

# Solidarity

Issue No. 192 / February 2025

\$3/\$5



**Sanction Israel - Scrap the US alliance**

**STOP THIS FAR  
RIGHT THUG**

**PALESTINE**

Antisemitism and the  
crackdown on protest

**TRUMP**

Resisting Trump's  
rule for the billionaires

**WORLD IN CRISIS**

The case  
for socialism

# Solidarity **WHAT WE STAND FOR**

## Capitalism is a system of crisis and war

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

## Workers power and socialism

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

## What about elections and parliament?

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

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

## We are internationalists

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

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

We oppose imperialism and support all

genuine national liberation struggles. We oppose Australian nationalism.

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

## Oppression and liberation

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

## Linking up the struggles

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

## Educate, agitate, organise

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

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

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

## SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

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Meeting 6.30pm every Thursday  
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Newtown  
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### Melbourne

Meeting 6.30pm every Thursday  
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### Solidarity No. 192

February 2025  
ISSN 1835-6834

Responsibility for election  
comment is taken by James  
Supple, 410 Elizabeth St, Surry  
Hills NSW 2010.  
Printed by El Faro, Newtown  
NSW.

## SUBSCRIBE TO SOLIDARITY MAGAZINE

*Solidarity* is published monthly. Make sure you don't miss an issue—pay by credit card online at [www.solidarity.net.au/subscribe](http://www.solidarity.net.au/subscribe) or send in this form with a cheque or money order and we will mail you *Solidarity* each month.

5 issues—\$15     One year (12 issues)—\$36     Two years (24 issues)—\$65

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Cheques payable to ISO Publishing. Send to PO Box 375 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012.

## Things they say

**We'll do what is necessary. If it's necessary, we'll do that. We're going to take over that place.**

Donald Trump on sending US troops to Gaza. His press secretary later said there'd be no US boots on the ground

**It is unfair to have explained to Palestinians that they might be back in five years. That is preposterous.** Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, saying it would take more than five years to make Gaza habitable again

**It [Israel] is a small piece of land, no question about it.**

Donald Trump, when asked if he supported Israel annexing parts of the West Bank

**Our decisions and the courage of our soldiers have redrawn the map [of the Middle East], but I believe that working closely with President Trump, we can redraw it even further.**

Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu

**They [Hamas] must be eliminated; they must be eradicated**

Trump's Secretary of State Marco Rubio, indicating the US shares Israel's goals

**Nothing can destroy coal. Not the weather, not a bomb.**

Donald Trump continues to back the fossil fuel companies

**They're rather far away and they need lots of airplanes.**

Donald Trump explanation of the US's trade surplus with Australia

**I'm better than I was 10 years ago ... I walk a lot. I swim, play tennis, do all that. I watch my diet, and I'm alcohol-free from Christmas, from New Year's Eve, for the duration. I did that last time [for the 2022 election]. It helps.**

Anthony Albanese on his election preparations

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## Extreme ocean heat kills 30,000 fish

AN EXTREME ocean heatwave caused 30,000 dead fish to wash up along the coast of WA in January, state authorities say.

The fish were found along a nine-kilometre stretch of beaches close to Gnoorea Point, 50 kilometres from Karratha in the state's northwest.

Ocean temperatures nearby were around 31 degrees, two to three degrees higher than normal, Nathan Harrison of WA's Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development said.

Further north around Broome a coral bleaching event has been underway since December, with ocean temperatures four to five degrees above normal.

"WA's oceans are the new frontline in the escalating climate crisis being driven by fossil fuel extraction, which WA is continuing to expand despite our increasing carbon emissions," Mia Pepper, the Campaigns Director at the Conservation Council of WA, said.

## Bank profits up again

COMMONWEALTH BANK profits hit \$5.1 billion for the first half of the financial year, an increase of 6 per cent. They're on track to hit \$10 billion annual profit for only the second time.

Higher interest rates are continuing to line the bank's pockets, while anyone with a home loan is under huge pressure. Loans in arrears actually cost the bank less because it was able to offset them due to rising house prices, since it can sell the home if a loan goes bad.

The bank is keen to make sure shareholders hang onto its fat profits. Last year the bank's CEO Matt Comyn complained calls for a super-profits tax on the bank were "insidious populism".

## Official hypocrisy over antisemitism and Islamophobia

MUSLIM COMMUNITY groups have condemned media and government double standards over the response to Islamophobic and antisemitic attacks. While the video of Bankstown nurses threatening Israelis was treated as a national crisis, anti-Muslim attacks are virtually ignored.

In the last month alone there have been numerous reported Islamophobic incidents. Two young Muslim women were assaulted and one knocked to the ground at Epping Plaza in Melbourne. A 53-year-old Sydney woman was also charged over seven separate graffiti incidents of anti-Arab and Islamophobic racism. Another instance of anti-Muslim graffiti was also reported in Sefton.

## Israel's Likud aligns with Europe's fascist right



ISRAEL'S RULING Likud party, headed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has joined the European alliance of far-right parties, Patriots.eu, as an observer member, aligning it with fascists and Holocaust deniers who are today fanatical supporters of Israel.

The grouping was founded by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, a friend of Donald Trump who is known for his authoritarian assault on the courts, independent media and activists and his vicious scapegoating of migrants and LGBTIQ+ people. He has also used antisemitic imagery depicting Jewish financiers plotting to control the world, including George Soros, in his election campaigns.

The grouping is currently led by France's National Rally, a party founded and led by fascists, and also includes the German AfD, which is increasingly dominated by organised Nazis such as Bjorn Hocke, who was convicted in 2023 for using a banned Nazi slogan.

Most of these far-right parties try to hide their antisemitism, focusing on the use of extreme racism against Muslims, migrants and refugees.

But in the case of Austria's Freedom Party the antisemitism is barely disguised. It has blocked the idea of building a Holocaust Museum and its leader, Herbert Kickl, campaigned promising he would be a Volkskanzler, or "people's chancellor", a term borrowed straight from Adolf Hitler. Senior party officials sang a Nazi SS song at the funeral of a party elder last year. The party was established by former Nazis after the Second World War.

The Freedom Party is, however, an enthusiastic supporter of Israel and its genocide in Gaza, along with all the parties in the alliance. In 2010 it signed the "Jerusalem Declaration" alongside other far-right parties, backing Israel's "right to exist" and "right to self-defence" against what it called "Islamic terror".

Last month Netanyahu also defended Elon Musk after his Nazi salute at Trump's inauguration, saying he was "being falsely smeared". He was, Netanyahu said, "a great friend of Israel".

## Companies exit greenwashing offsets scheme

BIG COMPANIES including Telstra, PwC and the NRMA have abandoned the federal government's carbon credit scheme amid growing concerns about dodgy offset projects.

More than 100 companies have exited the Climate Active scheme in the past two years. It allows companies to claim they are carbon neutral by reporting their carbon emissions and buying offsets.

Eighty per cent of credits under the scheme come from overseas offset projects, with the rest from Australian Carbon Credit Units. Domestic credits have been claimed to be higher quality but a series of studies have questioned whether many of them actually sequester any carbon.

Some companies such as Telstra have admitted that public concern that the scheme was greenwashing are behind their exit. Ben Burge, its former head of energy and climate said, "Too many own goals in this sector [offsets] has increased the degree of difficulty on trust."

Others such as PwC and Australia Post claim they will instead try to reduce their own emissions.

## Inequality in Australia is up

WEALTH INEQUALITY is increasing in Australia, with the top 20 per cent of households holding 63 per cent of the country's wealth, and the top 1 per cent almost 23 per cent. The bottom 40 per cent have just 5.5 per cent, with their share plummeting from 7.8 per cent since 2004.

Inequalities in education, housing and health have also worsened.

These are the findings of Monash Uni's *Transforming Australia* report, based on 2020 figures.

It found poverty here is also higher than in many similar countries, with 3.3 million Australians, 13 per cent of the population, living in poverty. This figure has barely changed in 20 years. This is worse than in the UK, with 11.2 per cent in poverty, and Canada with 8.6 per cent.

# EDITORIAL

## Albanese's failures boost Dutton's Trump-like agenda

DONALD TRUMP has emboldened the far right everywhere, raining down attacks on immigrants, trans people and climate policies. He has moved rapidly to purge opponents and impose his control on government agencies.

Vice-President JD Vance used a speech in Germany just weeks before an election there to unload on European leaders over immigration, demanding they end the policy of freezing far right parties out of government. He then met with Alice Weidel, the leader of Germany's fascist-dominated AfD.

Peter Dutton is trying to imitate Trump in the hope of winning the upcoming federal election.

His scapegoating of migrants for the housing crisis is spreading racism. He wants to mimic Elon Musk's mass sacking of public sector workers—threatening 36,000 job cuts without saying where the axe would fall.

But Anthony Albanese is also paving the way for Dutton—refusing to stand against his outbursts and acting on some of Dutton's demands himself.

Labor has announced a ban on overseas investors buying up existing houses, an idea Dutton floated last year. It wants to deport refugees released from detention under the NZYQ court case to Nauru.

