



# The Housing Crisis

Denis Doherty

**After decades of State and Federal neo-liberal housing policies, Australia faces an exploding housing crisis.**

The 26th June Anglicare report on the cost of living points to housing being a major factor, with average rents rising by more than 30 per cent over the past three years.

Australian governments have taken the view that people should pay for their own accommodation and that the state is absolved of any responsibility to provide public housing for its citizens.

The alternative – the private sector – can never solve the crisis because it treats housing as a commodity, a source of profit, not a human right. The private sector cannot and never will house the community; only governments can potentially do this.

The current Federal government's response is the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) which is not actually a fund for housing at all. It is \$10 billion invested in the stock market. The maximum the fund can disburse from its income, by law is \$500 million a year.

## NO GUARANTEE

There is no guarantee it will make that much money. Last year it would have lost almost four per cent and would have had to use part or all the profits from the next year to restore the fund.

The Albanese government has been boasting it will provide 30,000 social housing dwellings over the next five years. Even if it gets enough money from HAFF to achieve this – which is doubtful – it is still only a drop in the ocean.

The Federal government is mainly concerned with home ownership and private rental and, despite the PM's much vaunted childhood experience, showers Community Housing Providers (CHPs) with money. In the May budget Commonwealth rental assistance went up – money that is taken by the CHPs, not given to residents of social housing tenants to help them financially. CHPs also got direct grants to continue their work, including large salaries for their CEOs.

To get this "signature policy" through Parliament, the ALP has been dragged kicking and screaming to invest \$2 billion immediately into public housing for two years.

PM Albanese reportedly said that 100 per cent of this money will go towards public housing and must remain in government hands. The funds would go to each State on a per capita basis, with each Territory getting a guaranteed \$50 million. If this happens, it will be a step forward – but still not enough to solve the housing crisis.

## NSW IMPROVEMENTS

The new NSW ALP government has begun to grapple with housing issues in a better way than the previous LNP administration. It is fulfilling its promise to end the



privatisation of public housing stock continued by the previous LNP after the Keneally ALP started the cannibalisation of public housing in 2009.

Estates that were due for the chop have now been granted reprieves, including the Franklyn Street complex in Glebe where over 100 tenants have been enduring the threat of eviction for several years. Also saved in Glebe are 30 individual houses which will now be refurbished and put to use for low-income tenants.

These are great victories for community action which has continued for over a decade. People are learning that persistence and resistance works.

## NO REAL REFORM

However, the NSW government has stopped short of real reform. Its policy would also allow developments worth more than \$75 million which contain more than 15 per cent affordable housing to bypass local councils and planning panels.

Sydney already has lax building standards and worst fears could be realised if residents end up in yet another Mascot Towers development with a disintegrating building.

The NSW government has kept some projects that were began by the LNP in a nod towards neoliberal policies. The huge project at Waterloo will see over 4000 public housing tenants evicted ("relocated") and

the buildings demolished to be replaced with even bigger towers. A public housing complex in Glebe with 27 bedrooms is due to be demolished and rebuilt despite vigorous protest from local residents and activists.

The Minns government has also announced that it is assessing "surplus" government land to build more housing. Only 30 per cent of housing built on this public ("government") land will be set aside for social and affordable housing. This is exactly the same policy as the previous LNP government!

The ALP must finally recognise that public land must be used for 100 per cent public housing.

## "SOCIAL AND AFFORDABLE"

The terms "social" and "affordable" housing are often used as though they mean public housing. This is not correct. Social housing is housing run by Community Housing Providers' who cater to the low-income market. They are heavily subsidised by both State and Federal governments.

Affordable is housing which is especially set aside at a price that is 20-25 per cent below market rent. This practice is rorted and much affordable housing makes its way into full market rent after a brief period of affordability.

## PUBLIC HOUSING

What is needed to resolve the crisis is public housing – where State and Federal governments are responsible to fund construction and maintenance.

They can find the money to fund education, health, transport, museums, and much more – so why not housing?

The situation where governments have mostly pulled out of public housing, selling more and building fewer, must be reversed.

What is \$2 billion for housing when the Federal government is investing \$386 billion into nuclear submarines and \$254 billion in stage 3 tax cuts?

## HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT

Housing provides safety, emotional stability, improved physical and mental health, and a better chance of employment. It is a human right.

Public housing must extend over low income recipients to essential workers and on to all those who need a home.

Working to improve the quantity and quality of public housing is a vital activity for those dedicated to the cause of the working class and all those suffering under the rapacious capitalist system. ✪

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Why they're bastards

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# Guardian

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## Truth-teller must be freed

There are two important dates around now. Daniel Ellsberg died on 16th June this year, at the age of 92. Julian Assange turns 52 on 3rd July.

Both men were punished for doing what journalists are supposed to do: speak truth to power. Ellsberg (see article on page 12) released the Pentagon Papers which showed that the US President had “systematically lied” about the Vietnam war.

Julian Assange started Wikileaks, a website for whistleblowers. He became famous when Wikileaks published footage of US troops in Iraq shooting unarmed civilians, including Reuters journalists, from a helicopter.

The journalists the troops killed were Saeed Chmagh, and Namir Noor-Eldeen. You probably didn't know their names. That's because a trick has been played on us. Their story has been turned into a story about Julian Assange. Since Wikileaks revealed those murders, there has been a torrent of material about Assange. He's a bad house-guest. He's self-centred. He's proud. He doesn't offer to wash the dishes after a meal. Countless opinion pieces have opened by saying that persecuting whistleblowers is bad but Assange is an annoying person.

Assange is fighting attempts to extradite him from the UK, where he is in a high-security prison, to the US, where the government has repeatedly said that they intend to give him a 175 year sentence for espionage.

In the first place, it was asserted that Assange had endangered lives by releasing too much information too carelessly. This has always been hard to prove (and Assange denies it), so the next step was to focus on Assange.

The latest twist is that Andrew O'Hagan, who was going to ghost-write Assange's autobiography, and wrote an essay in the prestigious *London Review of Books* about how annoying Assange was as a person, has refused to cooperate with FBI investigators looking for more dirt on Assange. This makes the FBI seem pretty desperate, it's a decade since O'Hagan met Assange. O'Hagan has told a *Nine* newspaper that he “would not give a witness statement against a fellow journalist being pursued for telling the truth.” In any event, O'Hagan has done his damage, despite these fine words.

This year will be the tenth time Assange has had a birthday while not free. He stayed in the Ecuadorean embassy in London for seven years because, reasonably enough, he feared that extradition to Sweden for sexual assault charges (since dropped) might lead to extradition to the United States. After leaving the embassy, he was arrested by British police and has been kept in the high-security Belmarsh prison. Other than breaching British bail laws, Assange has committed no crime.

However, there is a crime which is not recorded in the legal system of any country, but is heavily punished. That crime is the offence of getting in the way of our planet's top imperialist power, the United States of America. The US has 800 military bases outside its borders, spends more on its military than the next four largest defence spenders combined, and throws its weight around like nobody's business.

The United States behaves like a mafia enforcer, but also uses “soft-power” to get what it wants, and likes to get on its high horse about morality. In revealing the killings of Chmagh, Noor-Eldeen, and other civilians by troops who have never faced consequences, Assange went against the US sense of impunity and its self-image as a moral nation that can sit in judgement on the rest of the world.

Julian Assange has spent a decade without freedom, trying to stay out of the bullying superpower's clutches.

Australian governments like to talk about our “sovereignty,” while at the same time making us even more a working part of the US empire. It is high time they showed they really meant it by bringing this Australian journalist home.

Happy Birthday Julian. We hope your next birthday is a free one.

Free Julian Assange! Bring him home!

## CPA International Department Statement

# United around the world against the criminal US Blockade on Cuba!

**The Communist Party of Australia condemns in the strongest possible terms the inclusion of Cuba in the US list of countries that sponsor terrorism. The CPA stands against the 60 year long criminal US blockade on Cuba.**

Almost sixty-one years ago, President John F Kennedy introduced Proclamation 3447, Embargo on All Trade with Cuba. The proclamation was designed to isolate Cuba and stop the spread of so-called Sino-Soviet Communism. The goal of the Kennedy administration was clear: “To bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government.”

Today, Joe Biden lives up to Kennedy's legacy. Despite his statement that Trump's changes, “have inflicted harm on the Cuban people and done nothing to advance democracy and human rights” and his pre-election promises to return at least to the Obama platform, he has refused to undo the extraordinary sanctions and has kept Cuba on the list of “state sponsors of terrorism.” This brings great hardship to the Cuban people when trying to trade in a global system dominated by US imperialism.

