularly important given the current cost of living crisis and financial sacrifices dancers made to support the company during the COVID pandemic in 2020-21.

In its place, management has offered a pay rise of just one per cent for the rest of this year.

The cost-of-living clause in the Australian Ballet EBA acts as a financial safety net by protecting future pay rises from being eroded by CPI increases. It ensures that as a bare minimum, dancers' pay will rise each year by the annual CPI.

Rae said the union had collected a staggering number of stories from dancers that painted a bleak picture of their financial wellbeing.

"Throughout negotiations dancers at every level of the company have told management of their serious concerns about their financial insecurity, with many describing how they live from pay cheque to pay cheque," she said.

"Management still refuses to provide workable solutions which has disappointed dancers given they also reminded management that many dancers' savings had been wiped out after they had agreed to significant pay cuts and wage freezes during COVID to ensure the company's survival.

"Dancers at the Australian Ballet have voted in favour of protected industrial action as an absolute last resort.

"They have immense pride in their work and their company, but as management continues to reject their reasonable and modest claims, they have been left no other choice."

Dancers began the first phase of their protected industrial action by making the rare move to go public and ask industry colleagues and followers to show the Australian Ballet's management and board that the public supports dancers in their fight for financial security.

"At all times, but especially during a cost-of-living crisis, financial security is worth fighting for," the dancers' public statement says.

Dancers and management are set to meet again in the coming weeks to continue negotiations. 🌟

## Brisbane detention protest calls for freedom for Hamid

**Around 50 people held a protest at Brisbane's immigration detention centre, BITA (Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation), yesterday Sunday 11th June.**

The protest called for the release of Hamid, an Iranian refugee brought from Nauru to Australia in February this year.

Hamid had been held on Nauru for over nine years. But, while other refugees and asylum seekers, similarly transferred from Nauru,

have been released, usually within a week or two of their transfer, Hamid remains in detention four months later.

Since 2019, Hamid has been cruelly separated from his two adult children when Peter Dutton refused to transfer Hamid to Australia with his children, under the Medevac laws. Despite representation to the Labor government on Hamid's behalf, there has been no explanation for the continued separation of the family or Hamid's detention.

From over 70 people in December last year, there are just 13 refugees left on Nauru, as Labor has progressively transferred them to Australia. Yes Labor are paying the notorious detention company MTC, \$420 million for garrison services until September 2025.

Refugee Action Coalition  
For more information contact  
Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713. 🌟

## Pilbara: proposed salt works draws criticism

Conrad Maclean

**Environmental activists have criticised plans for a salt works facility in the Pilbara's Ashburton area.**

The project is proposed by German Chemical Company K+S.

Campaign group Protect Ningaloo CEO Paul Gamblin said the project would be constructed over nationally listed wetlands.

"Those enormous salt pans could block the nutrient flows that give the Gulf so much of its productivity, the water that flows over the land and takes all the good stuff into the Gulf," he said.

"They concentrate salt and very hypersaline water that can be toxic to mangroves and can also cause a significant risk to species."

K+S Australia Managing Director Gerrit Goedecke said the project has been designed to allow the nutrient flows to reach the sea.

"The project has been designed over time to not block those nutrition flows. Nutrient flows are basically rainfalls in the hinterlands going towards the ocean," he said.

"The project is located between two drainage channels, so there is no blockage of nutrient flows."

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# Bring back the CES

**The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) has officially launched a campaign to put an end to outsourced government employment services with the creation of a modern Commonwealth Employment Service (CES).**

The CES was a hugely successful federal government employment service that was eventually privatised by the Howard Liberal government in 1998.

In privatising employment services, the Howard government argued that competition, through a large number of community-based providers, would ensure good quality services for job seekers, and value for money for taxpayers.

The reality couldn't be further from this promise, with just a handful of multinationals dominating the space, making enormous profits, and failing to deliver outcomes for job seekers and local employers looking to hire new staff.

The Prime Minister acknowledged these shortfalls recently when he remarked that "some of the system that's been established by our predecessors is about ticking the boxes rather than providing that support."

The current model is underpinned by an ineffective and punitive compliance framework that the CPSU argues does more harm than good and has called for it to immediately be abandoned.

A modern, fit-for-purpose CES would deliver better outcomes for job seekers, the government, taxpayers, and the employees who deliver these services.

## BACKGROUND

In its submission to Inquiry into Workforce Australia Employment Services, the CPSU recommends:

1. The immediate suspension of mutual obligations, noting it is a punitive system that does more harm than good.

2. The Commonwealth government take an in-principle decision to end the use of for-profit employment services, noting the conflict of interest inherent in a for-profit system.

3. The Commonwealth government take an in-principle decision to rebuild a public sector based employment service.

4. That while there are a number of possible models for a rebuilt public sector service; the best option is to rebuild a new modern CES, supplemented by specialist community-based services, to provide enhanced support to jobseekers and rebuild APS skills and capacity.

5. The Commonwealth government take steps to increase the number, range and location of entry level jobs in the Australian Public Service.

Melissa Donnelly, the CPSU National Secretary said, "Since 1998, successive governments have thrown huge amounts of public money at employment service providers, and what do they have to show for it? A toxic relationship with job seekers, wasted tax payer money, limited support for local businesses wanting to hire new staff, and huge profits for a handful of private providers who are failing to deliver."

"This system is like an old car that keeps breaking down, but instead of changing models, governments have just kept pouring money into trying to patch it up."

"It's not a system we can tinker with or tweak. It is a broken system that we need to replace."

CPSU

Editor's note: victims of the Robodebt



Photo: kai Stachowiak – publicdomainpictures.net (CC0 1.0)

scandal would probably agree that something drastically different to the current system is worth trying. As for competition, the *Guardian* – *The Workers Weekly* would like to ask any readers who are forced to interact with a Job Network agency how much chopping and changing they do, and how often they've complained about the service. For competition to have an effect, the customer has to be able to compare options, and the ability to choose. Neither is really available to Job Network "clients," but the cargo-cult of "competition" is impervious to facts. 🌱

## CES Facts

The Commonwealth Employment Service was set up in 1946. By 1988 it handled 41 per cent of advertised vacancies. CES programs helped jobseekers gain needed skills for work. A Liberal government privatised the CES in 1998.

## Private nurses and midwives reject "paltry" pay offer

**The slogan on the St Vincent's Health Australia (SVHA) is "Outstanding care from outstanding people," but there's nothing outstanding about SVHA's attitude towards staffing ratios and conditions.**

Hundreds of nurses and midwives at two major Sydney private hospitals have voted down a new enterprise agreement with employer SVHA, after labelling it "disrespectful" and "beyond disappointing."

For more than six months, NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) members at

St Vincent's Private Hospital in Darlinghurst and North Sydney's Mater Private Hospital pleaded with SVHA to improve staffing ratios and conditions in the proposed agreement, as well as its 3.75 per cent pay offer.

NSWNMA General Secretary, Shaye Candish, said the resounding "no" ballot result was justified and called on SVHA to return to the negotiating table with tangible offers which recognise the professionalism and value of their nursing and midwifery workforce.

"The nurses and midwives of St

Vincent's Private and Mater hospitals deserve better. They should be afforded the right to feel safe and supported in their workplaces, and to feel valued by their employer," said Candish.

"The proposed three-year agreement did not address our members' concerns on constant understaffing, the need for nurse-to-patient ratios or improvements to midwifery staffing. The pay offer SVHA put on the table also failed to acknowledge the financial pressures staff are impacted by."

"In light of the recent Fair Work

Commission announcement of a 5.75 per cent pay increase for those on award wages, SVHA really does need to do better."

NSWNMA Assistant General Secretary, Michael Whaites, said after the NSW government committed to introduce Safe Staffing Levels into public hospital, SVHA should have revised its proposed agreement to include safe ratios.

"Understandably, many of these private sector nurses and midwives are concerned they will continue to lose experienced staff out of the private hospitals, as they seek out

better working conditions in the public health system," said Whaites.

"We will continue to put forward the evidence-based case for nurse-to-patient ratios across a number of specialty areas during future negotiations with SVHA."

NSWNMA members will now consider next steps and have not ruled out expanded types of industrial action at either hospital. 🌱

## Union demands evidence that SA university merger will deliver better quality education and research

**The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) has demanded South Australian Premier Peter Malinauskas provide evidence the proposed university merger will deliver better quality education and research.**

The state government has promised merging the University of Adelaide and University of South Australia will improve education and research.

But a new NTEU survey of 1100 staff across all three South Australian universities shows just one in five (21 per cent) are confident the proposal will result in better education, while only 29 per cent are confident the merger will result in better research.

Just a quarter of respondents support the merger.

In a major concern for the Premier, 95 per cent said they have not been appropriately consulted by the South Australian government.

NTEU SA Division Secretary Dr Andrew Miller has outlined the damning results in a letter to Mr Malinauskas and Deputy Premier Susan Close.

Dr Miller's letter calls for an urgent response from the government, warning the entire process is at risk of failing.

"Merging the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia represents one of the biggest and most profound changes to higher education we are ever likely to see in South Australia," Dr Miller said.

"There is no turning back once this decision is made. We must get it right. Our public universities must serve the public interest, not political or corporate interests."

"The process must be evidence-based. It needs to be managed with the strictest public oversight protections and stakeholder engagement mechanisms imaginable."

"Getting this wrong would be catastrophic for South Australia."