When the Queensland Liberal National Party banned new prescriptions of puberty blockers and hormone treatments for trans children, Albanese refused to defend trans rights.

Queensland's move was straight out of the Trump playbook. But all Labor did was announce a national review of treatment guidelines.

Labor is paying the price for enabling Dutton. YouGov modelling projects the Coalition to win 73 seats to Labor's 66.

### US imperialism

Trump is already making the world a more dangerous place. His horror plan for ethnic cleansing in Gaza has been embraced by Israeli leaders.

Albanese refused to condemn it, instead reiterating tired platitudes about the failed two state solution.

Trump's plan may stall—but it has sent a message to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the US backs resuming the war.

Trump has also begun talking to Russian President Vladimir Putin about ending the war in Ukraine. The US and Russia are calling the shots about any settlement—showing that this is a



**Above: Anthony Albanese is backing US militarism and Israel even as Trump runs amok**  
Photo: Solidarity

proxy war between the major powers.

Trump is not motivated by any hope for peace but by his desire to focus US power on confronting China instead.

His Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth told European leaders they will have to provide the “overwhelming” share of aid for Ukraine and meet the costs of securing Europe themselves.

The Trump administration's focus on China should ring alarm bells here. Any war on China would carry unthinkable consequences.

Instead Albanese is doing all he can to encourage Trump, talking up the expansion of US bases here and his commitment to arming Australia to the teeth.

Albanese sent Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles to Washington to hand-deliver \$800 million to expand US shipyards building nuclear submarines. Albanese has committed \$4.7 billion to this.

In return Trump called Albanese a “very fine man” following their first phone call since his inauguration.

Albanese hopes appeasing Trump will get Australian companies an exemption from newly announced tariffs on aluminium and steel imports.

As he refuses to stand up to Trump's agenda, we will need more protests and campaigning to stop Trump's ideas gaining ground here. More Greens and independents in parliament after the election won't stop the drift to the right or deliver the alternative we need.

Trump's return makes Australia's

military alliance with the US more dangerous than ever. Albanese should cancel the \$368 billion nuclear subs deal now.

The US bases here have to go—including the use of the Pine Gap spy base to feed military intelligence to Israel.

Trump's plan for Gaza signals that the genocide is far from over. Even if the war doesn't resume, Israel and the US have no intention of allowing rebuilding to make Gaza liveable.

We have to keep up the demands for Albanese to sanction Israel and end the export of parts for Israel's F-35 fighter jets.

Albanese has also failed to act on housing and the cost of living—supporting business and the rich instead of working class people. We need a much more serious union fightback for pay.

Construction workers are still fighting to win back control of their union, the CFMEU, after Albanese backed the bosses and imposed administration. Workers in Brisbane took strike action on 19 February to oppose the Queensland LNP government's attack on conditions through tearing up the Best Practice Industry Conditions.

Everyone should throw their support behind workers fighting for a pay rise to cope with the cost of living. Nurses and rail workers in Sydney are both fighting the NSW Labor government for rises—they should step up strike action.

Fighting back the right and building an alternative to Labor's failures means building more resistance from below—and fighting for a socialist future.

.....  
**Albanese is encouraging Trump, talking up the expansion of US bases here and arming Australia to the teeth**

# The capitalist state is watching Trump

By Alex Callinicos  
Socialist Worker UK

AS ELON Musk and his gang of techies run amok in Washington, I've been thinking of something Frederick Engels wrote in 1879.

"The modern state is only the organisation that bourgeois society takes on in order to support the general external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments as well of the workers as of individual capitalists," he wrote.

"The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital."

Engels was saying that the state isn't the tool of individual capitalists. It acts in the general interest of the capitalist class as a whole. The state includes a hard repressive core, in the military, the police, prisons and the courts that are used to ensure capitalist order. They can be used to brutally smash strikes and mass protest movements that threaten the system.

It also taxes the bosses, regulates their activities, and sometimes even takes their assets over. Under the pressure of organised labour, it has developed extensive welfare services that maintain working class families as efficient and relatively compliant objects of exploitation. This includes everything from schools to public transport, unemployment benefits and healthcare.

Now one very big capitalist with the support of new President Donald Trump is seeking to reverse this process, and drastically to shrink the state. The *New York Times* newspaper points out that Musk is using the methods he adopted to get rid of workers at Twitter.

He's fulfilling plans set out in Project 2025, devised by the ultra-neoliberal Heritage Foundation. Russell Vought, the scheme's architect, has just been confirmed as Trump's director of the Office of Management and Budget.

## Presidential powers

But more is involved than attacking "Big Government". Edward Luce argues in the *Financial Times* newspaper that Trump wants "to recreate the imperial presidency that was buried in the mid-1970s after Richard Nixon's



**Above: Elon Musk talks about his plan to slash and burn government departments** Photo: White House/Flicker

resignation". This is a very shrewd point, much more accurate than all the overheated commentary comparing Trump's second presidency to Hitler's seizure of power.

Trump as a young man had as his mentor the sinister and corrupt right wing Republican lawyer Roy Cohn. Cohn had been Senator Joe McCarthy's accomplice during his anti-Communist witch hunt early in the Cold War. Nixon himself owed his political rise to his role in this witch hunt.

As US president between 1969 and 1974, Nixon sought to bypass the limits that the constitution put on his power. For example, faced with a Democrat-controlled Congress, he claimed the power to "impound" money that it voted for purposes he disapproved of. He also built up a vast secret apparatus of surveillance, repression, and dirty tricks to crush the anti-Vietnam War movement and secure re-election in 1972.

The gradual exposure of this apparatus in the Watergate scandal forced Nixon's resignation in August 1974. New restrictions on presidential powers were afterwards imposed by Congress. Now Trump, politically formed in the milieu that produced Nixon, wants to get rid of them. For example, Musk and his gang, in taking control of the US Treasury and cutting off spending they dislike, are reasserting the presidential power to impound money.

Trump is greatly aided by the fact that, unlike Nixon, his supporters control both houses of Congress and the Supreme Court. He also has, for the time being at least, the enthusiastic backing of Big Tech and Wall Street. If he succeeds, the result will not be outright fascism, but a much more authoritarian and racist version of capitalist "democracy". Political power will be concentrated in the White House.

What could stop Trump? So far the Musk hit-squad has steered clear of the core of the US welfare state—Medicare, Medicaid and social security. The attempts to purge parts of the repressive apparatus, notably the FBI, have bypassed the core of the national security state, the Pentagon and the CIA. It was when McCarthy tried to investigate the US army that he was brought down. And other bosses may tire of "the ideal personification of the total national capital" becoming the playground of one erratic and highly-subsidised tech bro.

But there's no substitute for mass mobilisation. It was the giant anti-war movement against the Vietnam War that was responsible for Nixon's downfall. People in the US today, initially stunned by the speed and brutality of the assault, are beginning to organise and protest.

Determined and courageous resistance can eventually rid us of this noxious bunch of crooks and fanatics.

.....  
**Trump wants "to recreate the imperial presidency that was buried in the mid-1970s after Richard Nixon's resignation"**

# Resisting Trump's agenda for the billionaires

By James Supple

DONALD TRUMP has set out to radically reshape the institutions of power in the US, moving rapidly to impose his far-right agenda.

He has ordered Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to step up raids and arrest and deport thousands of immigrants. Trump has even threatened to imprison up to 30,000 in Guantanamo Bay. This is a continuation of his racist scapegoating designed to blame migrants for crime and unemployment.

He has attacked medical treatment for transgender kids and banned trans women from women's sports, pardoned the fascist rioters who stormed the Capitol building, pulled out of the Paris climate agreement and opened up more land for oil drilling.

Trump's agenda is one of brazen capitalist reaction. His support for capitalism and the rich was symbolised by the collection of tech billionaires seated in the front row at his inauguration.

He is promising a set of ultra-neoliberal policies, including savage cuts to the public sector, tax cuts for the rich and a bonfire of regulations imposed to stop business trashing the environment. Trump has always said he measures his success by the health of the stockmarket—and letting profits rip.

His "first buddy", billionaire Elon Musk, has begun purging and dismantling whole government departments. In all the aim is to sack up to 10 per cent of government workers.

The USAID department is being demolished, with practically all its 10,000 staff sacked.

Aid has long been a tool of US power, extended to governments around the world willing to serve US imperialist interests.

But the effort to present the US as a benevolent power has meant it also provides billions for HIV programs, healthcare, food aid and immunisations across war zones and the global south.

Trump, however, has not had everything his own way.

He backed down on his initial plan for tariffs against Canada and Mexico after a huge backlash in Canada and pressure from US auto companies.

Car manufacturers in the US pointed out that individual components in US-produced cars such as engines can cross the Canadian and



**Above: "Nobody elected Elon" protest outside the Treasury Department in Washington** Photo: Geoff Livingston/Flicker

Mexican borders eight times. Tariffs would see them taxed every time they cross. Trump is now saying he will impose tariffs on steel and aluminium imports.

The courts have also blocked some of his blatantly illegal measures, restoring birthright citizenship for anyone born in the US and stopping his efforts to freeze all federal funding grants including to states, local councils and universities.