With the stroke of a pen, Biden could lift all the coercive measures of Trump's economic warfare. That stroke of the pen would save Cuban lives, but Biden does nothing.

Biden claims the blockade supports the Cuban people in their quest to determine their own future and these measures target the regime not the people. At the same time, he uses the hardship created by

the US to create desperation from the people who are faced with shortages. He does this in the hope they will turn their backs on the Cuban government.

The evidence is clear; UN estimates are that the blockade has cost Cuba over \$130 billion in damages. These costs are compounded by penalties imposed by the US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) on Cuba's allies and investors; banks, insurance firms, energy companies, and travel agencies are targeted to the tune of around \$2.4 billion, annually. The effect of the blockade is local and global.

Despite its attempts to starve Cuba the US government fails; the revolution has such massive support inside and around the world that no amount of military or economic power will prevail.

We call on the US administration to end the blockade on Cuba, to stop penalising third countries who wish to trade with Cuba, to remove Cuba from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism, and to let the Cuban people themselves determine their own future.

The CPA also calls on the Australian government to ensure the coercive measures imposed on Cuba by the United States do not affect the Australian people or the trade between the two countries.

The Communist Party of Australia sends a message of solidarity with the Cuban people in their struggle against this cruel blockade. You are not alone!

**International Department  
Communist Party of Australia**

22nd June 2023



“Bridges of love” action in Perth on Sunday 31st October 2021, at the Matagarup Bridge over the Swan River. Organised by Australia Cuba Friendship Society, and supported by CPA, and trade unionists.

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# The corporate state

Anna Pha

**Taxpayers are funding an inefficient system of outsourcing, wasting billions of dollars, in a process riddled with conflicts of interest that results in massive private profits. At the same time the public service has been robbed of its skills base and thousands of jobs lost.**

The tax scandal surrounding PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) has brought to the fore only some of the consequences of government functions being taken over by the corporate sector: The revelations around PwC are just the tip of the iceberg.

Public services and government agencies have been gutted from within with massive staff losses and contracting out of services. Anyone using these services knows how dysfunctional and corrupted they have become.

PwC is one of the Big Four consultancy firms, alongside Deloitte, Ernst and Young (EY), and KPMG. It is a multinational monopoly with operations in 157 countries providing accounting, auditing, consulting, and other services to both the public and private sectors.

Between 1st July 2012 and 30th June 2022 PwC pocketed \$414 million and together the Big Four pocketed \$1.246 billion from Commonwealth government contracts.

In the same years, \$80.8 billion in contracts were awarded – equivalent to around 55,000 full-time staff or one third of the current 144,300 employed by the Australian Public Service (APS). 56 per cent of these contracts were with the Department of Defence.

AusTender has recorded more than 800,000 contracts outsourced to the private sector by the APS and government agencies to the tune of \$565 billion in the past decade. Most of these contracts are for work that would previously have been carried out within government departments and agencies such as the former Commonwealth Employment Service.

Not only is work outsourced but the big firms have staff embedded in the public service and government agencies. Casual employment and labour hire are rife.

## BREACH OF TRUST

Former PwC partner Peter-John Collins was advising the Board of Taxation and Treasury on legislation to tackle tax avoidance by multinational corporations, and then using that confidential information to advise international clients on how to get round those laws.

“[...] Collins was aware that the confidential knowledge he gained from the consultations with Treasury would be leveraged to market PwC to a new client base,” the Tax Practitioner’s Board (TPB) said.

The TPB disqualified Collins for two years as of 23rd December 2022 and ordered PwC to have training and processes in place “to ensure conflicts of interest are adequately managed.”

## FEDERAL POLICE

Treasury has referred the matter to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) to investigate PwC’s conduct.

Almost 40 per cent of the AFP’s contracts in the last two years were with PwC for a total of \$20 million including auditing its books. Its Commissioner is reported to be close to former NSW Police Commissioner Mick Fuller, who now works for PwC.

The *Guardian* is not questioning the integrity of the AFP, but there is always the perception of a conflict of interest to consider.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mining transnational Adani applied for a loan of \$1 billion from the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) for its Carmichael coal mine.

So PwC was working for Adani, working for NAIF, and working for the department that oversees NAIF. With such a set-up, readers might be surprised to learn that Adani *didn’t* get the \$1bn loan.

Because of a conflict of interest!

Not the conflict of interest between PwC and its clients on both sides of the deal, mind you. No, the conflict of interest was that Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk was dating a senior PwC executive.”

## NSW TRANSPORT

Two NSW government departments – Treasury and Transport – signed separate contracts with KPMG to advise on managing the state’s transport assets.

KPMG went ahead with the overlapping work for the two departments without notifying either of them that it was doing the same thing for the other department. Incredibly, the departments received contradictory advice from KPMG.

Treasury’s contract with KPMG was worth \$10.5 million and that of Transport just over \$10 million.

If ever a situation dispels the myth of the private sector being cheaper and more efficient this example must take the cake.

This, like most work outsourced by government departments, could and should be done internally at far less cost to tax payers.

## POLITICAL INFLUENCE

The Big Four accounting firms wield considerable influence in the corridors of Parliament through revolving doors. They hire former politicians and senior public servants and embed their own people in ministerial offices.

To cite a few examples: PwC recruited Tim Reardon, Secretary of the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, federal cities minister Jamie Briggs, and Australian Signals Directorate executive Jane Quodling.

KPMG hired Queensland Premier Anna Bligh’s chief adviser and NBN executive Mike Kaiser and Gillard/Rudd government trade minister Craig Emerson.

Deloitte took on former AFP Commissioner Andrew Colvin.

EY’s recruits include Dean Yates, secretary and special adviser on infrastructure to the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, and Christopher Pyne, former federal Minister for Defence Industry.

These appointments open doors with politicians, and give insights into government and policy-making. They serve to entrench the outsourcing of government departments’ work. This is compounded by staff from these firms being embedded in the public service.

There are no restrictions on public servants stepping immediately into consultancy and advocacy roles. Politicians are supposed to wait 18 months, but this is not enforced.

The Centre for Public Integrity advocates ending this revolving door and enacting tougher post-separation employment provisions and transparency measures.

The situation is compounded by political donations to the major federal parties. Combined donations of the Big Four total \$4.3 million over the decade to June 2022. PwC is the largest contributor with \$2.1 million.

## CORPORATE STATE

The provision of core public services by the for-profit private sector has resulted in a decline in service provision as anyone attempting to deal with CentreLink could confirm, and is costing governments more.

A number of myths are used to sell the idea of privatisation and the associated contracting out of services, policy-making and other government functions. We were told the sector private is inherently more efficient. We are told that markets and competition lead to improved quality, contain costs, are more accountable and provide cheaper services.

These are neoliberal capitalist myths. There is no accountability. There is little or no integrity, as the PwC example shows. But



PricewaterhouseCoopers Building In Johannesburg, South Africa. Photo: TapticInfo – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 4.0)

there are massive profits to be made at the expense of the public purse.

When neoliberal governments talk about “handing everything over to the markets” they are talking about handing over government policy-making and political power and all public enterprises to the naked dictatorship of the big corporations.

This process has been underway since privatisations were commenced under Labor in the 1980s and accelerated under the Howard who slashed public service staffing and privatised the Commonwealth Employment Service with disastrous outcomes for the unemployed.