The survey also found:

- 60 per cent of staff do not believe they have sufficient information to make an informed decision about the pros and cons of a new university
- 66 per cent of respondents do not trust university councils to make good decisions for staff, students, alumni, and the public
- Only 30 per cent and 26 per cent are confident the governance structure of any new university will "serve the public interest" or "engage in transparent processes"

"Staff are demanding concrete evidence the merger will deliver better quality education and better-quality research; full stakeholder engagement and participation; and complete transparency and public oversight protections throughout the process," said Dr Miller.

"Staff, students, and community stakeholders must be 'co-creators' and joint decision-makers in the merger process."

"It is crucial for the government to guarantee university councils will adopt a process that is evidence-based, fully transparent, and has complete public oversight."

"We call on the Premier to commit to strict public interest, stakeholder, and evidence-based protections."

"The NTEU looks forward to working with the government and university councils to build a higher education sector in South Australia that honours the public interest in the fullest and purest sense."

National Tertiary Education Union 🌱

# Aboriginal housing: Australia's biggest policy failure?

Paul Cleary

**The inadequate if not negligent response of governments around Australia to the critical issue of Aboriginal housing – perhaps the country's biggest policy failure – puts into sharp focus why a Voice to Parliament may help elevate the case for urgent action.**

Governments have moved away from specific programs to address the acute housing needs of First Peoples, even though they have made commitments under Closing the Gap agreements to improve Aboriginal housing.

Incredibly, the state of Aboriginal housing is often at its worst in resource-rich regions where Aboriginal land generates massive wealth. This is apparent from even a cursory look at the Aboriginal communities of the Pilbara iron ore region of Western Australia, where much of the investment in housing took place before the state's coffers were flooded with mining royalties.

Typically, an Aboriginal home in remote or regional Australia was built in the 1970s or 1980s and has had very little spent on it since then. It most likely has at least one major structural fault such as cracked walls or floors, and is over-crowded. It might have had air conditioning added to help cope with more extreme temperatures, but it's unlikely to have solar panels to help reduce soaring energy costs.

With Aboriginal remote communities on the front line of climate change – facing rising temperatures and sea levels, and more extreme weather events – housing is emerging as a key issue, and yet governments across Australia lack any sense of urgency.

Gudanji-Arreernte elder Pat Turner, the co-chair of the Joint Council on Closing the Gap, has had her megaphone out on this issue, and is particularly scathing of the WA government.

"We are sick and tired of all the grey areas and the buck passing between Commonwealth and States. Look at Western Australia. Let me point out Western Australia and all you mob in the mining industry here," she told a post-election forum last year.

"You've all made billions and billions and billions of dollars off of Aboriginal land. And Aboriginal

people in WA live in the most appalling conditions today and they do not have the support of the Western Australian government."

The Rudd government responded to this appalling situation by developing the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, which provided \$5.5 billion over 10 years to build and renovate 11,500 homes across 300 communities. This led to a 6 percentage point fall in overcrowding to 21 per cent of dwellings.

But this program was ended by Malcolm Turnbull in 2018 and has not been revived under the new Labor government. This is despite the issue of overcrowded housing emerging as a major factor in the spreading of the COVID virus.

Over the past six months I put questions to the WA Housing Minister John Carey on investment in Aboriginal housing, the age of the housing stock, and why WA had the most over-crowded Aboriginal housing in Australia. The questions were referred to the Department of Communities which said initially that this information wasn't readily available. Finally, it said no such data existed because Aboriginal people were not required to identify themselves as social housing tenants.

The WA government has funded a \$2.6 billion social housing program but it can't say how much of this has addressed the housing needs of First Nations people. The Department said that 100 social housing dwellings have been added in the Pilbara region since 2017, but we don't know how many of these accommodate Aboriginal families.

Federal Labor is little different. Its proposed \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) allocates just \$200 million, or just two per cent of the fund, "for the repair, maintenance and improvement of housing in remote Indigenous communities," according to a comment from Housing Minister Julie Collins. The recent budget provided funding to the Northern Territory of \$111 million for remote housing, and even though the funding lasts just one year, the government said this was a "partnership."

Better Aboriginal housing is also needed to address health and socio-economic welfare. The Productivity Commission's latest report on Indigenous disadvantage

cites a mountain of research over many years which shows that poor quality and overcrowded housing are factors in high rates of family and community violence, together with chronic health conditions.

Inadequate housing explains why First Peoples continue to suffer from developing world diseases such as ear infections and rheumatic heart disease (RHD), the latter being 17-times more prevalent among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, many of them children, living in remote areas.

The commission cites ABS data showing that one in three Indigenous homes in 2018-19 had major structural problems, an increase of 7 per cent compared with 2014-15. "The most commonly reported problem was major cracks in walls or floors," the report said.

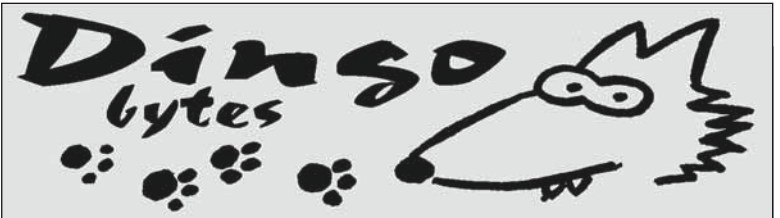
All Australian governments now have commitments on housing as part of their Closing the Gap (CTG) agreements, but their targets are unlikely to be achieved owing to lack of funding. The national CTG agreement aims to reduce overcrowding from 21 to 12 per cent of homes by 2031, which is unlikely to be achieved without specific new funding.

The Aboriginal "voice" or peak body for housing, NATSIHA, said the overall effort by Australians governments had been "patchy" and fell short of what was needed. NATSIHA had been "involved in the discussions" about the HAFF with the Federal government, but it appears that no specific funding commitment has been made to date.

"Appropriate levels of access to these funds and programs is critical to ensuring positive impacts can be achieved for the Closing the Gap targets," NATSIHA said in a statement for this article.

The failure of governments to properly support Aboriginal housing is particularly egregious when you consider that much of Australia's mineral wealth is extracted from or near Aboriginal land. It just shows that an increasingly wealthy Australia is becoming less concerned about the welfare of the First Australians.

Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTAR) – first published in *Pearls and Irritations*. ✪



Forest fire warnings have been issued in northern European countries as the "high risk" of summer wildfire season spreads up the continent. A lack of rain and rising temperatures have led to dangerously dry conditions in the region, from Scotland to the Nordic and Baltic countries. The warnings have raised concerns of a repeat of the summer of 2018 when major wildfires swept across Sweden in particular. While wildfires are common in the Mediterranean countries, the phenomenon is rare in northern Europe where summers are cooler and wetter in comparison. Small wildfires are already burning in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Scotland, and experts worry it could get much worse unless there is significant rainfall in coming weeks. Swedish weather agency SMHI head of hydrological forecasting Niclas Hjerdt said, "These countries are relatively new to drought problems. We usually have an excess of water up here in northern Europe and Scandinavia. So there isn't this historic knowledge of how to deal with drought situations that you could find in countries further south in Europe." SMHI says that southern Sweden received very little rain in May and not a single drop so far in June, leaving the soil exceptionally dry. A warming climate is making the Nordic region more vulnerable to forest fires by making summers longer and winters shorter. It also prolongs the "vegetative" season when most precipitation evaporates or transpires rather than sinking deeper into the ground. The Federation of Swedish Farmers said the drought had already affected grassland crops and could have an impact on cereals. "If there is no rain soon, future harvests will suffer," the labour group said in a statement. It noted that due to the hot and dry summer of 2018, the industry lost almost the entire grain harvest at a cost of approximately 10 billion Swedish krona (AU\$1.38b).

**PARASITE OF THE WEEK:** The Queensland Palaszczuk government is continuing to waste tens of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money subsidising the gas industry. The state budget included \$21 million for "exploration for new gas reserves in the Bowen and Galilee Basins over the next two years". Lock the Gate Alliance Queensland Coordinator Ellie Smith said, "Queenslanders have once again been let down by the Palaszczuk government and its thirst for dirty, polluting gas. Unfortunately the Palaszczuk government remains hooked on gas industry-fed spin. Gas is a fossil fuel like any other that is driving dangerous climate change. Queensland gas is expensive and the overwhelming majority of it is sucked up for exports. This budget sensibly contains significant funds for clean renewable energy – it's a shame the Palaszczuk government has tarnished this by continuing to prop up dangerous fossil gas. The parts of Queensland now targeted for gas drilling have so far managed to escape the damage caused by the industry further south. It's clear the Palaszczuk government hasn't paid any attention to the woes afflicting farmers near Dalby and Chinchilla where hundreds of groundwater bores have been drained and communities fractured."



## Radical Radiothon

3CR, Melbourne's Community Radio station, has been broadcasting alternative views and Australian music since 1975, and is still going strong. 3CR's annual Radiothon runs throughout June – their theme this year is "Stay Tuned, Stay Radical." The station needs your help to "Stay Radical" and provide a vital platform for the issues that get left behind, and the voices that get silenced. 3CR needs the community to "Stay Tuned" to diverse voices and alternative perspectives in order to create meaningful social change. Please help the station to build and expand this critical media outlet, and encourage others to "Stay Tuned, Stay Radical." Make a donation to 3CR's 2023 Radiothon today. Any amount makes a big difference, and all donations over \$2 are tax deductible. To donate go to [3cr.org.au/donate](https://3cr.org.au/donate) or call 03 9419 8377. If you donate, please mention the *Guardian – The Workers Weekly*. 3CR podcasts can be heard online and for free at [3cr.org.au](https://3cr.org.au).