## Building resistance

Trump can be beaten. His supporters are a minority—he won the votes of only 33 per cent of potential voters, with more than one third not bothering to vote at all.

But resistance on the streets is crucial to forcing Trump to back down. So far this has been more muted than at the beginning of his first presidency.

Too many left-wing activists and campaigners fell behind the Democrats and Kamala Harris's election campaign in the hope of keeping Trump out of office. But the Democrats personify a political system that has continually failed ordinary Americans, run in the interests of billionaires and the rich.

Their failure has left many of those opposed to Trump's agenda demoralised.

But opposition is growing. Thousands have joined protests in defence of immigrants in more than a dozen states, including California,

Minnesota, Michigan, Texas, Ohio and Arizona.

Businesses across the country shut down as part of a "day without immigrants", designed to show how reliant the country is on immigrant workers.

In Los Angeles, several thousand joined a march that closed part of the 101 Freeway for five hours. There have also been school walkouts, as students protest to defend their parents and families.

Others are organising to defend immigrants against ICE raids directly. In early February, 1500 people turned up to a legal briefing in Denver, Colorado to help provide legal assistance and make sure undocumented immigrants know their legal rights.

In his last term, Trump was forced to back down again and again in the face of mass opposition. He had to end the imprisonment of migrant children in cages at the border following massive public outrage.

When he praised fascists and far right groups that gathered in Charlottesville in 2017 as "very fine people", mass protests of tens of thousands nationwide came out to denounce racism and the right, leaving Trump isolated.

Trump will do nothing for working class people—and neither will the Democrats. Building a mass movement from below that connects his attacks on immigrants, trans people and women with his support for the billionaires can drive him back. This means socialist politics has to be at the heart of the resistance.

**Thousands have joined protests in defence of immigrants in more than a dozen states**

# Universities collaborating with weapons companies and Israel

By Maeve Larkins

LAST JUNE, the Group of Eight elite universities published a 168-page document detailing the potential for Australian universities to serve as a “strong foundation to turbocharging our efforts to support the AUKUS platform”.

AUKUS is a military agreement with the US and UK to supply Australia with nuclear-powered submarines as Australia gears up for war against China. Their cost of \$368 billion includes funds for universities to develop the expertise required to operate them.

Universities are clamouring to present themselves as military research hubs to grab these funds. At the same time, they have been cutting back humanities courses and “streamlining” degrees, moving further towards being degree-factories serving the needs of capitalism.

As Melbourne University Deputy Vice-Chancellor (and former spy) Michael Wesley put it, “The Australian government has nominated defence as being paramount in the national interest. For a publicly funded institution to refuse to work on the security and safety of Australia and international stability would be a dereliction.”

## Weapons company ties

Australian universities have supported military research for decades. ANU was established in large part to conduct nuclear weapons research. Universities have connections with weapons companies including Thales, Lockheed Martin and Boeing.

The Palestine movement has uncovered connections with companies which are directly involved in supplying the missiles and machinery for Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

The University of Sydney (USyd) receives millions of dollars from the US and Australian military. Its Nanoscience Building hosts the Jericho Smart Sensing Laboratory, which develops nanotechnology for military aircraft and satellites that is then sold to companies like Thales. The company’s Australian chairperson, Belinda Hutchinson, was USyd Chancellor for more than a decade until last year. Thales has helped develop the Heron Combat Drones Israel uses to terrorise and slaughter Palestinians.

At the University of Technology Sydney a facility ominously named “The Vault” provides the “secure



**Above: The student sit-in at Mahmoud’s Hall at Melbourne Uni last year** Photo: Matt Hrkac

environment” necessary for cybersecurity and military research, as well as to facilitate “collaboration” between “private companies, academic institutions, and government entities”.

ANU was granted \$500,000 by weapons company Safran to develop a pilot assistance system for helicopters. Safran provides Israel with battlefield targeting technology, as well as the mounted cameras and fingerprint scanners used to monitor Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

## Academic ties to Israel

Australian universities also maintain academic ties to Israeli universities, offering joint PhD and exchange programs.

The University of Melbourne (UniMelb) runs a PhD program with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. HUJ’s main campus is on illegally occupied Palestinian land in East Jerusalem. It also maintains an on-campus military base that helps train Israeli personnel.

These exchange programs normalise and support the Israeli apartheid state.

Last year, a freedom of information request at USyd revealed a letter

from the heads of Israeli universities to the heads of Australian universities which called for support for Israel in its “war on two fronts”—in Gaza, and for public opinion.

Last year Gaza solidarity encampments sprung up at universities across the country. The most significant was at UniMelb, where there was a concerted effort to win wide support among the student body.

This reached a peak in a ten-day occupation of the Arts West building, renamed “Mahmoud’s Hall” after a Palestinian student murdered by Israel who hoped to study at the university.

The movement will need to go much further to rid our campuses of all ties to Israel’s genocide.

University managements are now attacking the right to protest. There is an attempt to smear protests for Palestine as antisemitic. Pro-Palestine staff and students have faced disciplinary action, threatening to ban them from campus and suspend or expel them from university.

Many students will be rightly outraged by their universities’ complicity in an ongoing genocide. We must make sure they don’t get away with it.

## Exchange programs normalise and support the Israeli apartheid state

### Palestine campaign win: Bezael exchange stopped

SYDNEY UNI has announced the end of its exchange program between Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) and the Israeli Bezael Academy of Arts and Design. This comes after student and staff campaigning against its renewal, due in March.

An open letter by SCA students gathered more than 200 signatures. Activists held a speakout at last year’s graduation art show to build

awareness.

Management has tried to deny that campaigning played any role in its decision, saying that students had not accessed the program since 2015. But this is a result of BDS campaigning for over a decade and growing student recognition of the reality of Israel’s apartheid state. We should celebrate this as a step forward for efforts to cut all ties with Israel.



# Antisemitism smears used to crack down on support for Palestine

By Luke Ottavi

GOVERNMENTS, UNIVERSITY administrations and the mainstream media are increasing their crackdown against Palestine supporters and the right to protest.

They have opportunistically seized on a string of antisemitic attacks to try to demonise and discredit the Palestine movement.

They claim that Palestine protests are responsible for inflaming tensions and encouraging these attacks.

In January, Nazi swastikas and antisemitic messages were graffitied around synagogues and Jewish communities across Sydney and cars and businesses firebombed.

But there is no evidence the movement for Palestine has contributed to the attacks in any way. Antisemitism has never been welcome at the protests and most rallies have included Jewish speakers or contingents.

Jewish groups in Melbourne recently held a 400-strong anti-Zionist rally to declare their solidarity with Palestine and reject the idea that the Palestine movement is responsible for the rise in antisemitism.

In fact, NSW police have admitted that ten of the 11 people arrested over these attacks had no ideological motivation at all but were instead “being orchestrated in some manner”.

Those involved were “paid local criminals”, according to Australian Federal Police Commissioner Reece Kershaw. An 11th person arrested, also a longtime petty criminal, is a Nazi.

The discovery of a caravan filled with explosives along with a list of Jewish targets was initially described as a potential “mass casualty event”.

But according to the *Sydney Morning Herald* the explosives were up to 40 years old. Organised crime figures had offered to reveal details about the caravan to police weeks before its discovery in the hope of reduced prison terms.

This has not stopped bosses and the government from organising a wider crackdown against Palestine supporters.

## Unsafe

Absurdly, cricket journalist Peter Lalor was fired from SEN Radio for supposed antisemitism after he retweeted an article by Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* whose headline read:



**Up to 400 Jews and supporters joined an anti-Zionist Jewish rally outside the Victorian Parliament in Melbourne on 11 February, one of many expressions of support for the Palestine movement by Jewish people** Photo: Sumitra Vignaendra

**NSW police have admitted that ten of the 11 people arrested over antisemitic attacks had no ideological motivation at all**

“There’s no Auschwitz in Gaza. But it’s still genocide.”

Lalor says he was told that because he tweeted in opposition to Israel’s actions in Gaza, “the sound of my voice made people feel unsafe” and so he “could not cover the cricket anymore”.

The argument that speaking out to support Palestine makes Jewish staff and students feel “unsafe” is also being used on university campuses to attack the right to protest.

Antisemitism envoy Jillian Segal claims that university campuses have become a “cauldron” of antisemitism because of the Gaza solidarity encampments and student general meetings condemning Israel’s crimes of genocide and apartheid.

The *Herald Sun* ridiculously asserted that a Victoria University tutor emailing students to invite them to a pro-Palestine rally was an act of antisemitism because it made Jewish students feel “great distress”.

But as the Australian Palestine Advocacy Network rightly states, “subjective feelings of discomfort or unease” at pro-Palestine protests are “being wrongly equated with objective threats to physical safety, often leading to false accusations of antisemitism”.

Sarah Schwartz, executive officer of the anti-Zionist Jewish Council of Australia, has pointed out that “political discomfort is something that is a fact of life in a democracy”.

Sydney University is proposing some of the most repressive anti-protest and anti-free speech rules

nationwide to further repress Palestine activism on campus.