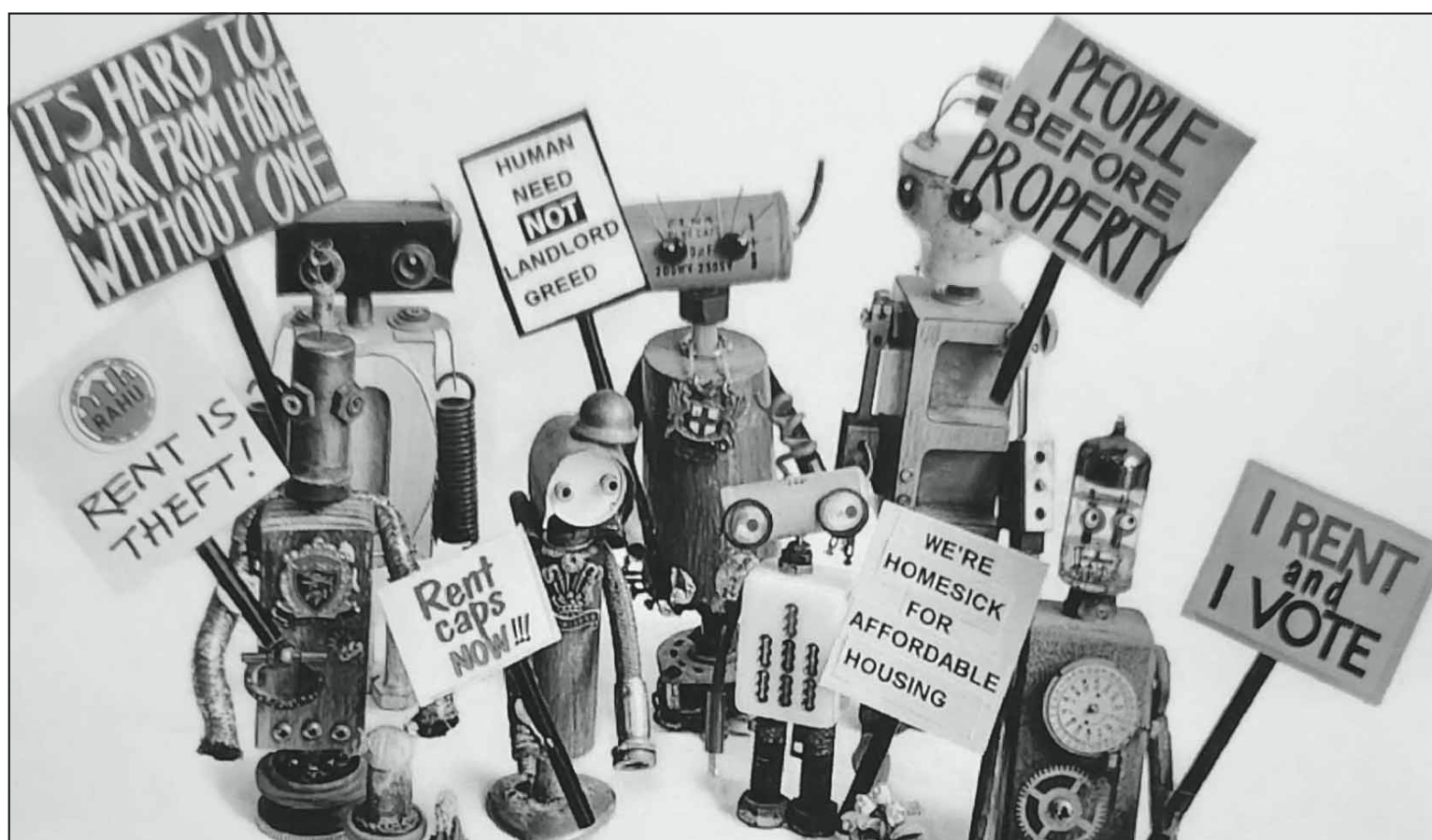
The Albanese government has acknowledged the decimation of the public service. “Labor is committed to rebuilding the APS, its capability and ensuring that jobs that need to be done are delivered, where appropriate, by public servants,” he promised.

The APS is not the only area where work should be done inhouse. There are also all the government agencies.

There is an urgent need to promote the public sector itself – the advantages it offers and the potential it has if expanded and democratised. It can play a major role in job creation, and can provide the government with the means to influence the whole economy, so that the needs of the community are put first, not corporate greed and power. ✪

## (Far from) Abhorrent

When is it good for something to be abhorrent? When it’s the title of this amusing and inspiring zine produced by our comrades at the Renters and Housing Union, or RAHU. With remastered hits like Grace Jones’ “Slave to the Rhythm Landlord,” kids books like “The Very Hungry Caterpillar Renter” and good reasons to join RAHU, like the \$126,700 they won back for members since starting up in 2020, *Abhorrent* is value for money – something renters don’t see enough of. To receive *Abhorrent*, just rent a property and join the Renters and Housing Union! ✪



# Big Welcome for Anura Kumara Dissanayake

## Wow what a welcome to Melbourne for Anura Kumara Dissanayake!

Over 2000 members of Melbourne's Sri Lankan community came to Deakin University's Burwood campus to hear a report by the Leader of JVP & NPP comrade Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Saturday 24th June. Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, literally People's Liberation Front is a Marxist-Leninist communist party campaigning for a people's government in Sri Lanka. Dissanayake, its leader, is also the leader of the National People's Power alliance, a coalition of political parties and other organisations fighting for change in Sri Lanka.

This significant gathering heard about the continuing crisis and intransigence of the old administration which refuses to act to allow elections or take responsibility for their crimes and corruption.

Anura Kumara Dissanayake made a captivating, compelling and at times humorous exposé of the many issues the Sri Lankan people are faced with. Many of the community members attending the meeting have family members in Sri Lanka badly affected by the situation there, and he made frequent references to their plight.

The speech highlighted the continuing and determined struggles



of the people against the corrupt administration.

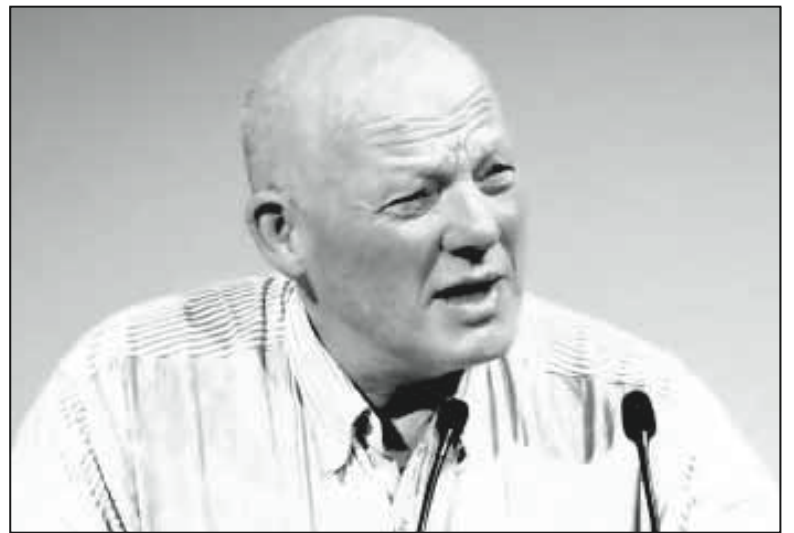
Anura Kumara Dissanayake also spoke of the advances made by alternative progressive political force the National People's Power, which has a strong support organisation in Australia.

The NPP is a political force fighting for elections, real change, and investigation, exposure and prosecution of those in the government who have bankrupted a rich country and imposed so much despair and hardship on the vast majority of the people of Sri Lanka.

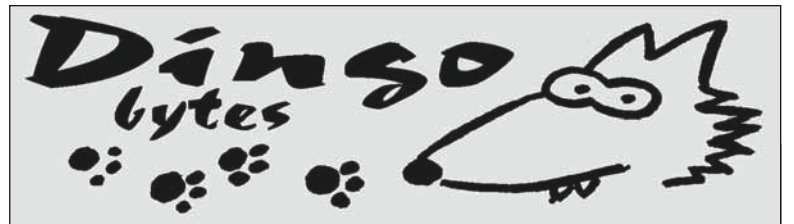
The community came out in force in support of the NPP and believe that its policies present a positive alternative that Sri Lankans here will support as they support their families and community in struggle in Sri Lanka.

Comrade Andrew Irving, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Australia spoke to the gathering, lending the CPA's support in the struggle against those who would exploit all of us, and for independence from those who want to take money out of the country of Sri Lanka. Comrade Irving assured the crowd of Australian comrades solidarity in the struggle for independence from those who have exploited Sri Lanka through privatisation and corruption. Comrade Andrew also asked the audience to work in support of the Indigenous people of Australia by supporting the vote for Yes for a Voice to Parliament so that Aboriginal people can have a voice in their own country.

Congratulations and solidarity, Anura Kumara Dissanayake and the NPP! ✨



Andrew Irving, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Australia.



The Retail Supply Chain Alliance – a coalition of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, the Australian Workers' Union, and the Transport Workers' Union (TWU) – has welcomed new laws announced by the Albanese government to better protect migrant workers in Australia. Among the key features of the legislation are protections against visa cancellation, the implementation of flexible visa requirements for future sponsorship visas, and the introduction of a short-term visa for workers to bring wage claims against exploitative employers. The legislation includes a significant extension of the time sponsored migrants are allowed between sponsors from 60 days to 180 days, allowing these visa holders to engage in part-time or casual employment while they are between sponsored employers. "This legislation is the result of many years of tenacious advocacy and we're very grateful to finally see it," said AWU National Secretary Daniel Walton. "It should enable migrant workers to safely address wage theft and escape from exploitative employers without risking their visa status." The new laws promise to extend Australian workplace protections to all workers, regardless of immigration status, signalling a commitment to ensuring fair and safe working conditions for everyone. "This crucial amendment to the Migration Act means that all workers, including undocumented ones, are entitled to workplace protections under Australian law," noted TWU National Secretary Michael Kaine. "While we applaud these reforms, we know there is still significant work ahead. We look forward to engaging with all stakeholders, including the Department of Home Affairs, in the co-design process of these protections to ensure they are robust, effective and centred on the needs of migrants."