Photo: Tom Pearson (CPA)

# Same job same pay EMPLOYER SCARE CAMPAIGN



Unions WA in Perth, 2017: National secretary of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, Sally McManus, launched the Change the Rules national campaign to reassert the need for fairer laws to protect the wages, conditions and rights of workers. Sally McManus (left) and Meredith Hammat.

Anna Pha

**A coalition of eight major business groups including the Master Builders Association, National Farmers' Federation, Business Council of Australia, Council of Small Business Organisations, and the Minerals Council of Australia, has launched a multimillion dollar scare campaign on TV and social media attempting to instil fear and alarm in workers and employers.**

Their claims are dishonest and outrageous.

"It means by law, employers will have to pay workers with little knowledge or experience exactly the same as workers with decades of knowledge and experience," the coalition falsely claims.

"It means by law, you cannot earn better pay by working harder or longer, if your colleague does not share your ambition or work ethic."

The claim that workers with "little knowledge or experience" will be paid the same as workers with decades of knowledge and experience is rubbish. At present a labour hire worker with more knowledge and experience could be, and mostly is paid far less. Surprise, surprise,

the employers are not demanding they be paid the same.

The consultation paper makes it clear. Both enterprise agreements and awards contain pay rates for different job classifications and levels based on experience or skill. It is intended for these rates to apply to all workers regardless of forms of employment.

By emphasising division, the employers here make plain their use of labour hire to pit worker against worker.

Australian Council of Trade Unions Secretary Sally McManus said it was "crazy and bizarre" to claim the reform meant less skilled workers would be paid the same as more skilled employees.

"As catchy slogans mask the true consequences, the proposed industrial relations changes threaten to strip subbies and independent contractors of their autonomy to be their own boss, negotiate higher wages and conditions, and exercise the right to choose the projects they work on, free from the influence of unions," Shaun Schmitke, acting-chief executive Master Builders Australia, asserts.

"Free from the influence of unions" gives the game away. That is the aim. Free from unions means

lower wages and loss of rights regardless of the relationship with a labour hire firm – employee, subby, or independent contractor.

"Businesses of all shapes and sizes need the ability to ramp up and ramp down, as economic conditions require and as opportunities arise," Schmitke disingenuously claims. True, there is a legitimate use for labour hire and the consultation paper acknowledges this, but not for 90 per cent of the workforce.

"We all want Australians to have safe, high wage, sustainable jobs, and to be rewarded for their hard work and experience," says Business Council CEO Jennifer Westacott.

"This is going to really impact on workers who are struggling with cost-of-living pressures and will also make Australia an extremely unattractive destination for people to invest – that means less jobs."

When did Australia's largest corporations shed a tear for struggling workers as they hiked up prices and made record profits?

The legislation is expected to be brought before Parliament before the end of the year.

Trade unions are gearing up for a campaign of their own to counter the employer propaganda and fight for Same Job Same Pay. ✪

## COP31: Australia's Olympic moment on greenwash

**Australia is using its bid to co-host the world's largest climate conference with Pacific nations to greenwash decades of climate inaction and future fossil fuel expansion, the Australia Institute think tank has warned.**

Its new report, *A Fair Cop31*, urges the international community to think twice before awarding hosting rights to the 2026 United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP31) to Australia, given that it is the world's third-largest fossil fuel exporter and has over 100 new gas and coal projects in development.

Despite the Australian government indicating that it will co-host the event with Pacific nations, the report notes that Australia has not acknowledged or met any of the conditions set by Pacific Leaders that would secure their support.

Australia's bid to host the COP has been called "Australia's Olympic moment on climate action" by its supporters, but the Australia Institute's Climate & Energy Program Director, Polly Hemming, says that

the Olympic metaphor should serve as a warning, not an inspiration.

"History shows us that the Olympics has often been used by countries with questionable credentials to sportswash their image. Australia's bid to host the COP appears to be an attempt at greenwashing their planned fossil fuel expansion," said Hemming.

"Australia has said co-hosting the COP will repair its reputation. A better place to start would be to stop subsidising and approving new gas and coal projects. Awarding Australia COP hosting rights in anticipation of it changing its ways would be, at best, a case of putting the cart before the horse, and at worst, a case of rewarding a country for decades of recalcitrance.

"It would further undermine the already tenuous credibility of the COP process given that major fossil fuel producer the United Arab Emirates is hosting this year's COP28 off the back of COP27 in Egypt," Hemming said. ✪

## GREEN NOTES

Anna Pha

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has issued a warning in the strongest terms that countries must start phasing out oil, coal and gas – not just emissions – and demanded fossil fuel companies "cease and desist" measures that aim to "knee-cap" climate progress. "The problem is not simply fossil fuel emissions. It's fossil fuels – period," Guterres said. "The solution is clear: The world must phase out fossil fuels in a just and equitable way – moving to leave oil, coal, and gas in the ground." His comments were in response to the United Arab Emirates' call for the agenda of the next UN climate change conference (COP28) to focus on emissions, not fossil fuels. The economy of the UAE, which will host COP28 is reliant on oil and liquid natural gas. This could see the postponement or cancellation of COP 28, due to commence on 30th November 2023.

Resource-rich countries that export fossil fuels are lined up against other wealthy states and island nations which are already sinking in rising oceans due to climate change. "Fossil fuel industry transition plans must be transformation plans, that chart a company's move to clean energy, and away from a product incompatible with human survival," Guterres said. "Otherwise, they are just proposals to become more efficient planet-wreckers."

The UN launched the Net-Zero Insurance Alliance (NZIA) of insurance companies in 2019. Insurance companies play a critical role in risk management, insurance, and investment. They are a necessary part of any fossil fuel project. The NZIA Target-Setting Protocol requires NZIA members to set science-based, intermediate targets for their insurance and reinsurance underwriting portfolios in line with a net-zero transition pathway consistent with a maximum temperature rise of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. NZIA members were required to independently set and disclose their initial target(s) by 31st July 2023. The Alliance had 30 members up until a couple of months ago but since then 13 members have left. Not all have given reasons, but some cited anti-trust laws. Anti-trust laws prohibit the operation of cartels for such purposes as price fixing, restraining trade, and lessening competition.

Pro-fossil fuel Republicans in the US, backed by fossil fuel companies, claimed that such a climate alliance could contravene anti-trust laws by aligning their policies. This is nonsense, but has been used as an excuse by some insurance companies to back out of their commitments. After all, pursuing a sustainable path means loss of business with some of the largest and most profitable corporations. "Fossil fuel companies must also cease and desist influence peddling and legal threats designed to knee-cap progress. I am thinking particularly of recent attempts to subvert net-zero alliances, invoking anti-trust legislation," Guterres said.

"Governments are pivotal in setting the record straight. They must help by providing clear reassurance: Collective climate action does not violate anti-trust – it upholds the public trust," Guterres said. Insurance companies as well as banks and superannuation funds should knee-cap the fossil fuel producers by refusing to do business with them.



**Something to say?**

**Write to the Editor!**

[editor@cpa.org.au](mailto:editor@cpa.org.au)

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# The achievements of women under Socialism

**Since the start of the Russian Revolution and through the development of equality under Socialism, women were encouraged to participate in an equal capacity in all aspects of life. It was felt that in order for any opportunities for women to emerge, traditional views and attitudes had to be overcome. This was achieved in former and present Socialist countries by education. This education was not only to support women but also to change the attitudes of men in how they view women and to assist in their emancipation.**

Many of these societies had to change from feudal lifestyles, break down traditional attitudes toward women, and help women escape from oppressive patriarchal controls to be able to pursue opportunities in order that they could begin to participate and achieve their equal place in the Socialist society. The Socialist society in all these countries allowed women to overcome traditional barriers, and move forward taking control of their own destiny.

It was seen to be necessary in the development of all the earlier and present Socialist societies that women had to be involved in and take part in administration of socialist enterprises and administration of the state. Lenin stressed that it was insufficient to grant women political rights without creating the conditions that allowed them to take part in the management of society.

Socialism sees these conditions as the main basis for equality in the family as well as in political and administrative participation. The basis for this emancipation, was bringing in laws which overcame the debasing of women, and gave men privileges in matrimonial legislation in regard to children and family property. This over time has led to freedom of choice and the position of women in production, public life, and in the family.

Not only in the former Soviet Union did these laws, coupled with affirmative action, form the early stages leading to the involvement of women in all walks of life, but in other former Socialist countries of Europe. In developing women's involvement in all walks of life, affirmative action was brought in, which required certain numbers of places being kept for women and training provided as needed.

In the former German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany), women achieved equal access to political, public, trade union, and administrative positions. They had developed free education from early childhood through to tertiary level. Childcare was free and accessible to all. Health care was free and accessible along with specialised support for fully paid maternity leave six weeks prior to birth and twenty weeks after birth. New mothers were given basic material requirements for their babies. Abortion was available free and on demand. Women didn't have to be dependent on a man as is the case in the west, but were completely independent and could pursue careers along with assistance with childcare at various levels. After school centres were provided, and meals for the children in early childhood centres, schools and after-school services. Sadly, when the socialist GDR was taken over by the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany), the women

lost every gain made, even as a lot of women in West Germany were hoping they would gain what the women in the GDR had. This caused many former GDR women to seek men through advertising as they couldn't maintain their economic independence, and had lost abortion on demand, free education, and childcare, which they had become so used to in the GDR.