It wants a ban on lecture announcements before the beginning of classes, a provision allowing the university to remove funding from clubs and even the Student Representative Council (the student union) if it deems students have infringed their rules, and a ban on hanging banners from footbridges.

## Zionism

There is also an effort to conflate anti-Zionism—calling for the dismantling of the apartheid state of Israel—with antisemitism.

Macquarie University Vice-Chancellor Bruce Downton has accused Palestinian-Australian academic Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah of antisemitism for tweeting just before the New Year, “May 2025 be the end of Israel.”

But opposing Israel’s existence is not antisemitic.

Israel is an apartheid state that operates a system of racist laws that discriminate against Palestinians, especially in the illegally occupied West Bank and Gaza.

Israel was created by Western imperialism collaborating with Zionists, a political movement for a separate Jewish state. There have always been Jewish people who opposed the Israeli ethno-state.

The alternative to Israel is a state where Palestinians, Jews and all people have equal rights.

There is nothing antisemitic about opposing the Israeli apartheid state and condemning its blatant war crimes.

# NT Liberals launch right-wing rampage

By Paddy Gibson

THE NEW Country Liberal Party government is on the rampage in the Northern Territory, inspired by Donald Trump’s rapid-fire reactionary policy announcements in the US.

The CLP’s campaign to win government in August 2024 centred around a racist “law and order” campaign, with promises to change the law so children as young as ten could be incarcerated and to re-introduce barbaric “spit-hoods” in juvenile detention centres.

All 100 per cent of children in NT detention centres are Aboriginal and the CLP is boasting that adult prison numbers have also increased by more than 500 people since they took office.

Aboriginal people are the most jailed minority group in the world and skyrocketing NT incarceration rates are the highest in Australia.

An NT local court heard evidence in January that Aboriginal women prisoners were “hungry all the time”, crammed into filthy cells with more than 20 people and without regular access to water or working toilets.

Parliamentary sittings in early February have seen a series of attacks on Aboriginal rights and the environment movement.

Private security will now be hired to guard the prisoners overflowing from NT jails.

The CLP abolished the Aboriginal child-placement principle, enshrined in child protection law for more than 40 years.

Existing law has not stopped more than two-thirds of Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their families being placed with non-Indigenous people.

But the change will empower racist case-workers and judges to remove even more children, at a time when removal rates mirror those seen during the Stolen Generations period.

The Arid Lands Environment Centre in Alice Springs and the Environment Centre NT in Darwin have been completely defunded.

These two organisations have operated for more than 40 years and played a central role in many campaigns that have stopped toxic development, including the Jabuluka uranium mine and the Muckaty



nuclear waste dump.

The CLP are creating a new powerful role, the Territory Co-ordinator, who will be able to quickly push through industrial development, gutting existing environmental protections and consultation processes.

The previous NT Labor government opened the door for this onslaught, trying to match the CLP’s racism with their own “law and order” binge and pressing ahead with destructive developments like fracking, in breach of their own party policy.

NT communities need solidarity to fight back. The reactionary onslaught shows the threats posed by a potential Dutton government and the need to fight the shift to the right.

## Labor vote collapse in Werribee points to workers’ growing anger

LABOR HAS won the Werribee by-election in Melbourne’s outer west by a whisker, with a massive swing against the party in what was formerly a rock-solid ALP state seat.

The result sends a warning not just to Jacinta Allan’s state Labor government but to Anthony Albanese, with a federal election fast approaching.

It confirms the massive wave of anger building among working class voters after years of cost-of-living pain.

Labor scraped home in two-party preferred terms, 50.8 per cent to the Liberals’ 49.2 per cent.

Labor’s primary vote plunged to 28.9 per cent, a catastrophic collapse from 45.4 per cent in the 2022 state election. Back in 2014, Labor won 56.6 per cent.

The Liberals picked up just 4 per cent of the former Labor votes, with the rest spread among a variety of independent and minor party candidates.

Werribee is one of many outer suburban working class areas which have already seen swings against Labor. It overlaps with the federal seat of Lalor (once held by Julia Gillard), where Labor MP Joanne Ryan’s primary vote plunged more than 7 per cent in 2022.

Workers in Werribee are doing it

tough. In the 2021 census, the median household weekly income was \$100 less than the Australian average.

Tellingly, the number of workers working from home during the lockdown that year was 5 per cent lower than the Victorian average—indicating that workers were more likely to be in blue-collar jobs and at greater risk from COVID.

COVID hit Werribee and the surrounding suburbs hard, with the area topping the list of cases in 2020.

Werribee falls within the City of Wyndham, one of the fastest growing areas in Melbourne. Government spending on transport, education and health has not kept pace. Trains are packed and drivers are stuck in traffic jams at peak times.

As of March 2024, workers in Werribee, like all those across the country, have suffered a 4.8 per cent fall in real (allowing for inflation) hourly wages since 2019.

Labor has presided over this disaster, putting the interests of big business before those of workers.

In doing so, they are paving the way for a Dutton government.

The Werribee by-election is confirmation that many workers have had enough. The challenge is to turn that anger into action, for real wage rises and stronger public services.

David Glanz

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**Labor’s primary vote plunged to 28.9 per cent, a catastrophic collapse from 45.4 per cent in 2022**

# NSW rail workers—All-out strike action needed

By Ian Rintoul

AS *SOLIDARITY* goes to press, the future of the struggle between the NSW Labor government and rail workers remains at an impasse, stymied by Fair Work hearings.

On Sunday 16 February, the Fair Work Commission refused to grant an s418 order that would have ruled rail workers' go-slow action illegal. But an s425 "cooling off" order that will potentially suspend industrial action is still to be considered.

The RTBU leadership hailed the "go-slow" decision as a victory but it is just the latest twist in an almost 12-month saga and will make little difference to the course of the campaign.

The rail workers' claim for a 32 per cent wage rise over four years would be a major win, not just for NSW public sector workers but for all workers fighting declining real wages while the cost of living goes up and up.

It is a credit to the determination of the rank-and-file of the RTBU that the union is still fighting—600 train drivers and crew didn't show up for work on 14 February when Sydney Trains said they would not pay any union member who participated in the go-slow action.

But the dispute should have been won months ago. The "boxing clever" strategy of the Combined Rail Unions (CRU) has run hot and cold for months. Work bans have been imposed, then dropped, industrial action ended in "good faith" and then started again.

The past nine months has been an endless parade of Fair Work hearings, some even initiated by the unions.

The longer the dispute has gone on, rank-and-file momentum has been lost and there are cracks appearing between the unions that make up the CRU.

Differences have emerged between the electricians, members of the Electrical Trade Union (ETU), and the RTBU, covering drivers, guards and general rail workers. It has been the ETU bans that have been responsible for the most strategic disruption to train services so far.

More than 1000 ETU workers struck for eight hours on 12 February to fight Sydney Trains' attempt to remove the clause that ensures unions



**Above: ETU members from Sydney Trains staged an eight hour strike on 12 February** Photo: Solidarity

are consulted before any workplace changes are made around issues of safety and risk assessments.

The ETU is also opposed to clauses that would allow Sydney Trains to reclassify electricians as new technology is introduced.

ETU members were angry that while they were on strike, RTBU officials were inside Parliament House for negotiations.

## Fair Work is a graveyard of disputes

In 2018, Fair Work banned a strike by the RTBU on the grounds that the strike was a "threat to the economy" and that it was "threatening to endanger the welfare of parts of the population".

Since then, the RTBU has ducked and weaved to avoid Fair Work banning industrial action.

That approach finally led to the RTBU officials tying their own hands behind their back, telling Fair Work in January that there would be no further strike action.

Playing by Fair Work's rules has meant that the rail workers' campaign has been derailed, over and over again, in Fair Work hearings.

And the latest offer from Sydney Trains in January of 14 per cent pay and 1 per cent super is still a wage cut in real terms.

## All out action can win

The RTBU is trying to push the cam-

paign across the line with a drivers' go-slow campaign. The informal "stay-home" by train crew has caused network chaos.

But with no workplace meetings to organise and plan the action there are limitations to how long such an on-again, off-again campaign can be maintained. Instead of building unity across all the unions of the CRU, solidarity is fraying.

It is shameful that the NSW Labor government is using Fair Work to restrict rail workers' right to take industrial action.

But instead of unions trying to manipulate the Fair Work process, the shackles on the right to strike need to be broken. The CRU has enough industrial power to defy any Fair Work orders.

Whether or not there is an imposed five month "cooling off" period will be decided by Fair Work on 19 February.

We can't let Fair Work determine whether or not workers can strike, and whether or not jobs and conditions are maintained or workers we get the real wage increase they are fighting for.

Rail workers need mass meetings to democratically determine the future of their campaign. United strike action can win.

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**Playing by Fair Work's rules has meant that the rail workers' campaign has been derailed, over and over again**

# Israeli occupiers step up war on Palestinians in West Bank

By James Supple

IT'S NOT just in Gaza that Israel is carrying out ethnic cleansing and war crimes against the Palestinians. A surge in attacks in the occupied West Bank has left at least 870 Palestinians dead there since October 2023.