**PARASITE OF THE WEEK:** The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) has joined a chorus of civil society groups raising concerns over the apparent winding back and delay on draft legislation that would have helped to stymie tax dodging by multinational corporations. Efforts were being made to enact mandatory public Country-by-Country Reporting for large corporations operating in Australia from 1st July 2023. However, it is feared the process has been put on the backburner after the federal government last night referred its *Making Multinationals Pay Their Fair Share – Integrity and Transparency* bill to a senate committee for review. NSWNMA Assistant General Secretary, Michael Whaites, said it was a deeply disappointing move, particularly on global Public Service Day (23rd June). "Country-by-Country Reporting is extremely important towards holding major corporations to account and ensuring they pay their fair share of tax in Australia, tax dollars that go towards funding our aged care reform, public health systems and affordable housing," said Whaites. "To have this draft bill watered down and referred to a senate committee on the eve of Public Service Day is very disappointing and raises concern about the perceived influence big businesses continue to have in Australia. Given the recent allegations against PWC, it is clear more transparency is needed, not less, and not the status quo. "We stand with other civil society professionals seeking tax justice in Australia and call on the federal government to be bold on integrity and transparency of the multinationals who operate willingly throughout our great country."

## Privatised, for-profit and punitive

**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 privatised by the Howard 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 current 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 the 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 Australian Public Service 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, CPSU National Secretary said, "The CPSU is proud to launch our campaign to 'Bring Back the CES' and revitalise employment services."

"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 taxpayer 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.

"The CPSU believes that time is up for the current privatised, punitive, and primarily for-profit employment services system.

"Insourcing employment services through the creation of a modern, fit for purpose CES would be a beneficial move for the government, for job seekers, for employers, and for the public.

"It would rebuild capacity and capability within the APS [Australian Public Service], it would allow the Commonwealth to play a direct role in shaping labour market changes and responding to immediate and future policy challenges and economic priorities, and it would rewrite the relationship between government and job seekers, which is hugely overdue." ✨

# Stranded in poverty



Refugee children at a shelter in Tangerang, Indonesia. Photo: Ybl yikimeida – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 4.0).

**Hundreds of refugees, mostly Afghan and Sudanese, staged protests on World Refugee Day on 20th June in cities across Indonesia to demand resettlement after years of being stranded in poverty. There were protests in Pekanbaru, Batam City, Makassar and Medan. Protesters disrupted official World Refugee Day celebrations to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and Indonesian authorities.**

Some of the biggest protests of recent weeks were seen in Makassar where Afghan and Sudanese refugees joined forces outside UNHCR offices and the Australian consulate.

Protests have been growing in Indonesia over the last few months as refugees face cost of living increases that have driven them further into poverty as IOM allowances (paid by Australia) have been frozen since 2018.

Refugees who have arrived in Indonesia since 2018 are deprived of income support or accommodation. The Albanese Labor government is maintaining the 2014 Morrison government ban on accepting UNHCR refugees from Indonesia.

On World Refugee Day

Immigration Minister Andrew Giles bragged about fulfilling Australia's 2023 humanitarian quota. The quota has not been increased since Labor took office. It remains at just 13,750 places. Labor says it is committed to increase the quota to 27,000.

Giles boasted that refugees included in the humanitarian program this year includes 7900 Afghans. Yet has done nothing to assist 7000 Afghan refugees stranded in Indonesia by Australia's ban.

"Labor must lift the ban on Indonesian refugees," said Ian Rintoul, spokesperson for the Refugee Action Coalition, "and it must increase the allowance paid to refugees stranded by Australia's ban."

"Indonesia has been warehousing refugees in Indonesia just as it used Nauru and Papua New Guinea (PNG) for offshore detention. Giles says Labor is committed to "safe, legal pathway. But refugees need more than words. Giles can make good on Labor's claim and end Australia's shameful ban and create a pathway for Indonesian refugees."

Rallies to demand an end to offshore detention, permanent visas for all, and an end to the Indonesia ban will be held around Australia in July to mark the 10th anniversary of 19th July 2013, when the Rudd Labor government announced the Pacific Solution II

and banned refugees sent to PNG and Nauru from permanently settling in Australia.

Meanwhile, around 50 people held a protest at Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation (BITA) on 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. Labor has progressively transferred them to Australia, yet they are paying the notorious detention company MTC, \$420 million for garrison services until September 2025.

For more information contact Ian Rintoul 0417 275 713. ✪

## Union thumbs-up to work improvements

**Unions in Australia have welcomed the Fair Work Amendment (Protecting worker entitlements) Bill 2023.**

The Bill inserts the right to superannuation in the national employment standards.

It improves unpaid parental leave rights by expanding the number of flexible parental leave days from 30 to 100 days and improves flexibility on how they can be taken and shared between parents.

Makes clear that the fair work act protections apply to temporary migrant workers and provides casual workers in the black coal mining industry with the same access to long service leave as permanent workers.

According to the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) president Michelle O'Neill, "Australia's workplace laws need updating to protect workers from loopholes used by some big businesses to drive down

wages and conditions. The passing of this bill is an important step forward in that process.

"Superannuation has finally been recognised in our workplace laws as a universal workplace right. All workers, with their union, will be able to enforce their superannuation rights and recover super that has been stolen from them. Millions of workers have around \$5 billion of superannuation stolen each year, and this measure will ensure more workers can retire with dignity and security.

"The bill also ensures that migrant workers are entitled to the same entitlements and protections as all other workers in Australia.

"The bill is also great for families. Strengthening access to flexible unpaid access to leave means families can better share in caring responsibilities.

"Our workplace laws need to be fair and keep pace with changes in modern workplaces." ✪

## PEACE NOTES

### Whose Artemis?

Hannah Middleton

More than 50 years after the first human stepped onto the lunar surface, the moon has become a strategic asset hosting increasingly hostile military postures and manoeuvres.

The moon sees increasing competition among a larger number of players with mining resources potentially worth billions of dollars.

The Artemis Accords, drafted by NASA, the US Department of State and the US National Space Council, establish rules for exploring and mining the moon.

The Accords were signed in October 2020 by the US, Australia, Canada, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom.

Twenty other nations have since signed the Accords.

The Artemis Accords are an agreement for international co-operation on the moon under US direction. They will enable private and public entities to pursue commercial activities on the moon.

They include commitments to emergency assistance, interoperability, debris mitigation, registration of space objects and sharing of scientific data.

The 1967 Outer Space Treaty (OST) forbids nations from claiming any planetary body or any sovereignty in space. No nation can "own" space or the moon. Weapons of mass destruction are forbidden in orbit and beyond, and the moon, the planets, and other celestial bodies can only be used for peaceful purposes.

The Artemis Accords violate space law by allowing signatories to lay claim to resources extracted from celestial objects.

The US interprets the OST as giving "the basic right for individual States to allow the private sector to become engaged" in commercial activities. However, unilateral approval of commercial exploitation does *not* comply with the OST.

The Accords state that "nations mining the resources of the moon do not acquire any property rights over those resources; they do not own them." The US and the other Accord signatories want a system in which private companies own the resources they extract, although not the territory they come from, because of the Outer Space Treaty. The US claims that the Artemis Accords therefore remain within the Outer Space Treaty's provisions.

The US does not view the moon as a global common, while Russia considers it as part of the heritage of all humanity.

US promotion of the Accords outside the usual channels of international space law, such as the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, has caused much concern. By requiring nations to sign bilateral agreements, the US is trying to impose its own quasi-legal rules and to negotiate agreements and contracts to reinforce its dominance.

Russia insists it will not tolerate unilateral US-led initiatives that replace or undermine existing principles and states that "the principle of invasion remains the same, whether it is on the moon or Iraq."

Russia has stated that the Artemis Accords are too "US-centric" and condemned them as a "blatant attempt to create international space law that favours the United States."

China is excluded from Artemis because NASA is barred by the US Congress from co-operating with Chinese space activities.

China has said the Accords are like "European colonial enclosure land-taking methods".

The China National Space Administration and Russia's Roscosmos State Corporation for Space Activities signed a memorandum of understanding in March 2021 for "extensive co-operation" on an International Lunar Research Station. The station is "a comprehensive scientific experiment base with the capability of long-term autonomous operation, built on the lunar surface and/or on the lunar orbit."

Mining natural resources including industrial metals such as iron, aluminium, and titanium, and rare earths is becoming increasingly important. Space is also a source of energy, using sunlight that can be captured by space-based solar power stations and beamed to Earth.