Bulgaria under a Socialist government had similar programmes as well. The Bulgarian Women's Union were active in gaining support for women in education which was free with provision made for accommodation particularly at the tertiary level. Women were given support prior to birth and after. Childcare was provided so women could continue their studies or career. Females were encouraged to participate in all levels of government and to pursue careers which had been male-dominated.

In Vietnam during the first decade or so of a Socialist system being established after 1945, there were several areas of concentration relating to women. First, laws were passed that led to not only affirmative action through the establishment and involvement of the Vietnamese Women's Union, but abolishing laws that oppressed women. Several significant programmes included the establishment of child minding, initially in private homes so that some women could enter the work force or study while other women were paid to stay at home to look after children until childcare centres could be established. This the women organised amongst themselves so up to ten children would be looked after this way.

The other early emphasis in Vietnam was on nutrition as malnutrition was very high. Over 40 per cent of children and families were malnourished and/or had suffered malnutrition. After liberation or reunification, women who had been prostitutes and/or drug addicts under the American occupation were specially housed and taught through programmes for literacy and skills training to develop income opportunities and independence. Health programmes were also offered. This was a big problem after liberation. They also had programmes for the men who had been in army under the Americans to give them useful skills through re-education programmes for peaceful production, literacy, and drug rehabilitation. In Vietnam women have moved from being 80 per cent rural with large families, to higher standards of living, and much better educated which has led to healthier children. The two child policy for the biggest of the 54 groups of people, the Viet Kinh, has created more opportunities for women and children in the future.

Due to the poisoning of Vietnam during the war, many women still suffer the harrowing experience giving birth to deformed children and some suffer from infertility through the effects of Agent Orange, as well as from land mine injuries and deformities. Women are in the forefront of working in all these areas to overcome the serious effects on agricultural production, along with medical and environmental problems. Traditional thinking of women's subservient role in the family is another area that women are taking a hand in changing positively.

Women have firmly established themselves in all areas of governance, justice,



Illustration: Rini Templeton

the professions, and production. They also have a significant role in family businesses and rural production. In the entrepreneurial group, women stand out.

In Cuba women are seen to be a "revolution within the revolution." This, Fidel along with the workers, farmers, intellectuals, and scientists established as an aim of the socialist system. Women have an active presence in all sectors of the economy and this is seen as a natural process.

Prior to the Cuban revolution, women not only suffered brutal oppression, dependent on and subjected to men but had no social rights. 80 per cent had never given birth in a hospital, tens of thousands were prostitutes, and 70,000 worked as maids. Illiteracy was extremely high and malnutrition was a constant problem particularly amongst children.

Cuba also established a women's group the FMC, (*Federation Mujeres Cubanas*, or Cuban Women's Federation) very early on, which has overseen and involved women in the literacy campaign, was involved in the development of the family doctor scheme in each area, with free childcare services, six weeks paid maternity leave before birth and twelve weeks on full pay after birth, and above all an affirmative action process. Added to this the government grants each new baby a full set of baby needs. The government brought in a family code in 1975, which set out decrees for women in marriage, children born out of wedlock, and parent's obligations to the children. Legal equality for women is incorporated in the constitution, so they have full political rights, and the

same rights as men in economic, political, and social fields. Discrimination is forbidden and punishable by law in regard to race, sex, colour, or national origin.

There are several positions in the government at regional and local levels reserved for women as well as Blacks, in the trade unions and in education programmes. The free education process in Cuba covers all children from birth to the end of university studies. Books are free, as are school uniforms, and daily meals. In the secondary science academies where an 80 per cent mark is required, females are now two to one to males in achievement, which clearly demonstrates that, when women are given the opportunity, they excel. Hence many doctors and scientists as well as teachers are women. Due to the blockade salaries are not as high as in other countries, but no one goes without food or clothing. What the country has, it shares.

In all of these countries, separate women's organisations formed to not only ensure the development of programmes for women, but also to monitor and advise the government on the needs of women. Also these women's groups had positions in governing bodies on which they had female elected members to keep governments informed on how women were progressing in achieving equality, and to establish laws and indicate areas of concern. In all these developments, overcoming centuries of traditional thinking based on patriarchal systems of life for women, took a considerable amount of education for both women and men. ✱

**Lenin said it was insufficient to grant women political rights without creating the conditions that allowed them to take part in the management of society.**

# Thomas Mayo on *The Voice to Parliament*

In support of *The Voice to Parliament*, the *Guardian – The Workers' Weekly* presents excerpts from Thomas Mayo's 21st Vincent Lingiari Memorial Lecture from August 2022, and from the launch of *The Voice to Parliament Handbook* in June 2023.

21st Vincent Lingiari Memorial Lecture

**Firstly, I acknowledge and pay my respects to Gurindji people, your Country and Elders, and I thank the Gurindji Board and your community for trusting me to deliver this lecture in honour of a very special man, Vincent Lingiari.**

I also acknowledge the other First Nations who were part of the walk off – the Mudburra, Warlpiri, Bilinarra, and Ngarinyan people.

I acknowledge those of us who are fighting to protect country – sacred Country that is being blown up, dug up, bulldozed, dried up, overfished, and poisoned.

To all our mob in the many different ways we are fighting to overcome the challenges that are uniquely ours in this country, I acknowledge you have never given up. The speech to come is in solidarity with your struggle. I hope it shines a light on your path. You do not walk alone.

And lastly, before I begin, I acknowledge my own mob. I am proudly Kaurareg Aboriginal, Kalkagal and Erubamle Torres Strait Islander. And I am union.

I am proud to be a member and official of the Maritime Union of Australia. The MUA didn't hesitate to support the Gurindji Wave Hill Walk-off, 56 years ago.

Every time Indigenous people have built a political Voice on our own – representation that has been capable of speaking up collectively and unapologetically – that has been capable of holding politicians to account for cruelty, negligence, and ignorance – that has had the capacity to inform the parliament on how they can get things right – we have been silenced.

From the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association in the 1920's, which was silenced through brutal intimidation by authorities who had complete control over our lives; through the Aboriginal Advancement League, the NAC, the NACC, FCAATSI, to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) which was established in 1988. All of them split up, ignored, defunded, and destroyed.

ATSIC was not corrupt, as some naysayers continue to say today. ATSIC was doing excellent work. And yes, it had its problems – but all human organisations will. Instead of supporting the Indigenous leaders of the time as we improved ATSIC's composition and processes, the Howard Coalition government, with the support of Latham's Labor Opposition, chose to purposely and tactically demonise and vilify that Voice until they had softened the Australian public up with enough lies to repeal it in 2005.

In 2007, we saw the Racial Discrimination Act in the Northern Territory suspended so that the government could turn the Australian army on its own most vulnerable citizens – an intervention into Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory based on lies. Of course, the intervention failed to improve the lives of Indigenous people. In fact, it made things worse.

There should have been a political cost for such a heinous act. But as always, the cost was ours alone.

The cost was families ripped apart. The cost was Black men stigmatised nationally. The cost was more children displaced. And the impacts from the Intervention are still felt all these years later and we had no Voice to parliament to set the record straight.

There are some who say Indigenous people already have a Voice because there is a record number of Indigenous people elected to Parliament; these same people are saying that a constitutionally enshrined Voice is only for "elite Blacks" – merely woke symbolism that will do nothing to address the issues in our remote communities. I say to them, you are dead wrong.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need a Voice that is protected from being silenced by hostile governments. We need a Voice where our representatives are not chosen in preselection processes run by the Greens, Labor, or the Coalition. We don't want self-appointed Voices either, who are backed by right wing think tanks.

We want a Voice with representatives who are chosen by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We want to be responsible for holding our representatives to account, according to our culture and values and the priorities that we determine. And we want the rule book – the constitution – to guarantee that what we say will be listened to, transparently, and with due respect.

In a representative democracy, being heard by all parliamentarians, and all Australians, in the centre of decision making, is the most practical thing we can do.

And there is nothing more lasting and powerful than establishing a representative body by a vote of the Australian people at a referendum. There can be no greater mandate.

When the Australian people say YES to an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice, they are saying to Parliaments for all time to come that what we say about our community and country must be listened to with the respect that we deserve.

Vincent Lingiari did not settle for rations. When offered a few bob to break the strike, he didn't lose sight of his dream of equality and land rights. Why should we accept less than a simple constitutional right to be heard today?

Our aim is for fairness. And that is not a bar too high.

If the catch cry of this nation is advance Australia fair, then we must advance our constitution so my people are heard.

If we are a nation that is for a "fair go," then we must act it.

We cannot aim low.

We must not dampen our aspirations for change.

We must work hard, as Lingiari did.

We must have courage, as Lingiari did. We must unite people across cities and towns, across religions and ethnicities, across the length and breadth of this great country, as Lingiari did.

From the launch of *The Voice to Parliament handbook*

So we're voting basically on the principle here that Indigenous people should be recognised and that we should listen to them about the matters that relate to them. And

**THOMAS MAYO & KERRY O'BRIEN**

Cartoons by Cathy Wilcox

**The Voice  
to  
Parliament**

HANDBOOK

**All the detail you need**

it really is that simple and that's what we're considering at this referendum.

It's simply guaranteeing that Indigenous people will have a representative body, a Voice and that we can make representations on matters of rights. It is not a third house of Parliament. It's not going to govern anyone. It's not going to control funding. It's not going to have a right to veto.

... There's an argument that ... treaty should come first, and I think that's the crux of that argument, that ... there's ever a voice, there must be a treaty and truth.