Children are dying in appalling numbers, with more than 200 dead, almost half of the total number of children killed in the West Bank over the past 20 years.

Just days after the Gaza ceasefire began, Israel launched a series of major military raids on Jenin, followed by attacks in Tulkarem, Tamoun and Tubas, all in the northern West Bank.

More than 40,000 people have been displaced, mainly from the refugee camps set up after the 1948 Nakba when Israel expelled 700,000 Palestinians. According to the UNRWA, "Repeated and destructive operations have rendered the northern refugee camps uninhabitable, trapping residents in cyclical displacement."

At least 50 people are dead so far.

In the Nour Shams refugee camp near Tulkarm in early February, Israeli troops shot dead two women including one who was eight months pregnant.

Scores of new checkpoints have also been set up across the West Bank, with travel between cities for Palestinians all but impossible. Israel has also carried out mass arrests, with more than 14,300 Palestinians arrested in the West Bank since 7 October 2023.

According to Doctors Without Borders (MSF) Israel's raids have become far more aggressive, as "military operations target and destroy critical utilities, including water systems and electrical networks—thus creating long-lasting medical and humanitarian impacts on Palestinian communities".

## Jenin

Hundreds of Israeli troops, backed by drones, helicopter gunships and armoured cars, have descended on the Jenin refugee camp.

Residents have been ordered to leave their homes via loudspeaker as drones circled overhead, with dozens arrested and interrogated.

About 90 per cent of the camp's population has fled.

Large areas of the camp have been reduced to rubble. Israel demolished nearly 20 apartment buildings at once after rigging them with explosives, in scenes widely shared on social media,



**Above: A house destroyed by Israeli army bulldozers in the West Bank city of Jenin during the Israeli military operation** Photo: Nasser Ishtayeh/SOPA Images via ZUMA Press Wire

while bulldozers flattened another 100 homes.

This is part of an offensive against the Jenin Brigade, an umbrella group for Palestinian resistance factions there, in particular Islamic Jihad and Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. Jenin has been a bastion of Palestinian resistance within the West Bank for decades.

It follows a six-week siege of the camp by Palestinian Authority (PA) Security Forces beginning in December that left 14 Palestinians dead, including three children, a journalist and three other civilians.

The PA was set up following the Oslo Accords in 1990s, the failed "peace process" between Israel and the Palestinians, and given limited control in some areas with the promise of a future Palestinian state.

Almost three decades on, it's clear Israel has no intention of allowing a Palestinian state. But the PA continues to collaborate with Israel to clamp down on resistance to the occupation.

It is increasingly despised among Palestinians. A poll in June 2024 found more than 60 per cent supported the PA's dissolution, with 89 per cent wanting its leader Mahmoud Abbas to resign.

Palestinian resistance is a response to the daily humiliation of occupation and their ongoing dispossession by Israeli settlers.

The number of illegal Israeli settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is now at least 730,000,

with official control of half the land in the West Bank.

Settlers are constantly establishing new outposts to control more land, organising violent attacks on Palestinians to try to push them out. There are now more than 200 of these outposts, according to Israeli NGO Peace Now, with 60 more set up in 2024 alone.

Israel's military raids have been followed by an increase in settler attacks on Palestinians, with cars and properties set on fire at Qalqilya and at Turmus Aya near Ramallah.

In 2024 there were 1400 separate incidents of settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank including physical assaults, arson, and destruction of fruit trees, as documented by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

This is the highest level ever recorded, leading to the displacement of 4700 Palestinians.

A landmark International Court of Justice ruling last July reaffirmed that Israel's occupation in the West Bank was illegal under international law and should end "as rapidly as possible", finding that it was carrying out racial discrimination and apartheid through its "near-complete separation" of Palestinians from Israeli settlers.

As a member of the court, the Australian government is obligated to impose sanctions on any export of weapons or other goods that support the occupation. We need to keep demanding the Albanese government starts to act.

# Resist Trump's brutal plan for ethnic cleansing in Gaza

By Adam Adelpour

DONALD TRUMP has announced a sickening plan to ethnically cleanse Gaza. At a press conference in the White House at the start of February he declared that he wants to physically remove Palestinians from Gaza, “take over” and “own it” and turn it into “the Riviera of the Middle East”.

Trump spoke alongside Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was invited to the US despite being wanted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court. Netanyahu, smirking with delight as Trump spoke, called the plan “remarkable”.

Trump's official spokespeople walked back aspects of the policy in the days that followed. Press secretary Karoline Leavitt said there was no plan for US “boots on the ground” in Gaza and that Palestinians would be “temporarily relocated” rather than permanently resettled in neighbouring countries.

But Trump doubled down on the plan for permanent ethnic cleansing in an interview with Fox's Bret Baier. When asked if Palestinians would have the right to return to Gaza, Trump said, “No, they wouldn't.”

Trump's statements placed further doubt over the Gaza ceasefire that began in January and removed any doubt that his administration is deeply committed to Israel's genocidal project.

Following the declaration, Trump began to threaten that “all hell is going to break out” if Hamas didn't release all Israeli hostages within days. Hamas had threatened to halt the next planned hostage release unless Israel kept its end of the ceasefire deal and stopped obstructing aid trucks entering the strip.

Three Israeli officials and two mediators spoke to the *New York Times* confirming that Israel had been violating the ceasefire and obstructing aid.

Netanyahu called up reservists to resume fighting if the hostage release fell through. In the end, it went ahead. However, the situation remains highly volatile.

## Humiliation

The ceasefire has eased some of the intense domestic pressure on Netanyahu's government but demonstrations in Israel are still demanding he adhere to the ceasefire and secure the return of all the hostages.

The ceasefire has also exposed



**Above: Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu, the butcher of Gaza, at the White House**  
Photo: White House

Netanyahu's abject failure to “eradicate Hamas” and secure his aim of “total victory” despite 16 months of genocide.

Netanyahu has been forced to negotiate with Hamas to release hostages. Israel has withdrawn from the strategic Netzarim corridor dividing the Gaza strip and dismantled its military bases there, allowing hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to return to the north of Gaza—an area that Netanyahu had attempted to depopulate.

According to Israel's Channel 14, Israeli soldiers left the Netzarim corridor in tears, claiming that their “efforts were in vain”.

Hamas has recruited about 15,000 fighters since the start of the war, according to US intelligence sources. The hostage handovers have showcased dozens of Hamas fighters and parades of thousands of Gazans, with the images of defiance being broadcast on Israeli television.

## Destabilising

Trump's belligerent and open support for the ethnic cleansing of Gaza has given Netanyahu the greenlight to resume attacks on Gaza, rather than follow through on all three stages of the ceasefire plan.

Speaking alongside Trump in the White House, Netanyahu confirmed his intentions, saying: “We can't leave Hamas there [in Gaza], because Hamas will continue the battle to destroy Israel ... you can't talk about peace ... if this toxic murderous organisation is left standing.”

The second stage of the cease-

fire is supposed to involve the return of remaining male Israelis and IDF soldiers in exchange for Palestinian prisoners and the complete withdrawal of IDF troops from Gaza. The third stage would involve the reconstruction of Gaza.

Trump and Netanyahu's statements effectively shredded the second and third stages of the ceasefire.

Trump's ethnic cleansing plan involves neighbouring countries—Egypt and Jordan—taking huge numbers of displaced Palestinians. Both countries have flatly rejected the proposal, as has US ally Saudi Arabia.

Egypt and Jordan's rulers fear that the combination of collaborating with the US and Israel's ethnic cleansing plan and hosting massive numbers of displaced Palestinians would fatally destabilise their regimes. And they are more fearful than ever following the rapid collapse of the Assad regime in Syria.

Trump has threatened to cut US aid to Egypt and Jordan if they don't comply. This is all a recipe for turmoil to come.

Here in Australia, Albanese has not only refused to condemn Trump's ethnic cleansing plan but has continued to allow the supply of F-35 fighter jet parts to Israel. He has continued to demonise Palestine supporters and handed Trump almost \$800 million for the AUKUS nuclear submarines.

Trump and Netanyahu's bloodthirsty plans for Palestine—and the instability they will create—make resistance here and across the Arab world more important than ever.

**Trump's open support for ethnic cleansing has given Netanyahu the greenlight to resume attacks on Gaza**

# TRUMP, GENOCIDE, CLIMATE CHAOS WHY YOU NEED TO BE A SOCIALIST

In the face of global catastrophe and the horrors of capitalism, we need a socialist world run in the interests of people and planet, argues **Jacob Starling**

WE ARE living through a period of intense turmoil, crisis and catastrophe. Israel's genocide has left Gaza in ruins and killed at least 61,700. Regardless of whether the current ceasefire holds, Israel continues to subject Palestinians to a brutal apartheid regime.

The Ukraine War, which has now lasted almost three years, has seen trench warfare return to the fields of Europe, alongside the threat of nuclear war.

Far-right bully Donald Trump sits in the White House, launching attacks on trans people, women and anti-racism programs, promising the deportations of millions of immigrants, dismantling entire arms of government and threatening to take over Greenland, Canada, the Panama Canal and now Gaza.