Now that the US is pursuing the Artemis Program, the question of how states will behave in exploring the moon and using its resources has come to a head. The big question is, who will own them?

Negotiations are needed *now* on the regulation of space in general and of the moon in particular. The aim must be a treaty to set rules governing the responsible and sustainable exploration of outer space.

# FREE JULIAN





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# Earth “really quite sick now”

Seth Borenstein

**Earth has pushed past seven out of eight scientifically established safety limits and into “the danger zone,” not just for an overheating planet that’s losing its natural areas, but for the well-being of people living on it, according to a new study.**

The study, by the international scientist group Earth Commission published in the journal *Nature* looks at climate, air pollution, phosphorus and nitrogen contamination of water from fertiliser overuse, groundwater supplies, fresh surface water, the unbuilt natural environment, and the overall natural and human-built environment. Only air pollution wasn’t quite at the danger point globally.

The study found “hotspots” of problem areas throughout Eastern Europe, South Asia, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, parts of Africa, and much of Brazil, Mexico, China, and some of the US West – much of it from climate change. About two-thirds of Earth doesn’t meet the criteria for freshwater safety, scientists said as an example.

“We are in a danger zone for most of the Earth system boundaries,” said study co-author Kristie Ebi, a professor of climate and public health at the University of Washington.

If planet Earth just got an annual check-up, similar to a person’s physical, “our doctor would say that the Earth is really quite sick right now and it is sick in terms of many different areas or systems

and this sickness is also affecting the people living on Earth,” Earth Commission co-chair Joyeeta Gupta said at a press conference.

It’s not a terminal diagnosis. The planet can recover if it changes, including its use of coal, oil, and natural gas, and the way it treats the land and water, the scientists said.

But “we are moving in the wrong direction on basically all of these,” said study lead author Johan Rockstrom, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany.

“This is a compelling and provocative paper – scientifically sound in methodology and important for identifying the dimensions in which the planet is nearing the edge of boundaries that would launch us into irreversible states,” Indy Burke, dean of the Yale School of the Environment said in an email.

The team of about 40 scientists created quantifiable boundaries for each environmental category, both for what’s safe for the planet and for the point at which it becomes harmful for groups of people, which the researchers termed a justice issue.

Rockstrom said he thinks of those points as setting up “a safety fence” outside of which the risks become higher, but not necessarily fatal.

Rockstrom and other scientists have attempted in the past this type of holistic measuring of Earth’s various interlocking ecosystems. The big difference in this attempt is that scientists also looked at local and regional levels and added the element of justice.



Image: pxfuel.com

The justice part includes fairness between young and old generations, different nations, and even different species. Frequently, it applies to conditions that harm people more than the planet.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

The report uses the same boundary of 1.5 degree Celsius of warming since pre-industrial times that international leaders agreed upon in the 2015 Paris climate agreement. The world has so far warmed about 1.1 degrees Celsius

so it hasn’t crossed that safety fence, but that doesn’t mean people aren’t being hurt.

“What we are trying to show through our paper is that even at 1 degree Centigrade there is a huge amount of damage taking place,” Gupta said, pointing to tens of millions of people exposed to extremely hot temperatures.

The planetary safety guardrail of 1.5 degrees hasn’t been breached, but the “just” boundary where people are hurt of 1 degree has been.

“Sustainability and justice are

inseparable,” said Stanford environmental studies chief Chris Field, who wasn’t part of the research. He said he would want even more stringent boundaries. “Unsafe conditions do not need to cover a large fraction of Earth’s area to be unacceptable, especially if the unsafe conditions are concentrated in and near poor and vulnerable communities.”

People’s World ✪

## Statement of the General Union of Students in the Republic of Iraq You will not Silence the Voice of Students

**We have received the decree issued by the Ministry of Higher Education to prevent the work of our Union within all universities, and to pursue and prosecute our fellow activists in the Union, for fear that the Union’s activities would subsequently be exploited to negatively affect the academic reputation and the progress of the educational process, according to the decree.**

We express our strong disapproval and rejection of this repressive decision, which represents a clear suppression of student and academic freedoms and carries with it a clear and systematic targeting of the voice of students and their Union. It is aimed at covering up the failure and corruption of successive administrations, which has led the educational process to collapse, and implementing further plans and decisions that are destructive to education in our country.

What raises our astonishment and condemnation more is the referral of the follow-up to this decision to the offices of the security services at the university. This is an unacceptable police measure and an explicit violation of the Higher Education Law, which prohibits the presence of any military manifestations on campus.

We would like to state that the academic reputation was humiliated when sectarian and ethnic power-sharing was adopted as a criterion for selecting university administrators at the expense of professional competence and integrity. The ruling forces went further in crushing this reputation when the Certificate Equivalency Law was passed, which legitimized thousands of forged certificates obtained outside Iraq, allowing their holders to later assume high positions in the state. The Ministry has continued in insulting the academic reputation, and it ignores the practices of financiers of private

colleges and universities that are offensive to students and academics alike.

This decision has come at a time when the Ministry turns a blind eye to the practices of the so-called “volunteer student teams,” that are affiliated with ruling parties, and facilitates their work. It is allowing them to carry out the most heinous sectarian and political activities and the blackmail of professional educational cadres.

Accordingly, we call on the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research to withdraw this repressive decision and to make an official apology to our Union for the grave abuse it caused to the history of the first student organization in Iraq. We also hold the Ministry responsible for the security and safety of our colleagues and cadres.

We, in the General Union of Students in the Republic of Iraq, stress that these repressive practices will not undermine our resolve to continue the march of the Union

that extends back over 75 years of struggle, and to continue our activities that are aimed at securing a free student life and a better future.

In the same context, we extend our call and appeal to all friendly unions, organizations and trade unions, to condemn this decision which constitutes a grave violation of student and academic freedoms, as it is part of a series of measures targeting public freedoms that are constitutionally and legally guaranteed, and to stand firmly against these practices.

Long live the General Union of Students in the Republic of Iraq.

Long live the struggles of the Iraqi student movement.

**Executive Committee  
The General Student Union  
in the Republic of Iraq**

20th June 2023

## Largest NHS action in history

**UK: Junior doctors in England are to escalate their industrial action for better pay by striking for five days next month in the largest National Health Service action in history.**

The British Medical Association (BMA) also reported junior doctors being “inundated” with job offers from abroad as the government ignores their call for their pay to be restored to 2008 levels.

In one instance, the government of South Australia sent a truck with advertisement hoardings to picket

lines offering the doctors well-paid jobs there.

Attempts to lure angry and dissatisfied NHS workers away come against a background of 154,000 staff shortages including 47,000 nurses, more than 8,500 doctors, and shortages of midwives, general practitioners and community nurses.

July’s action will be “the longest single period of industrial action in the history of the health service,” according to the BMA.

BMA junior doctors committee

co-chairs Dr Robert Laurenson and Dr Vivek Trivedi said, “The NHS is one of this country’s proudest achievements and it is shameful that we have a government seemingly content to let it decline to the point of collapse with decades of real-terms pay cuts to doctors driving them away.

“With the 75th birthday of the NHS just days away, neglect of its workforce has left us with 7.4 million people on waiting lists for surgery and procedures, 8500 unfilled doctors’ posts in hospitals,

and doctors who can barely walk down the road without a foreign government tempting them to leave NHS where they are paid £14 per hour for a country which will pay them properly.”

They also said more than 80 per cent of junior doctors reported that patients support their action.

“Even now the government can avert our action by coming to the table with a credible offer on pay restoration,” the pair said.

“Restoring pay can stem the flow of Australian job adverts in

doctors’ social media feeds – and lead to a future 75 years of doctors being paid fairly, in a rebuilt workforce and NHS that this country can continue to be proud of.”

A spokesman for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the junior doctors “chose to end talks by announcing new strike dates,” and that if the strikes were cancelled “we will be able to proceed with those discussions.”

The doctors will strike from 13th to 18th July.

Morning Star ✪



# Slaughter House Juneteenth

Graham Holton

**Across the US multiple shootings marred the Juneteenth weekend, leaving thirteen dead and more than 100 wounded. In Chicago at least 70 people were shot, 13 fatally. In Baltimore six people were wounded. In Milwaukee six teenagers were shot and in St. Louis one child was killed and nine others injured at a party. Other shootings occurred in numerous other cities. Those responsible for the shootings have diverse backgrounds. Why was there so much violence on the national holiday?**

Juneteenth, aka the 19th of June commemorates the end of slavery on 19th June 1865, at the end of the Civil War. At its hub is the island of Galveston, where Union General Gordon Granger read out Order No. 3, freeing 250,000 people in Texas from the evils of slavery, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation. Today Juneteenth is a US federal holiday in twenty-eight states and Washington DC. More than twenty states do not recognise the holiday.