So it's an illogical argument, firstly, because treaties are already on the way in the States. In the Northern Territory, the processes have begun. The most advanced is in Victoria. It's ten years in, so treaties are already on the way. But what is important to consider is that according to treaty experts, treaties are going to take many decades. They say 30 to 40 years. Senator Thorpe herself has said at least 20 years. When I asked

about this in a couple of forums and so, I put this to people, why would you wait an uncertain amount of time for an uncertain outcome? Because a treaty is a negotiation. It's not a treaty that's done and dusted. It is a negotiation about what is in a treaty. So why would you want to wait an uncertain amount of time for an uncertain outcome before we start to address issues that are common across all of our communities? You know, I've travelled extensively and I know these issues are common, housing issues, ... how the justice system treats our people ... health, education, employment, you know, infrastructure, quality programs, bringing attention to programs that are wasteful and failing for the cost. These are the things that a voice can do immediately. So why would we wait for a treaty?

*The Voice to Parliament handbook* is available in bookstores now. *The Voice to Parliament Handbook* launch webinar can be viewed at [australiainstitute.org.au](http://australiainstitute.org.au) 🇺🇦

**Vincent Lingiari did not settle for rations. When offered a few bob to break the strike, he didn't lose sight of his dream of equality and land rights. Why should we accept less than a simple constitutional right to be heard today?**

# Child labour common in US

**Children are our future, and they need to be taken good care of in any society. However, in the United States, child labour is common as the country fails to take real actions to protect its young.**

As World Day Against Child Labour is on 12th June. The United States, the only country in the world that has not ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, should seriously examine its problem of rampant child labour and take action to protect the children.

The United States has seen a 69 per cent increase in children employed in violation of child labour laws since 2018, according to the US Department of Labor. Farming is a sector where child labour runs rampant.

Estimates by the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs suggested that there are approximately 500,000 child farm workers in the United States. Many of them start working as young as age 8, and 72-hour work weeks – more than 10 hours per day – are not uncommon.

Furthermore, a report by the US Government Accountability Office suggested that 100,000 child farm workers are injured on the job every year and that children account for 20 per cent of farming fatalities.

Child labour is also not uncommon in other industries. For example, a recent federal investigation into Guatemalan children working in the United States in violation of child labour laws has expanded to include meat-packing and produce companies that have allegedly hired underage migrants in at least 11 US states.

As the problem of child labour plagues the country, some lawmakers are seeking to loosen child labour laws instead of taking much-needed actions to enhance protection of the children.

Lawmakers in several US states are embracing legislation to let children work in more hazardous occupations, for more hours on school nights, and in expanded roles, including serving alcohol in bars and restaurants as young as 14, said a report by The Associated Press.

"The consequences are potentially disastrous," Reid Maki, director of the Child Labor Coalition, which advocates against exploitative labour policies, was quoted as saying, "You can't balance a perceived labour shortage on the backs of teen workers."

A total of 10 US states have considered bills to loosen child labour restrictions in the last two years, said a report from the World Socialist Web Site.



Photo: Family Moments – StockSnap (CC0).

## SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION AGAINST CHILDREN

Despite the appalling situation, child labour issues seem the elephant in the room for US legislators and politicians. Though the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) was passed in 1938 in the United States, it did not ban child labour in the country.

Under US labour law, children above 12 can work unlimited hours on farms of any size with parental permission, as long as they do not miss school, and those above age 16 working in agriculture can do jobs experts deem particularly hazardous. There is no minimum age for children to work on small farms or family farms.

Some may argue that US child labour in agriculture is legally protected under the FLSA. Nonetheless, despite rapid technological and automation advancements, and mounting evidence of occupational hazards, the act has remained essentially unchanged since its adoption in 1938.

Besides, punishment for child labour violations stipulated by the FLSA is so trivial

that some employers may have deliberately chosen to take risks.

Under the act, a packaging and hygiene company with an annual revenue of over US\$450 million was merely fined US\$1.5 million for illegally hiring over 100 child labourers, without any criminal charge.

"In the US system, oftentimes the monetary risk for labour rights violations is relatively small so it might be seen as a cost of doing business," Dieter Waizenegger, executive director of SOC Investment Group, was quoted by Reuters as saying.

The systemic oppression against children leads to the ironic fact that in the United States, a self-proclaimed "beacon of human rights," you have to be 21 years old to buy cigarettes, but only 12 years old to work on a tobacco farm with parental consent.

## A LINGERING PROBLEM FOR US

Child labour has been a lingering problem for the United States as the country is reluctant to take concrete actions to protect the children.

Forms of child labour, including indentured servitude and child slavery, have existed throughout American history, and the number of child labourers across the country peaked in the early decades of the 20th century, according to The University of Iowa Labor Center.

With parents' consent, children are allowed to be legally employed in many fields. Parents' right to take advantage of the productive capacity of their children is long recognised in the country. Children are more the property of their parents worth exploiting than a vulnerable group that ought to be protected.

The lack of commitment to end child labour is not confined to US borders. Among all members of the International Labor Organization, the United States has ratified fewer conventions than most other countries.

The unwillingness to rectify the convention is "an epic failure on the part of our country," said Rebecca London, an associate professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz, together with Catherine Ramstetter, founder of Successful Healthy Children. [China.org.cn](http://China.org.cn) ✪

## Aged Care Crisis: background

Anna Pha

**Privatisation is one of the major causes of the present aged care crisis (see *Guardian* #2057) and the accompanying lack of accountability and transparency in the private sector. The shortage of government-subsidised home care packages is another.**

The present crisis in residential aged care is no accident – it is government induced. It is a direct result of the privatisation and deregulation of the sector commenced by the former Howard Coalition government in 1997 and the failure of governments since to build new residential aged care centres.

These policy failures left a huge unmet need for private operators to fill. The care element has been replaced by the profit motive as big corporations cherry-pick the least costly residents and hence the most profitable.

Under Howard's aged-care legislation, the number of registered nurse (RN) hours that a typical nursing home with 60 residents was funded for was 308 hours in

a week. Ten years on, it had fallen to 198.

The number of enrolled nurses (ENs) also fell. "These clinical roles were replaced by low-paid and low-skilled personal care workers, often migrants who are given little or no support and face language barriers in the workplace." (*The Saturday Paper*, 12-18/09/2020).

Deregulation saw the share of all bed licences in residential aged care held by private for-profit companies rise from 27.6 per cent in mid-1999 to 41 per cent in mid-2019. There is virtually no accountability or transparency on how the billions of dollars of government subsidies are spent.

### TAXPAYER GUARANTEE

Under Howard low-care private nursing homes were permitted to charge resident bonds (deposits). Then in 2012 Labor's Mark Butler extended this to high-care homes, thus enabling private homes across the entire sector to charge bonds, subject to approval from a new Aged Care Financing Authority.

These bonds run into hundreds of thousands of dollars – in effect providing the private owners of the homes with lucrative interest-free loans to expand their empires.

The system is class based – the rich can afford luxurious care.

The Abbott Coalition government and its successors made cuts to funding and to indexation of the aged care budget.

By 2019 the total pool of deposits held by private nursing homes was a whopping \$30 billion – guaranteed by the government (taxpayers) if a provider went belly up. Private providers are free to invest these deposits wherever they like. This could be on building new aged care facilities, the stock market, or even transferring them to another related company in a complex corporate company structure.

The interest or profits from these investments belongs to the aged care provider, not the aged care resident. Only the deposit is returned to the resident or their estate when they leave or die.

In research for the Royal Commission, Professor Kathy Eagar from the University of Wollongong

found the average Australian nursing home resident receives just 180 minutes of care each day – low by international standards.

Good practice is considered to be between 242 and 264 minutes each day. Eagar said this would require an "overall increase of 37.2 per cent in total care staffing." The Albanese Labor government has since legislated for 200 minutes a day.

The Royal Commission also revealed that since 2000, the cost of providing residential aged care had risen by 116.3 per cent but government funding rose by only 70.3 per cent.

### AGED CARE WATCH

Since the Royal Commission, the United Workers' Union has established Aged Care Watch, a crowd-sourced reporting tool allowing age care workers, residents, family and community members to share their experiences of unfilled shifts and understaffing issues.

They can report them online ([agedcarewatch.org.au](http://agedcarewatch.org.au)) in one place with the aim of putting pressure on decision-makers to fund additional

care hours. The site also provides useful information for the wider public regarding performance of nursing homes.

The reports from aged care workers reveal the heart-breaking reality of life in aged care facilities, exposing the widespread understaffing and how it leaves older Australians unsafe. There are harrowing stories about the impact of inadequate staffing including older Australians left in distress, experiencing serious injuries from falls while unattended, or being left soiled and unattended for extended periods.

Aged care workers routinely report being unable to complete their work, missing breaks, and suffering injuries and abuse on the job due to understaffing problems.

The reports also show aged care workers, sick of inaction, delays and federal government bungling, are speaking out to hold their facilities and the federal government accountable. ✪



# US Police Violence



Photo: wallpaperflare.com

Graham Holton

**On 16th June the US Justice Department announced that the Minneapolis Police Department needed to be reformed. The Justice Department's Civil Rights Division had launched its investigation in April 2021. The 89-page report vindicated the community's complaints of rampant abuse by the police force.**

US Attorney General, Merrick Garland said, "the Minneapolis Police Department routinely uses excessive force, often when no force is necessary, including unjust deadly force and unreasonable use of Tasers." Police officers used deadly neck restraints (now banned) and shot at people despite no immediate threat. Officers failed to intervene when their colleagues used excessive force. They discriminated against those with behavioural and health disabilities, and racially discriminated against Black and Native Americans. Police officers retaliated against protesters and journalists, who were following up on cases of police brutality.