Trump's re-election is only one example of the rise of the far right globally. In Germany the AfD, a party dominated by Nazis, is now the second most popular party. Elections in France last year saw the fascist National Rally narrowly miss taking government.

Peter Dutton is trying to mimic their racist, anti-migrant politics in the hope of winning the federal election here.

Trump posed as an "outsider" to appeal to the discontent at the political system. Both Democrats and Republicans have imposed neoliberal policies designed to boost corporate profits. Since 2000, about two million well-paid, stable and often unionised jobs in the US have been replaced with insecure and low-paid service sector jobs.

Inequality has increased massively as a result over the past few decades. The top 10 per cent of American households now own more than 70 per cent of its wealth.

Alongside all this, the threat of

global climate catastrophe looms ever nearer—and world leaders still refuse to act. The devastating fires which have hit the US and last year's widespread floods in Europe show how dangerously the world is already heating.

## Capitalism

Social crisis and the climate catastrophe are a product of the capitalist system that puts profit before people and produces global chaos and war.

Capitalism produces immense inequality. Millions of workers around the world are exploited in the interests of a tiny minority of billionaires. Oxfam reported last month that billionaire wealth surged by \$US2 trillion last year while the number of people living in poverty has barely changed since 1990.

The search for bigger and bigger profits determines what is produced by society, not the actual needs of the people. The constant instability of the market creates incredible waste.

Meanwhile, the environment is ransacked by corporations competing for short-term profits, creating climate catastrophe and threatening the foundations of human life.

Capitalism has created bloodshed and war on a scale never before seen. As Karl Marx wrote, the system came into the world "dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt".

The barbarities of the trans-Atlantic slave trade that saw millions of Africans worked to death and the brutal colonisation of much of the world by European empires marked the system's birth.

The last century produced the industrial slaughter of the First and Second World Wars, followed by further bloody wars in Korea and Vietnam, which slaughtered a million

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**Capitalism  
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and up to three and a half million respectively. Millions more died in Iraq because of US and Australian wars in 1991 and 2003 and decades of sanctions.

These wars are the inevitable consequence of capitalist competition on an international scale.

Huge companies, and the states which support their interests, fight for control of natural resources and markets. Spheres of influence are seized and defended from any potential rivals.

The unflinching support of Western powers including the US and Australia for Israel's atrocities throughout the Middle East reflects the same imperialism that is hardwired into the system.

The Middle East is important to the US because of its immense reserves of oil, still the lifeblood of modern capitalism. Israel acts as the West's enforcer, keeping its Arab neighbours in line.

Although the US produces enough oil domestically to meet its own needs, control over Middle Eastern oil production through military power allows it to guarantee oil to its allies.

Israel's role in dominating the Middle East allows the US to potentially withhold oil from rivals like China.

## Fighting the system

In the face of such horrors an alternative is desperately needed. The question therefore is, what would that alternative look like and how can we get there?

In the face of the hopeless failure of Anthony Albanese's Labor government many are looking to the Greens or independent MPs as an alternative. However, attempts to build a more equal society through parliament have always failed because they leave the

foundations of capitalism and oppression unchallenged.

The power to win radical change comes from mass protests and resistance outside of parliament. We need to look to struggles in the workplaces and on the streets, not at the voting booth.

Workers' role inside capitalism gives them immense potential power. The working class makes up the overwhelming majority of society—not just stereotypical blue-collar workers in manufacturing or construction but white-collar workers who run the schools, hospitals, IT companies and call centres. Through strike action, workers can cut off the flow of profits and exert real power to demand change.

Many important changes have been won through such action. Paid annual leave was first won by striking print workers in 1936 and penalty rates for weekend work were won following major strikes in 1947.

The power of mass working class action is not limited to conditions at work, however.

Working class power has been key to giving social movements the power to force change. Workers have helped win land rights for Indigenous people by supporting the Gurindji strike (the struggle, of course, continues), fought for equal pay for women and mobilised against the Vietnam War.

But to get rid of capitalism we need a revolution to take control of society out of the hands of the billionaires and the rich and introduce real democratic control.

The working class has both the ability to bring capitalism to its knees and to build a socialist society. Over the past 150 or so years, the world has seen numerous examples of this.

### Working class power

During the high points of mass struggle, new forms of working-class power and mass democracy have sprung up again and again to challenge the system.

This first took place during the 1905 Russian Revolution, when strike committees developed into workers' councils or "soviets" as the uprising developed and strengthened.

In the face of the stubborn resistance of the ruling class, demands for higher pay and the right to form trade unions developed into a serious political challenge to the state itself.

Soviets represented a new form of authority based on democratic



**Above: Blockade at Port Botany calling for a ban on Israeli shipping company ZIM** Photo: Aman Kapur

debate and organisation in the factories, beginning to make decisions about how to organise production and the economy themselves, rather than according to the whims of the bosses.

Although the 1905 Revolution was crushed, the soviets returned in the 1917 revolution, taking control of the workplaces and eventually becoming the foundation of a new state. Unlike in our parliamentary system, delegates to the soviets were subject to immediate recall and received no special privileges.

Similar forms of direct democracy have sprung up since wherever workers have challenged capitalism. After the defeat of Germany in the First World War, workers' councils spread across the country.

In 1956, the Hungarian workers created workers' councils to coordinate their uprising against the USSR. In 1973, Chilean workers formed cordones to coordinate resistance to the far-right reaction against President Allende.

These forms of workers' power can give us some idea of what genuine socialism would look like.

Real socialism has nothing in common with the dictatorship under Joseph Stalin that emerged out of the defeat of the Russian revolution, or similar regimes that claimed to be socialist in China and Eastern Europe.

The wealth of society would be

taken out of the hands of the corporations and the billionaires. Unlike the capitalist system, in which the boss has undisputed power within the workplace, workplaces would be run democratically from the bottom up, by the workers themselves.

There would be democratic control over what society produced, ensuring that the economy was run to meet the needs of the people and end environmental destruction rather than to secure profits for the capitalists.

Such a revolution would add enormous weight to the fight against oppression, undermining the division fostered by our rulers.

Russia by 1917 was a backward country riddled with sexism and antisemitism. The October Revolution saw the new workers' state abolish discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people, make abortion lawful and elect a Jewish leader, Leon Trotsky, to the leadership.

Socialism cannot be voted into existence. It requires the total overthrow of the capitalist ruling class—the overthrow of the exploiting minority in the interests of the exploited majority. And to help make that happen, we need a mass revolutionary party.

Ultimately, it is only through a wholesale social revolution, driven by the organised power of the working class and mounting a direct challenge to capitalism itself that all the disasters and atrocities which accompany it, can be consigned to history.

# WHY MINORITY GOVERNMENT IS NO WAY TO WIN CHANGE

**Caitlin Doyle** and **James Supple** look at the experience of minority government in the past and why it has not delivered serious change

AS THE federal election draws closer, Labor and the Coalition are neck-and-neck in the polls.

There is even a good chance that Liberal Party leader Peter Dutton, who many had previously seen as too right-wing to win power, could win the election.

Current polling suggests neither party will win a majority, and will still need the support of independent MPs or The Greens to form a minority government. Many see this situation and the use of the balance of power in parliament as a chance to force some meaningful change.

Pro-Palestine independents are running in a number of Labor electorates in Western Sydney, and the Climate 200 grouping is supporting 35 candidates, including teal MPs and other “community independents”. They are hoping to elect even more independent MPs at the coming election in order to increase their parliamentary bargaining power.

The Greens have announced they would support a minority Labor government and that their priority this election is to “keep Dutton out”.

But the chance of Labor working with The Greens or pro-Palestine independents is slim. Anthony Albanese, like Bill Shorten before him, has sworn to never go into coalition with The Greens, not wanting to be associated with their left-wing policies.

In addition to The Greens there are already 13 other crossbench independent and minor party MPs in the lower house. Labor is certain to talk to them first before looking to The Greens. The chance of Labor needing to rely on Greens MPs in the lower house is very slim.

Most of the teal MPs represent traditional Liberal Party electorates in some of the wealthiest areas of the country. Allegra Spender’s electorate of Wentworth in Sydney, for instance,

includes the suburbs of Double Bay and Darling Point, two of the three richest in the country.

She recently told ABC’s *Insiders* that she was “very open to working with a Coalition government”, saying that when it came to, “my view on the world and the Coalition’s view on the world, there are a lot of parallels”.

This applies not least to her attitude to Palestine. After 7 October Spender declared she was “particularly pleased” by the decision to light the Opera House in the colours of the Israeli flag and was “appalled” by the Student General Meeting motion at Sydney Uni last year backing Palestinians’ right to resist under international law.

Teal independents Kylea Tink, Zoe Daniel and Zali Steggall also opposed capping superannuation accounts at \$3 million, defending tax breaks flowing to the wealthiest Australians.

A Labor minority government relying on teal MPs would not be a shift to the left.

## Greens in power?

Many within The Greens believe that entering into government with Labor would also allow the party to push Labor to the left and pass more progressive policies.