On 19th June 2023, Jan Schakowsky, a congressman from Illinois said of Juneteenth, "Today marks 158 years since the day the last group of enslaved Black people in the United States learned they were free. I am proud to have been able to vote to make this important day a federal holiday, and to see President Biden sign it into law in 2021. ... Despite the progress we have made, Black Americans are bound by the intergenerational trauma of slavery, systemic racism, and right-wing extremist attacks. The inequities continue to play out in our health, education, and justice systems."

St Louis Mayor, Tishaura Jones, told CNN, "My heart goes out to all of the families in pain today. All those attending will carry with them the scars, physical and mental, from the gun violence that tore into their lives."

Earlier, on 13th June, the Department of Homeland Security had issued a nationwide alert that Juneteenth would likely witness numerous White Supremacist attacks, after online website posts called for widespread violent attacks against Black events, businesses, institutions, and those individuals who supported the holiday. The Buffalo Massacre, by the white domestic terrorist Payton Gendron, would inspire other White Supremacists to commit acts of violence. "We assess that reactions to the [14th May] attack in Buffalo, New York, from racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs) who believe in the superiority of the white race likely will drive a heightened threat to traditional RMVE targets – including African American and other minority communities – in the coming months."

The Deputy Attorney General, Lisa Monaco, spoke on the threat, "The intelligence community has assessed that the most lethal domestic terrorism threat is posed by racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists."

On 15th June, the Justice Department formally charged Gendron with twenty-six counts of federal hate crimes and firearms offenses. His 19th birthday was on 20th June.

Attorney General Merrick Garland said, "[We] fully recognise the threat that hatred and violent extremism pose to the safety of the American people and American democracy. We will be relentless in

our efforts to combat hate crimes, to support the communities terrorised by them, and to hold accountable those who perpetrate them."

The US Attorney's Office held its second United Against Hate event in Missoula, Montana on 16th June, with a meeting of federal and local law enforcement representatives and members of the LGBTQI+ community.

The election of president Donald Trump in 2016 saw the alt-right gain prominence in the US political scene. Their extreme right-wing views have become increasingly mainstream, a result of the long history of racism, white supremacy, and white nationalism in the country.

Three years later, the Southern Poverty Law Center reported a marked increase in white nationalist groups, with a 55 per cent increase from 2017. In 2022 the Anti-Defamation League annual assessment of propaganda activity showed that white supremacy propaganda distribution and events had increased by 38 per cent across the US, with a 61 per cent increase in Texas. The report recorded 6751 incidents, 527 of them from Texas. At least fifty different White Supremacist groups and networks distributed propaganda, with three responsible for 93 per cent of the activity: Patriot Front, Goyim Defense League, and White Lives Matter. The Patriot Front was responsible for 80 per cent of the distributions.

The National Urban League report, "State of Black America" (April 2023), gives details of the present high level of white supremacy hate crimes, extremism and racism occurring across America. There are no signs that hate crimes are abating. ✪

## "Dire hunger emergency"

**Somalia's "dire hunger emergency" has escalated to frightening levels, with one-third of the population expected to face crisis or worse levels of food needs, World Food Programme executive director Cindy McCain said.**

Her statement came as the United Nations agency has been forced to cut food aid drastically for lack of funding.

McCain told the UN security council that the latest food security data shows over 6.6 million Somalis in desperate need of assistance, including 40,000 "fighting for survival in famine-like conditions."

But she said that the World Food Program had been forced to cut monthly food assistance, which had reached a record 4.7 million people in December, to just 3 million people at the end of April.

She added: "Without an immediate cash injection, we'll have to cut our distribution lists again in July to just 1.8 million per month."

McCain, who visited Somalia last month, said that she had seen "how conflict and climate change are conspiring to destroy the lives and livelihoods of millions of Somalis."

The country's longest drought on record, which killed millions of livestock and decimated crops, recently gave way to disastrous flash floods in the south, she added.

Urging donors to be as generous as they were in hauling Somalia "back from the abyss of famine in 2022," McCain warned that the survival of millions of Somalis is at stake.

**"... conflict and climate change are conspiring to destroy the lives and livelihoods of millions of Somalis."**

UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres visited Somalia in April "to ring the alarm" and appealed for "massive international support" for the Horn of Africa country.

However, the results of a high-level donors conference for three countries in the region – Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya – on 24th May were very disappointing.

It raised less than \$1 billion of the more than \$5 billion that organisers were hoping for to help over 30 million people.

Only in the past few years has Somalia begun to find its footing after three decades of violent chaos caused by warlords, the al-Qaida-linked Al-Shabaab extremist group, and the emergence of Islamic State-linked jihadists.

With Somalia having faced numerous attacks from Al-Shabaab, the government recently embarked on what has been described as the most significant offensive against the extremist group in more than a decade.

Catriona Laing, the new UN special representative for Somalia, told the council that the government's operations have degraded Al-Shabaab militarily, and dislodged its fighters from a number of areas, which is "a notable achievement."

Nonetheless, she warned that the group remains a "significant threat" in the region.

*Morning Star* ✪



## Global Briefs

**SRI LANKA:** Former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa is accused in a report of tampering with police records in a bid to hamper investigations into mass graves discovered in an area where he was a military officer during an insurrection in 1989. The report by activist groups including the International Truth and Justice Project, Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka and Families of the Disappeared also said that even though hundreds of sets of remains have been unearthed in some 20 exhumations of mass graves in the past three decades, no action has been taken to identify the victims and return their remains to their families.

**GERMANY:** A rail workers' union said that it will ask its members to vote on all-out strike action after long-running pay talks with the main national train operator broke down. The EVG union has already staged hours-long or one-day "warning strikes," a common tactic in German wage negotiations, during the dispute with state-owned Deutsche Bahn.

**AFGHANISTAN:** The country's United Nations envoy warned the Taliban that international recognition as the legitimate government will remain "nearly impossible" unless the Islamist movement lifts severe restrictions on women and girls' education and employment. Roza Otunbayeva told the UN security council that the Taliban "act against the key values expressed in the United Nations charter."

**RUSSIA:** *Wall Street Journal* reporter Evan Gershkovich, who was arrested in March, must remain in jail on espionage charges until at least late August, a Moscow court has ruled, rejecting the US journalist's request for release.

**BRAZIL:** Former Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro faces being barred from standing for office for eight years after his country's electoral court began ruling on charges linked to his unfounded allegations against the voting system. The Superior Electoral Tribunal is deciding whether the far-right politician abused his office and misused state media when, in July last year, he told a meeting of foreign diplomats that Brazil's electronic voting machines were subject to large-scale fraud. Prosecutors argue that the claim violated electoral law, as it took place during campaigning for the October 2022 elections. Bolsonaro lost the presidential election to his left-wing rival Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva. Experts says that a conviction is almost certain, taking Bolsonaro out of the next presidential elections, due in 2026. The former president told journalists: "There was no criticism or attack on the electoral system" at last July's meeting. On 8th January, his supporters ran riot in the presidential palace, Supreme Court, and Congress a week after Lula's inauguration, claiming that the elections had been rigged, and demanding military intervention. Bolsonaro's actions have been compared to the attempts by Donald Trump to cling to power after his defeat in the 2020 US presidential election.

Find out more about the

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### Brexit self-harm

Dear Comrade Editor,  
Seven years ago a few currency speculators and hedge fund owners who knew they would make a lot of money, a few principled, thinking left-wing people who believed it would make nationalisation and other socialist measures easier under a future left-wing government, and an awful lot of people who would shave their hair and eat it in a pizza if the *Mail*, *Express*, *Sun*, *Times*, *Telegraph*, or *Daily Star* told them to, voted to leave the EU.

It was a conscious act of economic and political selfharm on a par with the repeated election of Thatcher in the 1980s with its resultant destruction of public housing, NHS, social care, social security and everything else which constitutes a coherent, caring and decent society.

Together, these two acts have transformed the UK from one led by people at least trying, in that memorable postwar phrase, to make “a country fit for heroes” to one stewarded by self serving liars, and ideally suited to property speculators, unscrupulous landlords, hedge fund owners, oligarchs wallowing in wealth stolen from socialist economies and privatised utility, railway, and healthcare parasites.

They have gone from being (rightly or wrongly) regarded

as a leading force for social justice and intelligent leadership in Europe to being dismissed as an irrelevant sewage covered backwater run by people who hate foreigners.