Gleason Glover of the Urban League found that, "police brutality is nothing new to the city of Minneapolis. It almost gives the impression that if you are black and poor, it doesn't really matter if you lose your life."

Racial minorities, who make up 14 per cent of the city's population, have complained about mistreatment for years. Wanting greater accountability, they set up the Civilian Police Review Authority in 1990. The brutal racist behaviour continued.

In May 2020 George Floyd, an African American, was killed by white police officer, Derek Chauvin, who knelt on his neck, while handcuffed, until he died. People filmed the incident and the shocking footage went viral on social media. In June 2021, Chauvin was convicted of unintentional second-degree murder and sentenced to twenty-two-and-a-half years in prison.

The video footage so outraged the public that protests and riots spread across the US, attacking the systemic racism embedded in the police force. Up to 26 million people called for the shutdown of

the police force. The slogan, "defund the police," called for police budget reductions and to delegate certain police responsibilities to other organisations. It demanded the cessation of the militarisation of the police force, in which the public are the enemy, in its "War on Drugs."

The filming of police officers abusing innocent citizens, saw the birth of social movements against the police. In July 2013, after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting to death of African-American Trayvon Martin, in February 2012, was followed by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, using the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter.

In 2014 street demonstrations following the police killing of African Americans, Michael Brown, in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner in New York City, led to the "Hands up, don't shoot" movement.

It was not just innocent African Americans who were brutally gunned down. In 2017 Australian woman, Justine Damond Rusczyk, was fatally shot by a Minnesota police officer. She had had called 911, and when the police arrived, she was shot dead. Rusczyk was wearing pyjamas. In 2019 the police officer Mohamed Noor, who killed Rusczyk, was sentenced to twelve-and-a-half years for murder. He was Sudanese. On 16th September 2021 the ruling was overturned and Noor was freed in June 2022.

Even age does not stop police shootings. A recent study has shown that black children are six times more likely to be shot to death by the police than white children. On 22nd November 2014, Tamir E. Rice, a 12-year-old African American, was killed in Cleveland, Ohio, while carrying a replica toy gun. A police dispatch call had told the responding officers that a juvenile was carrying a pistol that was "probably fake." The City of Cleveland filed a claim for the cost of Rice's ambulance ride, which was withdrawn after a public outcry. The lawsuit filed by the Rice family, against the two officers and the City of Cleveland, settled for US\$6 million. On 28 December 2015, the grand jury returned its decision declining to indict the white police officers.

*The Washington Post's* police

shooting database shows that between 2015 and 2021 the police had killed at least 245 people, who were in possession of a toy gun. If the replica "looks like a real gun," the police responded with violence.

Many gun manufacturers license their designs and brand names to toy companies, which create replica weapons virtually indistinguishable from the real weapon. More than two dozen gun companies, including Colt, Beretta, and Glock, allow airsoft companies to use their guns' likeness to manufacture gel blasters, that fire balls of liquid.

In 2022 law enforcement killed 1237 people, making it the deadliest year since 2013. Despite local efforts to curb police brutality, there has been an intensified backlash to criminal justice reform, with a lack of federal legislature to override state legislature that supported police violence.

Police shooting unarmed civilians has become part of American pop culture. TV programmes show unarmed people being shot in the back with the police officers excusing it as "resisting arrest." Samuel Sinyangwe, founder of Mapping Police Violence, says that in 32 per cent of cases, the victim was fleeing when killed, making lethal force unnecessary.

The only legal avenue to get justice is to use the civil, rather than criminal courts. Such cases have resulted in massive payouts to victims and their families. In Mississippi, on 30th May 2023, Aderrien Murry, a 11-year-old African American, made a 911 call and the responding police officer shot him in the chest. Aderrien's mother filed a US\$5 million lawsuit in the federal court. In September 2022 the Chicago city council approved US\$25 million to settle lawsuits against its police. Austin City Council, Texas approved the US\$10 million lawsuit filed by two men injured by police officers in the 2020 George Floyd protests.

Despite the recent DOJ report, police violence will continue, as it is embedded in police training. The state overrules the rights of the human rights of individuals, making any changes to federal legislation unlikely. ❄



## Global Briefs

**NIGERIA:** Islamic extremists killed at least seven farmers in north-east Nigeria, local authorities said, in an attack that further threatens food security in the hard-hit region at risk of famine. The militants attacked the farmers as they worked on their crop fields near Borno state's Molai area.

**SERBIA:** Prosecutors have opened legal proceedings against three Kosovo police officers, ignoring international demands for their immediate and unconditional release. Serbian officials say they were arrested when they crossed deep inside their border while Kosovo officials insist they were "kidnapped" and taken to Serbia by force.

**HONDURAS:** An environmental activist was killed by unidentified gunmen six months after his younger brother and another activist were killed in a similar attack. Oqueli Dominguez was shot by two men on a motorcycle at his family's home in Tocoa. All three were well-known defenders of the nearby Carlos Escaleras National Park which has been a iron oxide mining spot for years.

**BULGARIA:** President Rumen Radev has dismissed the country's chief prosecutor amid public anger over his failure to tackle high-level corruption. Radev signed a decree to remove Ivan Geshev from his post after the Supreme Judicial Council earlier voted to oust him for "undermining the prestige of the judiciary." The decision referred to his remark during a news conference demanding the removal of "political trash" from Parliament.

**ASIA:** India and Pakistan are bracing for flash floods, heavy rain, and high winds after Cyclone *Biparjoy* made landfall this evening, making it difficult for rescue teams to aid evacuations. Authorities expect conditions to worsen as *Biparjoy* was expected to reach wind speeds gusting up to 138 km before slowing down, passing through already flood-devastated Sindh in Pakistan.

**ECONOMY:** The European Central Bank pressed ahead with another interest rate hike, and said that more are on the way in an attempt to get ahead of inflation figures. The increase to 3.5 per cent is the eighth straight rise since July 2022 for the 20 countries using the euro as the current rate of inflation is at 6.1 per cent. Interest rate hikes can weaken the economy and risk recession.

**MIDDLE EAST:** Chinese Premier Li Qiang met with visiting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in a drive by Beijing to elevate relations and increase its overall presence in the region. The sides have announced the formation of a "strategic partnership," as China's chief rival for global influence, the United States, is seen as withdrawing from the region following the conflicts in Iraq, and Afghanistan and complications in ties with regional power Saudi Arabia.

**AFRICA:** Zimbabwe has reported record tobacco sales while its farmers are "heavily indebted" and seeing "minimal" benefits, according to the labour group the Tobacco Association of Zimbabwe. Critics say the farmers are not benefitting as they should from the tobacco boom, largely because of a contract system that locks them into unfavourable loans and prices.

Find out more about the

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**I really enjoyed the recent Youth Camp organised over the long weekend by the Sydney Branch, the first one in a long time. I flew from Adelaide To Sydney with a comrade. Then we went to Mount Victoria in the Blue Mountains where it got down to -2 overnight but we stayed in cosy dorms. It was so good to see the Party flag flying high from the flagpole at the camp site. My comrade and I were the only ones from interstate.**

Saturday morning everyone arrived just before lunch and after we did some banner painting which is good preparation for demonstrations and protests. Then we set up discussion groups looking at the history of

socialist governance with Roland Boer, who is a Marxist academic and a very interesting speaker. This is a subject all Party members should really understand.

Saturday evening after dinner we sat around a camp fire in comradeship and chatted while we toasted marshmallows. We all got to know each other well.

Sunday morning was great, as we went on a bush walk, stopping at different look-outs. After lunch we did union organisation training with a CPA member who is a United Workers Union union organiser. Then we had dinner and there there was a film screening around another camp fire. We watched a film on the young Karl Marx.

On Monday morning after breakfast we

had a discussion on the history of the CPA then we had lunch

My dad, aunties and uncle went to similar camps when they were young here in South Australia, and we should have a youth camp in Adelaide in the near future, perhaps in the Christmas holidays.

**Dylan Whiteford-Hall  
Adelaide**

Editor's note: Glad you enjoyed the camp, Dylan! Readers are invited to write in to report on Party or Party-adjacent activities, as well as with views on the *Guardian*, Australia, or anything.

## Housing activists unite for public housing

E Lennon

**CPA members in Sydney attended the Homes for People, Not for Profit: End the Housing Crisis rally on 17th June in support of public housing residents fighting against demolition.**

The rally featured several speakers raising awareness on the housing crisis and the state government's lacklustre approach to improving conditions for private renters and public housing tenants.

Speakers included public housing residents, students, as well as organisers from Action for Public Housing and the Anti-Poverty Centre.

CPA member Skye who attended said the rally was a great way for people to come together on the issue.

"The CPA has long campaigned for the protection and expansion of public housing, and it is great to see the broader left taking up the cause at this rally," they said.

"It has long been time to build a united front campaign around public housing, and we have seen that the groundwork has now been laid to do so. With hard work, we will be able to build this rally into a significant movement in defence

of the right of the working class to high quality housing."

Nick, another CPA member at the rally echoed the strength of united front work and added the importance of bringing the broader community with the movement.

"It's good to see united front work but we need to ensure our message is getting through to the community and bringing fellow activists and workers into the struggle," he said.