In January, Greens leader Adam Bandt declared that a power-sharing arrangement between The Greens and Labor, with the support of the teal independents, could usher in a “golden era” of progressive reform.

But we have already seen an example of this kind of “power sharing” in the Senate.

The Greens have held the balance of power in the Senate since the last election, with Labor needing Greens vote to pass any legislation that the Coalition opposes.

So Labor has simply worked with

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## Labor was last forced into minority government after the 2010 election under Prime Minister Julia Gillard

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the Liberals instead on many occasions. We have seen this over the recent electoral funding laws, imposing administration on the CFMEU, cuts to the NDIS, anti-refugee laws and many other measures.

Anthony Albanese has simply refused to make concessions on issues such as housing and climate change, telling The Greens pointblank that they can either vote for Labor’s policies or see nothing done.

Far from The Greens being able to use their parliamentary numbers to shift Labor to the left, they have given in and passed Labor’s measures on several occasions, wilting in the face of accusations from Labor that they are blocking change.

Much the same would happen if Labor was forced into minority government—as recent history shows.

## Gillard Labor government

Labor was last forced into minority government after the 2010 election under Prime Minister Julia Gillard. The Greens even had a share in the balance of power in the lower house, with Labor relying on three independent MPs as well as the sole lower house Greens MP at the time, Adam Bandt, to hold onto power.

At the time many celebrated this as the beginning of a break with the “two party system”, and a way to force progressive change from Labor. But the experience was a failure.

Far from any shift to the left, the Gillard Labor government moved further and further to the right. Labor reintroduced offshore detention of refugees on Nauru and Manus Island and insisted on austerity through delivering balanced budgets.

This saw it impose cuts to single parents payments and rip \$2.3 billion out of universities in its last budget.

It refused to increase taxes on the rich to fund public services, caving in



to the mining companies to produce a mining tax that raised almost no revenue.

The major concession The Greens point to from this experience was the introduction of the carbon tax. This was a useless policy that did very little to reduce emissions, aiming to deliver just a 5 per cent reduction target. It relied on the use of dodgy offset schemes and gave billions of dollars in compensation to big polluting companies.

But its biggest failure was political—it played into Liberal leader Tony Abbott’s hands, since the whole idea of the tax was to increase power prices. Abbott ran a ruthless campaign that successfully branded it a threat to the cost of living.

It was so unpopular that it helped deliver Abbott the next election.

There was also a deeper problem that resulted from The Greens’ decision to join a minority government.

The Greens’ desire to prove that they could be a reliable parliamentary partner saw them repeatedly defending an unpopular and indefensible Labor government.

Their Agreement with Labor itself only committed The Greens to keeping the government in power through supporting confidence and supply motions.

In return Labor agreed to a handful of items including a climate change committee, a debate on the war in Afghanistan and an investigation into spending on dental care.

But instead of attacking Labor’s drift to the right The Greens too often defended the government. They constantly talked up the “achievements” of their Agreement and what The Greens had extracted from Labor.

When Julia Gillard’s plan to deport refugees to Malaysia showed Labor had reached rock bottom over refugees, The Greens finally had to attack Labor, with Bob Brown commenting, “I’ve bitten my tongue for quite a while on this.”

Yet when Kevin Rudd finally toppled Julia Gillard as Labor leader then Greens Leader Christine Milne said she was, “very sad” and claimed her government had, “delivered some tremendous outcomes”.

This certainly wasn’t the way workers and the wider electorate saw it—booting the government out of office just months later.

### Fighting the right

The danger of a Coalition victory in this year’s election is also very real.



**Above: The Greens signing the Agreement to support Julia Gillard’s minority Labor government in 2010** Photo: Greens MPs

Dutton has gone out of his way recently to imitate US President Donald Trump’s “anti-woke” racism and bigotry.

Just as Trump did with the Democrats, Dutton is pointing out Albanese’s failure to address people’s real economic pain, while using minorities and the left as scapegoats, going after trans rights, refugees, Aboriginal people and pro-Palestine activists.

The Greens are right to unequivocally oppose Dutton and everything he represents.

But vowing to support Labor in government will not build the fight we need against Dutton and the right. Nor will it pull Albanese to the left.

Albanese’s primary goal in government has been to prove that Labor could be a safe pair of hands for the ruling class’s profits and the economy.

Far from pursuing any serious left wing agenda, Albanese carried over the worst of the previous Coalition government’s policies—the massive expansion of gas and fossil fuel projects, the AUKUS nuclear submarine deal, and the refusal to act on negative gearing on property that is driving the cost of housing out of reach for many working class people.

On top of this, Albanese has repressed and smeared the Palestine solidarity campaign, sided with the Liberals to pass draconian refugee leg-

islation and attacked the CFMEU—previously one of Labor’s strongest and most powerful supporters.

Meanwhile, Labor has overseen a further decline in real wages in the face of a cost-of-living crisis. This economic misery is one of the primary reasons for the fall in support for the Albanese government.

Positions in parliament can help build social movements, union struggles and resistance on the streets. The Greens have been an important voice of opposition from within parliament, most recently against Labor’s backing of Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

But real change is not going to come through electing more Greens, pro-Palestine or left-wing MPs into parliament to take the balance of power.

The experience of the Gillard minority Labor government shows that trying to extract concessions through parliamentary horse trading won’t shift government to the left.

Focusing on parliament and elections as the way to win change is a dead end. The power to win change lies in mass social movements and workers’ strikes and industrial action outside of parliament.

Instead of a focus on door-knocking and electioneering, we need more activists working to build the movements for Palestine, climate action and housing and rebuilding fighting unions.

# STUDENTS AND THE FIGHT FOR ABORIGINAL RIGHTS THE FREEDOM RIDE SIXTY YEARS ON

**Tom Fiebig** looks at the famous Freedom Ride in NSW, which saw students expose the racism and segregation against Aboriginal people across the state

IN FEBRUARY 1965, 60 years ago this month, 29 students from the University of Sydney embarked on a historic two-week trip through north-western New South Wales.

The students confronted the brutal racist segregation and appalling living conditions in country towns and on tightly controlled Aboriginal reserves—bringing widespread public attention to the plight of Aboriginal people.

In the 1960s, mass anti-racist struggles were sweeping the world. The student movement in Australia was particularly inspired by the US civil rights movement. On 7 May 1963, Sydney University students held a raucous demonstration at the US consulate in solidarity with US civil rights activists, with many students arrested.

These protests led to pointed discussions about what was being done to fight racism in Australia, leading students to found a new organisation, Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA). On 7 July, 800 students marched on NSW Parliament House to demand an end to the Aborigines Protection Act, racist laws used to control Aboriginal people. At follow up meetings, drawing inspiration from the 1961 US bus rides against segregation, SAFA members voted to take a “freedom ride” through country NSW.

SAFA’s strategy on the rides combined surveys to document racism and discrimination and direct action protest to confront segregation. The tour was led by the eloquent Charles Perkins—one of only two Aboriginal students at Sydney University.<sup>1</sup> The group was open to any student who paid a small fee and agreed to respect the group’s democratically made decisions. Contact with the media was coordinated out of Rev. Ted Noffs’ Wayside Chapel.

The students were deeply shocked by the depth of racism they encoun-

tered. Assimilation, the Government policy at the time, dictated that Aboriginal people should leave missions and reserves and settle in towns like “other Australians”. Between 1838 and 1964, Aboriginal reserve land in NSW had shrunk from 15,000 acres to just 1500.

There was, however, considerable resistance to the presence of Aboriginal people from local town councils and residents. As a result, many families were forced to live a marginal existence in shanty towns along rivers and near garbage tips.

In Wellington, one such town, Ann Curthoys (one of the initial Freedom Riders) wrote in her diary, “Houses of tin, mud floors, very overcrowded, kids had eye diseases, had to cart water from the river. It was not a place anyone should have to live in.”

Police harassment then, as now, was also a major problem. An Aboriginal woman at a reserve near Moree told the students that, “[police] barge into houses without knocking—the men often have had only one or two glasses of beer—then drag them to truck without formally telling them they are being arrested”.

According to Curthoys, Bowraville was perhaps one of the worst places SAFA visited. Here the local picture theatre had a physical partition and two sets of doors. The school buses, and even the cemetery, were segregated.

## Confronting segregation

The Freedom Ride built on an upswell in organised campaigning for Aboriginal rights in the early 1960s.

When planning their itinerary, the Freedom Riders drew on the advice and connections of two Sydney based-organisations, the Australian Aboriginal Fellowship (AAF) and the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA). Both groups involved Aborig-

## The rides combined surveys to document racism and discrimination and direct action protest to confront segregation

inal and non-Aboriginal activists and co-operated with local groups across NSW, fighting to end segregation and to abolish the Aborigines Welfare Board, the state authority that asserted extreme power over Aboriginal people on missions and reserves.

This campaign had significant support from trade unions, particularly those led by the Communist Party of Australia. In 1963-64, efforts led by the South Coast Aborigines Advancement League, organised out of the South Coast Trades and Labour Council, defeated segregation in South Coast towns like Nowra, with unions threatening to ban transport of goods to any shops or services that excluded Aboriginal people.