And, seemingly to quell any doubt as to the correctness of this assessment, the government has apparently made it illegal for Sadiq Khan’s office to fly the EU flag today, despite the fact that 60 per cent of Londoners voted to stay in the EU.

He should do so anyway.  
Anyhoo Bollocks to Brexit.

Jim Cowie  
Melbourne

### Shame Albo Shame

On Monday 26th June, the Australia government announced a new military package worth \$110 million for Ukraine. The very same day Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong, and Defence Minister Richard Marles paid tribute to ALP Elder Simon Crean who sadly passed away on Sunday 25th June in Germany, aged 74.

PM Albo obviously ignored that Simon Crean as leader of the ALP in opposition stood firmly against the war in Iraq that the Coalition government without parliament approval sent Australian troops to die in yet another US war.

It is a shame that the three main government representatives tried to persuade the public about their decision for more money for war while expressing their condolences to the family of Simon Crean’s. A trade unionist who rightly opposed a war for which war criminals at the helm have not been prosecuted.

People in the Ukraine do not need more military support. What the Ukrainian people need is international support for the initiatives trying to find a diplomatic political solution to the conflict.

While the war goes on the Ukrainian government is privatising all public enterprises, undermining the right



Something to say?  
Write to the Editor!

editor@cpa.org.au

for workers to organise and limit or ban the participation of working-class organisations.

At home the Australian government continues with its warmongering, pushing the AUKUS deal and taking scarce resources out of workers pockets. No money for health, dental, housing, and social spending just for war plans.

I would say Shame Albo Shame!

Vinnie Molina  
WA

## Op-Ed: Why they’re bastards



Photo: Ken Teegardin – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Marcus Browning

“Robbing a bank’s no crime compared to owning one.”

Bertold Brecht

**Private banks exist to make fat profits. Social conscience does not generate profits. If maximising profits means people are made homeless or driven into poverty by massive repayments, then that is seen as in the interests of shareholders.**

Their failure reflects the bankruptcy of policies that are based on “market forces” and the inability of the private profit system to address the needs of people and the overall economy. While the accumulation of maximum private profit remains the one and only goal of banks, they cannot but fail the people.

We need a bank that exists to provide

people with a service, that has as its charter a social responsibility to assist and support people, small business and family farmers.

Following privatisation of the publicly owned state and Commonwealth Banks, all semblance of real competition went out of the window – the Big Four banks gained a tight monopoly over the industry. Fees were raised, new fees introduced, service deteriorated and new investment products were promoted that have nothing to do with genuine banking.

One of the reasons banks got into so much trouble and carry such heavy losses on their books is that they have not stuck to banking. Their problems lie in the huge debts and losses they raked up in takeovers, speculative activities such as derivatives, and loans to private equity and other corporate sharks for takeovers and expansion.

What is needed is a bank that offers

banking services. A bank that takes savings deposits, pays interest on them and receives interest on the money it lends people and businesses. One hundred years ago banks made their income from margins – the difference between the interest they paid on deposits and the interest they received from loans. This difference also funded their costs. We need a bank that is a real bank, providing banking services, without the fees, but with guarantees on savings.

People need certainty in their lives. When they take out a home loan they need to know what their repayments will be in a few years time; that they will not rocket beyond reach. They need to know that the bank will not turf them onto the streets if they become ill or unemployed and fail to make mortgage payments.

People need to know that their savings are secure, guaranteed by government. The

government needs to know that when it uses public funds, as it is doing now, it has control over where those funds go and how they are used. That it can ensure their use is socially desirable and socially beneficial.

Rural people need a sympathetic bank that treats them well, can accommodate periods of flood and drought.

Small business needs a bank that can provide them with a reliable service that recognises their needs.

Government needs a bank that will lend where investment is needed, that has the confidence of the people to sell bonds and raise the necessary finance where needed to carry out government policy.

There is only one type of bank that can do these things, a publicly owned and controlled bank – a People’s Bank. That is what Australia needs right now. ✪

# Starbucks ditches Pride for profit

Mark Gruenberg

**WASHINGTON: Somebody tell Starbucks's bosses that June is Pride Month. They've gone in the other direction.**

An internal memo, leaked to Starbucks Workers United (SWU) – the Service Employees-backed group that's aiding the grassroots union organising drive at the coffee giant – orders store managers to take down and remove all pro-LGBTQ+ material from their stores.

This is, of course, from a corporation that attempts to cultivate an image of inclusiveness. Yet its vicious campaign to prevent unionisation of its stores, filled with so much labor-law breaking that it's resulted in multiple federal court orders, belies that.

So does its anti-gay edict. Workers in the Twin Cities first reported the memo, the same day, 14th June 14, that Starbucks honchos publicly denied the firm is anti-LGBTQ.

"The manager of my store received an e-mail from the district manager last night regarding decorations," a Minnesota Starbucks worker posted. "The memo instructed my manager – and perhaps other managers – *not to put up decorations for Pride or any other holiday*" [writer's emphasis].

"Rather than demonstrating inclusivity by erecting decorations for a multiplicity of holidays," the writer said later, "including Pride, our store will disavow decorations entirely."

In the last 30 years, LGBTQ+ people have increasingly become accepted in wider US society, especially when it comes to matters of non-discrimination on the job, marriage equality, and in popular culture. A combination of chasing after the "pink dollar" and the advancement of LGBTQ people within corporate management structures have also resulted in many companies embracing Pride marketing every June.

But there's been a corresponding right-wing backlash, some of it violent, and especially aimed at transgender people as of late.

Starbucks appears to be catering to the right-wingers, in the name of greater profits, the Twin Cities Starbucks worker, commenting on the internal memo, said.

"Given the timing of her directive, I assume our district manager has yielded to pressure from alt-right homophobes and transphobes."

Starbucks Workers United had its own take on the company's



Photo: RDNE Stock project – pexels.com (CC0)

attitude, in a press release posted as a series of tweets.

"For the last two weeks, Starbucks workers have taken to social media to report the company is no longer allowing Pride decorations in-store. This seems to be the first year the publicly "pro-LGBTQ+" company has taken this kind of stance," it began.

"Taking a cue from Target, who bowed to anti-LGBTQ+ pressure and removed Pride merchandise, corporate and district management are taking down Pride decorations that have become an annual tradition in stores.

"In union stores, where Starbucks claims they are unable to make 'unilateral changes' without bargaining, the company took down Pride decorations and flags anyway – ignoring their own anti-union talking point."

But the firm's discrimination against LGBTQ+ people apparently extends beyond the absent visuals in its stores – and it started long before Pride Month. SWU, quoting workers, reported "last October, some workers reported their transgender health benefit plan changed, causing them to pay out of pocket fees and lose access to certain providers."

"If Starbucks was a true ally, they would stand up for us, especially during a time when LGBTQ+ people are under attack. A company that cares wouldn't turn their back on the LGBTQ+ community to protect their already astronomically high profits," the tweets said.

SWU concluded by declaring unionisation and writing anti-discrimination policy into a contract is the way to end the company's prejudice.

"True allyship with the LGBTQ+ community is negotiating a union contract that legally locks in our benefits, our freedom of expression, and ways to hold management accountable," the SWU release concludes.

That may take a while. Starbucks has shown few signs of bargaining in good faith, despite National Labor Relations Board orders that it do so.

Except in scattered instances with a few local stores – the latest in Brooklyn – Starbucks, led by its former CEO Howard Schultz and the union-busters his regime hired, has refused. The grassroots organising drive has won union recognition votes at more than 320 Starbucks stores, covering over 8000 workers, around the US.

But when public pressure forced Starbucks bosses to sit down with workers' reps, the union-busters called for their caucus after five minutes, before SWU had a chance to present and explain its contract proposals, which it posted publicly on its website.

Instead, the bosses walked out and never came back. They repeated that performance in the very next scheduled session, giving the excuse that workers from around the country should not be allowed to Zoom into the telecast.

People's World ✪



## the job (getting on with)

The Labor government doesn't have time for empty talk, you'll be surprised to hear. That's because they are "getting on with the job" of building new homes. "Getting on with the job" sounds so real and practical, it's no wonder people whose jobs are mostly talking love to use it. It sounds, for just a moment, as though they've got a wheelbarrow full of bricks they need to get back to.

## affordable (housing)

A very specialised weasel word, this one. 'Affordable' is only ever used when talking about housing. It's a very successful weasel word, almost never questioned. Affordable by who? For how long?

"Affordable" sounds like it must be good – it's not like we want housing which is *unaffordable*! What "affordable" should be contrasted with instead is a word not used much now – public. "Affordable" housing can be only affordable for some people, and can also be flogged off later when the NGO that helped get it built needs some cash, long after the announcements have been made. Let's get housing which is publicly owned and affordable for everyone!