"Everyone involved is doing great work, and as protections for public housing gain more support it's important that we keep messages clear and accessible to the broader community; public housing is not for sale and social housing is not an adequate replacement of the state's duty to house people."

In recent news, the NSW Labor government stated they would not proceed with the redevelopment of the Franklyn Street Estate in the Inner-Sydney suburb of Glebe. However, community groups have their eyes closely guarding the proposed demolition and redevelopment of the Wentworth Park Road public housing also in Glebe.

Action for Public Housing is rallying against the demolition, and has called Minister for Housing, Rose Jackson's support of it



"disappointing." They are instead calling for new public housing to be built on vacant land.

As disputes over public housing rage on, the state government faces battles in the private rental market, and the federal Albanese government is facing friction with the Greens on its Housing Affordability Future Fund Bill.

Across the board, Australia is

seeing roadblock after roadblock in attempts for reform and improving the national housing crisis. Now, as ever, there is an abundance of evidence continuing to show the flaws of capitalist economics.

While landlords are hiking rents, and the state government continues neglect of existing public housing stock and refuses to build further stock, people are

being pushed further into rental stress, difficult living situations, and homelessness.

As the movement grows to defend public housing and improve housing situations nationwide, members of the Communist Party of Australia need to engage in building a mass movement. ✪

## OP-ED: AUKUS, the ranks are breaking

**How good would it be if we could see headlines like these?**

**Albanese to spend \$300 billion on Public Housing**

**or**

**Power prices to plummet with \$400 billion investment in renewable power or even**

**Smiles all round: dental care now on Medicare**

It'd be good, right? That's what could easily happen if the government heeded the Communist Party of Australia's calls for a Peace Budget to replace the largest-ever

spend by an Australian government on anything. Perhaps "easily" is the wrong word, since our two major bourgeois parties are in unison on AUKUS. The Greens, who have said AUKUS will "undermine the global effort to fight the climate crisis," aren't about to form government.

So are those headlines just an unrealistic day-dream? Recently, it looks like there's more opposition to AUKUS than the Albanese Labor government anticipated. Some of the opposition is in their own ranks.

Victorian Labor pulled a motion criticising AUKUS from the Victorian State Labor conference, allegedly after a deal was done to put off any debate until the ALP national

conference in Brisbane. The Australian Manufacturing Workers Union moved the motion stating "profound" disappointment in the government going ahead with the Morrison Liberal government's AUKUS pact and obscene submarine spend.

We are not starry-eyed about this. There is no requirement for Albanese's government to do anything about any motions passed at the ALP national conference, and Labor governments have a long history of ignoring the wishes of large sections of their rank and file. However, it's good to know that a growing group of ALP members and voters aren't falling for Albanese's preposterous spin on AUKUS.

The ALP draft national platform describes AUKUS as "our self-reliant defence policy," which is a funny way to talk about a policy that will effectively turn our armed forces into a branch of another country's military.

As former Labor PM Paul Keating has written, AUKUS has no other purpose apart from "to suit and comply with the strategic ambitions of the United States."

It's encouraging that Keating isn't alone in seeing AUKUS for what it is – an obscene expense that also decreases our sovereignty, but dissident ALP branches won't save us. Defeating AUKUS and getting Australians the peace budget they need will take a lot of work. ✪

## Palestinians Warn Against Israeli Proposal

**On 12th June, Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh warned the Israeli occupation against submitting any proposal to divide the Al-Aqsa mosque compound on a religious basis, saying that any such move will lead to "overwhelming anger with unpredictable results" given its religious sanctity for**

**Palestinians, other Arabs, and Muslims in general.**

The proposed division of Al-Aqsa would be a serious violation of the 1967 "status quo" agreement, according to which Jordanians are the custodians of the mosque, and only Muslims are allowed to pray inside. It will also be a violation of the international law of occupation, under which an occupying power

is not allowed to make any fundamental changes in the occupied territories.

As per the proposed legislation, Palestinians will get access to around 30 per cent of the present compound, with the rest going to the settlers, including the area where the Dome of the Rock is located. It will also allow the settlers to use all the gates of the compound

instead of the present mechanism where they are only allowed to enter the mosque compound through the Maghariba (Moroccan) gate.

Shtayyeh's remarks came after the Islamic Supreme Council and Council of Scholars and Preachers in the occupied territories issued a statement on Sunday calling the Israeli proposal to divide the Al-Aqsa mosque dangerous.

The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Territories, Sheikh Muhammad Ahmad Hussein, warned that the move will lead to a "worldwide religious war." *globetrotter* ✪

# Gaza: Women farmers defiant

Yasmin Abusayma

**The last month of spring is typically a busy time for farmers in Gaza. In Khuzaa, a town in south-eastern Gaza, the crops would just be showing their promise.**

But this past May only brought destruction and death to Gaza's farming communities, as Israel's five days of attacks on the Strip prevented farmers from tending to their crops.

Aseel al-Najjar, Ghaida Qudeih and Nadine Abu Rouk run a thriving farm of approximately 1.5 acres in Khuzaa.

"Our farm is located just 500 metres from the so-called security fence [with Israel]," al-Najjar said. "And in the midst of the war and air raids, reaching our land meant risking our lives – it even meant death."

The Israeli airstrikes meant that the farmers were confined to their homes, unable to venture outside due to the danger posed by Israel's warplanes.

And though they had worked diligently for three years to cultivate their land – a task that is already difficult given Israel's poisoning of Gaza's soil with noxious herbicides – their melon and tomato crops that had shown such promise had now withered due to a loss of water for five consecutive days.

It is estimated that Israel's May 2023 war on Gaza inflicted over \$1.3 million in losses in the agricultural sector, according to the Palestinian agriculture ministry.

This amount includes indirect and direct damage by the Israeli attacks that extended to crops, irrigation wells, agriculture equipment and storage facilities.

Al-Najjar, Qudeih and Abu Rouk depend on multiple sources of water to irrigate their Khuzaa farm, including wells and retention ponds. But due to the high salinity of the water they collect, they also have to purchase water from Israel's state water company, Mekorot, which is twice the cost of well water.

The three women, all in their twenties and from the Khan Younis area of Gaza, grew up in farming families, but they had never anticipated becoming farmers themselves. They completed their university degrees in fields such as education, commerce and finance, but the post-graduation job hunt was a dead end.

Unemployment in Gaza is staggeringly high due to the ongoing Israeli blockade.

Agriculture, to them, seemed like a promising alternative.

"Encouragement and support from our families were abundant," Qudeih said, "as agriculture has been a cherished profession handed down through generations."

In that, they were well aware of the hardships that accompany farming in Gaza, but the near constant setbacks are becoming difficult to endure.

In May 2021, during a major Israeli attack on Gaza, Israel fired missiles near the women's farmland in Khuzaa, leaving behind unexploded ordnance. Just as in 2023, al-Najjar, Qudeih, and Abu Rouk were unable to reach their land to irrigate, so they lost more than half an acre worth of crops.

Furthermore, they found that when they tried to plant crops anew, they did not thrive. The soil had been contaminated with toxic substances, likely herbicides, sprayed by Israeli planes.

"I still remember the moment I went back to check on my land," al-Najjar said. "I was heartbroken when I learned that the crops of tomatoes, cucumber and other vegetables had died and withered."

Over time, they recovered from that loss, once again taking to the land and cultivating new crops.

Now, three years later, the loss hits deeper.

Al-Najjar described it as an "immense setback" to their livelihoods. "I don't know what to do to compensate for all the losses we've incurred."

They also understand that others fared far worse in the latest Israeli attack.

On the morning of 10th May, the Israelis used a drone to fire a missile at farmer Muhammad Abu Taima, killing him. He had been outside on a farm in Abasan al-Kabira, not far from Khuzaa.

"I knew Muhammad very well," Abu Rouk said. "He exuded pride in his agricultural work. In spite of how dangerous it was, he continued to work the land regardless of the escalation and the tense atmosphere. He was a day labourer and had a family to provide for."

The three farmers mourn his death and continue to think ahead, about how to plan for their futures.

Several days before the Israeli attack, word arrived that they had received funding from the German government via the GIZ foundation to establish a farm of almost two acres.

"The dream persists despite the loss of the crops," al-Najjar said.

*The Electronic Intifada* ✪



Following *The Sun* a day earlier making public British Tory government plans to attack transgender children in almost every possible way at school through new "guidelines" for schools, *PinkNews* published a recording of Rishi Sunak mocking the leader of the Liberal Democrats for "trying to convince everybody that women clearly had penises" on the 19th June.

After the most recent manifestation of the right wing's attack on transgender people, we would be remiss to ignore that our own Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, went on record in the lead up to the election saying that men can't get pregnant, making public that he doesn't believe that trans people are the gender that they identify with. This was unsurprising, given the gutting of LGBTQ+ rights from the ALP's platform under Albanese's leadership.

But why has there been such a successful sustained right-wing attack on trans people, and especially on trans women? The germ of our answer can be found in Engels, who said in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, "The first class antagonism which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression with that of the female sex by the male."

The oppression of the female sex by the male could well have been complicated by the existence of transgender and nonbinary people. There is evidence of their existence since Ancient Mesopotamia. If people's gender did not align with their sex, then how could the oppression of women be justified? People surely associated the female sex with womanhood, as we do today, and conversely the male sex with manhood. It could not be said that it was exclusively the woman's role to raise children on the basis of their ability to fall pregnant and give birth if there were transmasculine people who could do the same, and conversely transfeminine people who could not.