In July 1964, a delegation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal unionists travelled to Walgett after an appeal for support. Two nine-year-old Aboriginal children had been jailed for stealing crayons and two table tennis bats and balls. The boys’ mothers replaced the stolen items, but subsequently the children were placed in foster homes due to “bad housing.”

Resolutions from unions supporting the delegation led the NSW Labour Council to fund a lawyer to represent the Walgett mothers and they were hosted at union meetings in Sydney.

The union delegates reported to the Labour Council, “the most important event of our trip was a meeting of 100 Aborigines on the Sunday, who, after listening to our delegation, elected a committee to protect their interests.” Harry Hall, a shearer in the AWU, became president of the newly formed Walgett APA branch.

When the Freedom Riders rode into Walgett, their protests were joined by local APA supporters. Their target was the RSL (now the Returned Services League), “the great sacred cow at that time... the most cherished institution in Australia,” as Perkins put it.

The RSL barred Aboriginal people

from entry. A SAFA-led picket of the RSL was heckled by white residents.

“Various drunken white men abused us, but some of the Aboriginal women drew these gentlemen’s attention to their own sexual behaviour with Aboriginal women at the time, and that was basically the end of that”, freedom rider Aidan Foy remembers.

Following the demonstration, the students were effectively evicted from the church they had been staying at and made to depart early.

Anticipating trouble, a convoy of sympathisers’ cars, including Aboriginal people, accompanied them. This did not stop a local resident, a young grazier’s son, from speeding past the convey and ramming the bus with his vehicle, eventually running it off the road. Miraculously, no one was hurt.

Media coverage of this incident garnered national and international attention, forcing the Premier, Jack Renshaw, to absurdly deny the existence of “undue racial discrimination” in the town.

### Clash at Moree

Moree’s prized feature was its artesian baths, attracting thousands of tourists a year. But the Aboriginal population was strictly excluded. Although there had been some local opposition to the ban from a young local councillor, Bob Brown, this had proved unsuccessful.

With their parents’ permission, the SAFA members collected eight children from the Aboriginal reserve and drove them to the pool in the bus. At the pool, the now ex-councillor Bob Brown tried to buy entrance tokens for six adults and for the eight Aboriginal children. At first, the pool management refused, and there was a standoff. The crowd grew, and the pool manager consulted with the Mayor.

After an hour of picketing, the Mayor relented. He flat-out denied that there ever was a bar on Aborigines entering the pool, it was simply a matter of cleanliness. If he could inspect the eight children to confirm their cleanliness, they could enter. Eventually, all eight were admitted. It seemed that the ban had been broken. So the students set back off.

However, after they left Moree, news arrived that the Moree baths were again off limits to Aboriginal children. The students turned around to re-apply the pressure. Locals greeted their return with intense hostility.

Bob Brown “was grabbed by local youths when he arrived at the pool. He was carried bodily to the front of the pool and dumped in a gutter.” The



**Above: The Student Action for Aborigines bus outside the Hotel Boggabilla** Photo: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales/ Courtesy SEARCH Foundation

hostile crowd grew to 500 and began pelting eggs and rotten tomatoes. The students had their hair pulled, received cigarette burns and were spat on.

But their determination paid off. At a crisis meeting, the Mayor vowed to rescind the discriminatory motion barring Aboriginal people from the pool, if the students left town immediately. Claiming victory, the students ended the picket.

### Aftermath

The Freedom Rides had a major impact, making oppression of Aboriginal people front page news. In the months that followed, local campaigns for Aboriginal rights flourished. Neville Kelly, who helped establish a Moree Association for the Advancement of Aborigines, said the student actions, “kicked it off, we realised we had to do something”.

SAFA branches were formed in other states. SAFA hosted an O-week meeting at Sydney University that attracted 350-400 people.

Trade unions were also invigorated. The Teachers Federation, which had initially been ambivalent about the confrontational nature of the Rides, sent the students money after the Moree clashes. At a stop-work meeting of the Sydney branch of the Seaman’s Union, members commended students for their, “courageous exposure of the oppression and segregation levelled against the aborigines in NSW towns”. When students arrived in Lismore, the local Trades Hall Council gave them a heroes’ welcome.

Perkins had initially turned down an offer from the Waterside Workers

Federation (WWF) to provide a speaker system for the rides, wanting to distance the Ride from Communists who led the union.

But in July 1965, five WWF members were part of a 20-strong delegation of Aboriginal trade unionists to Walgett who joined SAFA members, including Perkins, in actions with the local APA that broke the colour bar in the local cinema.

Continuing action eventually defeated formal segregation across Australia and the Aborigines Welfare Board was abolished in 1969.

Tragically, however, laws allowing segregation and racist controls were reintroduced by John Howard with the Northern Territory Intervention in 2007 and continue to this day.

Across the country the social position of Aboriginal people remains dire. Most of the problems observed by the Freedom Riders persist 60 years on—inadequate housing, water and medical services, police harassment and child removal.

Since the failure of Labor’s Voice referendum, racism against Aboriginal people has intensified. Everyday, land rights are being bulldozed to enable Australian capitalism’s addiction to fossil fuels. Yet the legacy of the original Freedom Ride can continue to inspire—and point to the kind of militant action needed today.

### Notes

1. It is often (incorrectly) claimed that Perkins was the first Aboriginal person to graduate from University, including in an earlier issue of *Solidarity*. That title in fact goes to Bundjalung woman Margaret Williams-Weir, who graduated with a Diploma of Education in 1959.

# LABOR FAILS TO STAND UP AS QUEENSLAND ATTACKS TRANS RIGHTS

By Matilda Fay

FRESH OFF the back of Donald Trump's attacks on gender affirming care, the anti-trans right in Australia is on the offensive.

Queensland Premier David Crisafulli has halted prescription of puberty blockers and hormones for trans kids, plunging people into distress and uncertainty. There are 491 young people in Queensland currently on the waiting list for these treatments.

Shamefully, federal Labor Health Minister Mark Butler has failed to oppose the Queensland ban or call for it to be reversed.

Instead the Labor government is trying to avoid taking a position by announcing a federal review of Australian treatment guidelines for trans and gender diverse kids. Labor sought to override a separate review launched by the Queensland LNP government but the LNP is still pushing ahead to set its own treatment policy.

Labor's review will be led by the National Health and Medical Research Council and many organisations have cautiously welcomed it, seeing it as a path to establish medical standards that can resist anti-trans attacks.

But Labor doesn't need a review to defend trans kids. In the press conference announcing the review, Butler was asked to explicitly affirm his support for gender affirming care for young people and refused. Labor has continually failed to support trans rights in their three years in office despite countless opportunities to do so.

Last year Albanese backed away from an election promise to remove special exemptions allowing religious schools to discriminate against LGBTIQ+ students and teachers, after signalling that the government was seeking a bipartisan approach with the LNP. Despite having clear support from The Greens and the crossbench to stand up for trans kids, Labor capitulated to the right.

## Wave of attacks

Labor is refusing to stand up to a growing global onslaught of anti-trans bigotry.

Trump has signed an executive



Above: Rally on the Transgender Day of Visibility 2023 in Melbourne. Photo: Matt Hrkac

order banning federal funding for puberty blockers, hormones or surgery for trans people under the age of 19 and at least 24 US states already ban them.

In December, the UK Labour government banned the use of puberty blockers and hormones for under 18s indefinitely following the widely criticised Cass review.

The Cass review argued that existing studies into puberty blockers and hormone treatments are "poor quality" and their long-term effects are not understood. But it set an impossible-to-reach standard by insisting on the need for Randomised Control Trials where some participants receive placebos rather than puberty blocking medication.

These are near impossible to carry out because, unlike other drugs, it is obvious to any patient whether they receive the puberty blockers or hormone treatments, since they have immediate physical effects.

There are also serious mental health risks associated with giving adolescents placebos instead of puberty blockers.

Citing the Cass review, a group of anti-trans campaigners including notorious bigots Tony Abbott, Katherine Deves and Jillian Spencer are calling for Australia to follow the UK.

Amid this wave of anti-trans politics, there is no room for weasel words or capitulation. Federal Labor should immediately condemn the Queensland ban and use all available measures to prevent its implementation. They could, for instance, make providing care to trans kids a condition of federal funding to hospitals.

But it's clear we can't rely on Labor to stand up for trans rights. We need to build a fighting movement on the streets to push back these attacks.

Thousands attended rallies called by the Trans Justice Project around the country on 8 February to protest the ban in Queensland.

In the US there is a growing fightback, with nationwide rallies, court challenges and some doctors speaking out, committing to defy Trump's bans. We need health sector unions and medical bodies in Australia to condemn the ban and commit to supporting health staff in Queensland to act with similar defiance and ensure trans youth get the care they need.

Activists have fought over several decades to establish the principle that trans people have a right to gender-affirming care. We will need to continue taking this fight to the streets to halt the rise of anti-trans bigotry and assert that trans people and trans rights are not going anywhere.

**Solidarity**