## modest (adjustment)

Modest clothing doesn't draw attention to itself. Modest changes to super laws are like that. Labor was scared by the fury they faced when a proposal by Bill Shorten to stop giving free money to rich people was misrepresented as a scheme to attack all old people and take away their beach houses. Now treasurer Jim Chalmers has made a "modest" adjustment to super affecting only the .05 per cent of people with super balances of more than \$3 million. Everyone else's rorts will be uninterrupted. It remains to be seen if this modesty will satisfy the right wing media whose approval Labor craves, but if "no tax refunds for rich people who don't pay tax" isn't modest enough for the Murdoch press, I wouldn't bet on it.

## reward (for your experience)

When is paying person A more than person B for the same job not underpaying person B? When it's a reward to A for experience! Labor's 'same job same pay' legislation is meant to address the situation where two people doing exactly the same work can get different rates of pay because they're working for different contractors. It's nothing to do with fairness, but unfairness is the Mineral Council of Australia's thing, so they're spending big on totally deceptive ads pretending it's all about rewarding people for experience and hard work.

## agency (exercising our)

"Exercising agency" is a waffly way of saying "doing what you want to do," unless you have a dog called "Agency" that needs a walk. Agency becomes positively weasle-ish in the hands of Foreign Minister Penny Wong. Asked by an anxious journalist about whether Pacific islands countries were banding together to prevent having "a closed hierarchical region dominated by one particular power" Wong answered that "peace is best served by all of us exercising our agency." Never mind the fact that a region dominated by one particular power is what the Pacific has now – that power is the USA, and Wong is absolutely fine with US domination. As for exercising agency, remember the uproar the last time the Solomon Islands exercised its agency by signing an agreement with China? That may not be the sort of exercise Penny Wong had in mind.

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## TV/Streaming review

# Utopia

FJK

Communists have a hard time with the word “utopia.” We are often derided as “utopian” by people who dislike communism but don’t think about it much. One of the first things you learn reading classic communist texts like *The Communist Manifesto* is that communists are very much *not* utopian socialists. Those soft-headed types who think that if they just announce their great ideas for how good human society could be, the world will make it happen without any need for class struggle. By the time Engels wrote *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, the utopian socialists had been doing this for some time with no success, but they are still with us now.

People in general are suspicious of utopias, so tv shows using the title tend to be negative. If you don’t mind a lot of darkness and violence, and do like good techno music, check out the 2013 British thriller, *Utopia*, in which plucky underdogs fight a eugenicist conspiracy to make the world perfect by sterilising 19 out of every 20 people on earth.

The ABC comedy series *Utopia*, launched in 2014, was always a kind of Australian “Yes Minister.” This reference dates me badly, but *Yes Minister* and the follow-up,

*Yes Prime Minister*, are absolute comedy classics which stand the test of time. *Utopia*, in which Rob Sitch is running an infrastructure department that can’t get anything done, is okay-funny. Overall, it’s a mug of warm Milo – nice but not thrilling.

The opening moments of the new *Utopia* really take me back. We see a bunch of futuristic graphics and hear people saying “nation-building” a lot. We also hear the current Prime Minister say it. It seems like an eternity ago that Tony Abbott was announcing that he wanted to be “the infrastructure Prime Minister.” There has been a decade of bad prime ministering since then – not just amusingly incompetent, but actually lethal.

Still, here we are in 2023, and some things are always funny. Like the gap between what politicians promise and what they mean to deliver, and how they wiggle out of commitments, right? *Utopia* has a crack at that with Lehmo, the new PM’s political fixer, doing the amusing wiggling.

Less hilarious is the first episode’s other focus, respect classes. “It’s just one hour,” Rob Sitch’s oppressed boss says with relief. “That’s right, just one hour a day for this week.”

This is meant to be hilarious because everyone knows how to respect their fellow workers, so we don’t need some patronising instructor to give us classes on it,



right? Classes that office workers are made to sit through, can definitely be annoying, and patronising. It’s understandable that workers who try to get on with everyone and do the right thing could feel affronted at the idea they need a class on their behaviour, but middle-class Australians are told that they don’t need to change a thing about their behaviour often enough without *Utopia* adding to it.

On the casual racism front, the bossy respect class instructor

perpetrates some on a staff member by repeatedly asking them where they’re from, and not being happy with being told “accounts,” or “Mitcham.” It’s kind of funny because she’s doing what she’s supposed to be teaching the staff not to do.

The show also tries to satirise workplace harassment. The hunky new guy in the office wants to flirt with nice Celia Pacquola, who’s interested, but a fellow worker who takes the Respect class too seriously keeps interrupting their fun flirting.

It’s meant to be funny because he’s taking respect too seriously. At this point, the makers of *Utopia* should go to youtube and look up “Are we the baddies?” Women still face workplace harassment at high levels. Non-anglo Australians face immense amounts of casual racism. I’m fine with satirising boring workplace training, but *Utopia* verges on making fun of a worker’s right to get through the day without casual racism or harassment.

ABC and ABC iview 📺

## Daniel Ellsberg

# “The most dangerous man in America”

Graham Holton

**Daniel Ellsberg, once known as “the most dangerous man in America,” died on 16th June 2023 at the age of 92. In 1969 he was working as a Pentagon consultant at the prestigious Rand Corporation think tank, where he gained access to classified documents on the Vietnam War, which already had killed 45,000 Americans and hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese. In 1971 he exposed the history of US involvement in US Decision-Making in Vietnam, 1945–68, better known as the Pentagon Papers. The 7000 pages disclosed massive deception by US Presidents from Harry Truman to Lyndon B Johnson.**

The Nixon administration tried and failed to block the Pentagon Papers publication. It went to the Supreme Court, which considered the implications of the wiretapping of one of the defendants and his lawyer by the government, in what became known as Watergate. The trial court judge, Matthew Byrne, declared a mistrial and the Supreme

Court ruled 6-3 to allow the publication of the *Pentagon Papers*.

Ellsberg’s disclosure of US activities is credited as a major factor in ending the war in Vietnam. The former chief editor of *The Guardian* (UK) newspaper, Alan Rusbridger, called Ellsberg, “the grandfather of whistleblowers.”

The publication of the *Pentagon Papers* was followed by Philip Agee’s *Inside the Company: CIA Diary* (1975), which exposed CIA activities in Latin America. More recent whistleblowers include Julian Assange, Bradley Manning, Edward Snowden, and Chelsea Manning. In 2010 Julian Assange published in his *Wikileaks*, more than 700,000 confidential documents, videos and diplomatic cables, provided by a US Army intelligence analyst. He is presently in prison in the UK, with the possibility that he will be extradited to the USA to face espionage charges.

With the US presently provoking war with China, it is worth remembering the real aim of the Vietnam War. President Johnson stated that the Vietnam War was to secure an “independent, non-Communist South

Vietnam,” but a January 1965 memorandum by Assistant Secretary of Defense John McNaughton stated that it was actually “to contain China.”

According to the *Pentagon Papers*, the US government played a key role in the 1963 South Vietnamese coup and assassination of Ngô Đình Diệm, the first president of the Republic of Vietnam, thereby escalating the US presence in Saigon. On 3rd November 1965, Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, sent a memorandum to President Johnson about the bombings: “The February decision to bomb North Vietnam and the July approval of Phase 1 deployments make sense only if they are in support of a long-run United States policy to contain China.”

In 2021, concerned about the US stoking tensions with China, Ellsberg released a classified government report showing the US had planned to attack China with nuclear weapons, during the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis. A nuclear first strike by the US was an “insane” policy that would have ended “most life on Earth.”

In April 2023 Jack Teixeira, a member

of the Air National Guard, was arrested for leaking classified documents on the Ukraine Conflict, prepared by the Joint Chief of Staff intelligence directorate and the Defense Intelligence Agency. The “Top Secret” documents revealed that since February 2022, 43,000 Russian soldiers had been killed and 180,000 wounded. Ukraine also had suffered massive losses with 131,000 killed and wounded.

In a recent interview, Ellsberg found the conflicts in Ukraine and Taiwan constituted an “insanity that has taken over the public,” as there was a “real possibility of a nuclear war.” That Boris Johnson and other Western leaders dissuaded Volodymyr Zelenskyy from signing a peace treaty in April 2022 was a “crime against humanity.” They told Zelenskyy: “We are not ready for that. We want the war to continue. We will not accept a negotiation.” Ellsberg believed that “there were a lot of Americans who wanted this war.”

Filmmaker Michael Moore said that Ellsberg “risked being jailed for life for his role in helping to end America’s mass slaughter in Vietnam.” 📺



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