While it is important to recognise that there have been many societies that managed this contradiction in ways that did not oppress trans people, the method of managing this contradiction used by the societies that colonised the world was to eradicate trans people from the public view. Transmasculine people could perhaps be disallowed from child-rearing, but transfeminine people could not be made to fall pregnant and give birth, so we were painted as perverts and predators to justify forcing transfeminine people to live as men and extermination of those who refused. The same had to be done to people that exhibited all other forms of transgender existence and gender-nonconformity, as the idea that being transgender was either a lie or the result of indoctrination had to be upheld.

In a time where people are having fewer children later in life (or not at all) due to the cost of living in contemporary capitalism, the capitalist class must now do whatever they can to defend the nuclear family that Engels identified as the first class antagonism. Rather than make concessions to the working class that would enable people to live comfortably while raising children at a younger age if they choose to do so, they have renewed and intensified attacks on transgender people, and we must fight against it.

## Colombia: Historic ceasefire agreement

**On 9th June, the Colombian government and the leftist guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (ELN), signed a historic agreement for a six-month bilateral ceasefire. The parties also reached an agreement on the participation of civil society in developing peace negotiations, as well as in verification and monitoring mechanisms.**

The agreements on the long-awaited truce and the participation of society in the process were reached during the third round of peace talks, which began on 2nd May and concluded on 9th June in Havana, Cuba.

President Gustavo Petro, who traveled to Cuba to attend the closing ceremony of the third round of talks, celebrated the agreement on the ceasefire.

The ceasefire will be applicable nationwide and will be implemented on 3rd August. Between 9th June and 5th July, both the ELN and the government will prepare and discuss internally how the ceasefire will be implemented and how they will reach those in remote areas to spread the message about the new agreement. Both parties will give orders of cessation of offensive operations on 6th July, and finally, on 3rd August, the ceasefire will be fully implemented.

During the six months of ceasefire, the Colombian Armed Forces and the ELN guerrillas will stop all kinds of offensive operations against each other. Additionally, the rebel group will halt any hostilities against the civilian population.

With regard to the participation of civil society, a National Participation Committee will be created that will begin functioning on 25th July. It will include representatives from 30 sectors of society, who will contribute to the transformation of the country and the achievement of peace.

*Globetrotter* ✪

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Coeditors:  
 Tom Pearson and Floyd Kermod

Published by  
**Guardian Publications Australia Ltd**  
 74 Buckingham St,  
 Surry Hills, 2010

Printed by  
**Spotpress**  
 24-26 Lillian Fowler Pl  
 Marrickville 2204

Responsibility for electoral comment  
 is taken by **T Pearson**,  
 74 Buckingham St,  
 Surry Hills, 2010

# Communist Youth Camp

## An inspiring weekend

E Lennon

**Young Communists came together from across the country for the 2023 Communist Youth Camp held over the June long weekend.**

The camp ran over three days in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney, on Dharug and Gundun-gurra Country.

Comrades got to test their art skills with banner making, spend time in nature on a beautiful bushwalk, participate in union training, and listen to multiple talks on various topics followed by group discussions.

Cole, who participated in the camp says it was a chance for everyone to connect.

"The camp was a beautiful initiative for those in solidarity of the communist movement to connect with each other," she said.

"The environment provided reflection on how we can build and enrich the Party based on significance of community, socialist principles, and the fight for equality for the working class."

On the first day of camp, participants worked hard on their protest banners, followed by a talk on the history and theory of socialist governance by Roland Boer, a

CPA member who is an academic teaching Marxist philosophy at the School of Philosophy at Renmin University of China in Beijing.

Comrades went bushwalking on the second day and explored impressive rock formations and caves. This was followed by union training, which included theoretical discussion as well as practical training, led by a CPA member who is a union official.

*The Young Karl Marx* (2017) was shown for the camp's movie night, offering a historical dramatisation of the lives of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels from the start of their friendship to the publication of *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848.

On the final day, a talk was given on the history of the CPA and its youth organisations by a casual academic and a student who are both in the CPA NSW Youth Fraction.

Skye, who attended the camp says the talk helped everyone learn more about youth activism.

"It really showed how we have to approach youth activism from within communities rather than without," they said.

"We talk a lot about how we need to show that we come from the workers rather than preach to them, but we often fail that in



practice, and nowhere more than when it comes to youth and social movements.

"We educate ourselves on how to be communists in the workplace; we seldom dig through the literature that the speakers found on how to be communists in our community organisations, like sporting and arts clubs."

Christian, another attendee of the camp says it was a great experience and a success.

"I thought the camp was encouraging, inspiring and refreshing," he says. "It was clear that everyone who participated enjoyed it a lot, that many people learned a lot and got lots out of it, and that it is an important initiative that

should be made into a regular event."

The organisers would like to thank everyone who helped make the camp a reality and for comrades who made donations to fund the weekend. ✨

## Costly friendship: Australia and the US Civil War

Graham Holton

**With the AUKUS agreement, the United States military build-up in Australia and the upcoming Exercise Talisman Sabre war games, between the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the US military, it is worth considering the long history between our two countries. It is a relationship that has been friendly and at times fraught with conflict, when Australia did not come out on top faced against our far superior military partner.**

The first Americans came to Australia in 1770, as crewmen on Captain James Cook's *Endeavour*. The colony of New South Wales soon developed trade links with North America, before the 1776 War of Independence strained the friendship. Since then, Australia and the USA have had a long-intertwined history, from American whalers using the colonies for resupplies, to Americans coming to Australia during the gold rushes of the 1850s. Australians even fought and died in the American Civil War (1861 to 1865).

By 1901, the year of Federation, there were 7448 US-born citizens living in Australia. Many American-Australians worked in the labour movement, helping to form trade unions and the Australian Labor Party, hence the American spelling of "Labor." In 2018, Australia and the US celebrated the

100th "Anniversary of Mateship," commemorating fighting side by side at the Battle of Hamel, France.

Many Australians have American ancestors and still maintain connections across the Pacific. During the Civil War my distant cousin, William Pavey, left Melbourne to join a New York army regiment and died in North Virginia. In the 1870s, my mother's family, the Sargents, migrated from New York to settle in Melbourne, the colony of Victoria.

The Confederate raider *CCS Shenandoah*, an iron-rigged, teak planked screw steamer, arrived in Hobson's Bay, Melbourne, on 25th January 1865, 15,000 kilometres from the Confederate States. Queen Victoria had proclaimed the Confederacy a power "belligerent" to Britain, though officially the Australian colonies were neutral in the war. Neutrality meant that the colony could not provide aid and support to either side. Commander James Waddell, from North Carolina, had received orders to load coal in Melbourne and then head to the Pacific whaling grounds. Whale oil was used in lighthouses, making it militarily useful. The ship's eight heavy guns with a 5 km range could have bombarded the capital, if the colony had refused assistance.

A large number of Victorians strongly sympathised with these Confederate visitors. Leigh Goodall, former chairman of the Williamstown Maritime Association, found that many of those "cheering the rebels were sent out here in chains or in forced labour.

Many were Irish. They obviously hated the Brits at the time and were therefore on the side of the rebels." Ship surgeon Charles Lining wrote in his journal: "Steamer, tug-boat, yacht – all Melbourne, in fact, with its 180,000 souls seemed to have outdone itself in welcome to the Confederates." The officers showed over 7000 visitors over the ship, such that there was "standing room only" on deck. The crew was besieged by invitations to socialise and entertain, with Ballarat, the site of the 1854 Eureka Stockade rebellion, welcoming them as heroes.

The US consul to the colony, William Blanchard, convinced that the *Shenandoah* was a pirate ship, asked the colonial governor, Charles Darling, to seize the ship and arrest the crew. Instead, Governor Darling granted Waddell permission to make repairs at the Williamstown dry dock. The US consul learned that Waddell had recruited at least 20 men, in violation of England's neutrality law. On 14th February, 200 policemen and 50 soldiers were dispatched to search the ship. When Waddell refused the search, Governor Darling demanded that the ship leave port immediately.

The *Shenandoah* sailed out of Port Phillip Bay four days later. On board were fresh supplies, coal and 42 men who had signed on to the Confederate cause. The steamer sailed to the whaling grounds in the Bering Sea, near Alaska, where there were 48 US whalers. The *Shenandoah* captured twenty.

On 3rd August 1865, Waddell learned of the war's end from the Liverpool barque *Bar-racouta*, making the *Shenandoah* the last Confederate ship to fight in the Civil War.

In 1872, an international court ordered Britain to pay £2 million pounds in damages to America for "improperly allowing" the *CSS Shenandoah* to increase her crew and gain coal supplies. The British colony of Victoria paid the war debt, a fortune at the time.

Barry Crompton of the American Civil War Round Table in Australia argues that the *Shenandoah* had a huge impact on Victoria. "Melbourne scaled-up its defences because of the *Shenandoah*. Cannons were installed in 1867 on the shore line and an ultra-modern ship was commissioned to represent Victoria's sea power." The two-turreted ironclad *Cerberus* patrolled Port Phillip Bay from 1870. Its wreck can be seen, and swum around today from Black Rock in Melbourne.

This largely forgotten incident remains a sharp reminder of how the US treated Australia in the past. Today Australia still has very limited bargaining power with the military juggernaut. Being a partner in its anti-China stand can only end in disaster. The US military is using Australia as a depot for its nuclear submarines, a technology beyond our technical capacity. Can we risk Australia's future by being a lackey to US governments? ✨



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