

Solidarity

Issue No. 194 / April 2025

\$3/\$5

KEEP DUTTON OUT



PREPARE TO FIGHT

LABOR FOR UNION

RIGHTS AND PALESTINE

ELECTION

Housing policies fail to stop property investors

TRUMP

US decline, tariffs and the world economy

MILITARY SPENDING

'Defensive' weapons not alternative to AUKUS

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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Things they say

We are cutting up the strip

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, announcing that Israel has created the Morag corridor separating Rafah in the south from the rest of Gaza

We're not ogres. But at the same time we do expect people to come into the office to do the job that they've been hired to do.

Jane Hume, Shadow Minister of Finance and the Public Service, defending the Coalition's plan to ditch work from home

This is a great time to get rich.

Donald Trump, appearing to tip off his followers about news on tariffs that caused a stockmarket jump

Our major exports to the US are defence-related.

South Australia's Trade and Investment Minister Joe Szakacs

Likewise, an old-fashioned term that we use: groceries. I used them in the campaign. It's such an old-fashioned term but a beautiful term: groceries. So, it's a bag with a lot of different things in it.

Donald Trump, in his speech about tariffs

It's important to point out that our plan has gas, and a lot of gas, in the system between now and when nuclear can come online in 2035-37.

Peter Dutton, asked about his plan for nuclear power

Who doesn't want to have a world where Russia and the United States are doing, collaboratively, good things together?

Steve Witkoff, former real estate developer and now US special envoy, negotiating an end to the war in Ukraine

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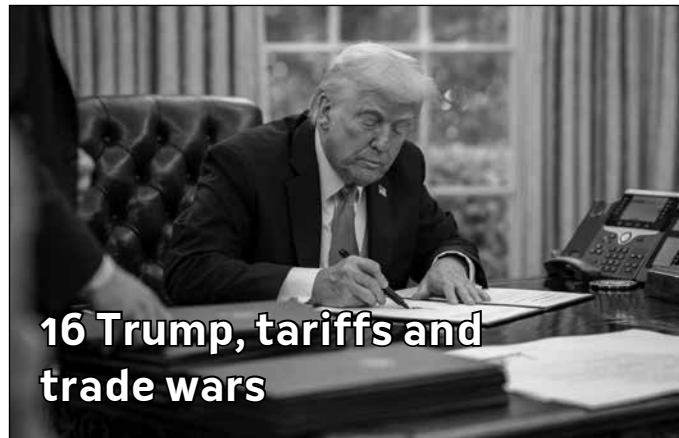
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Sydney hospital privatisation ending after medical failures

THE PRIVATE operator of Sydney's Northern Beaches Hospital says it wants to hand it back to public control. Private company Healthscope, which runs the public facility under a public-private partnership begun under the NSW Coalition government in 2014, wants to get out of the agreement due to financial problems.

This comes after the death of two-year-old Joe Massa at the hospital last September, following failed treatment at its emergency department. He died from severe lack of fluids after vomiting the previous night—but had to wait two-and-a-half hours for a bed and was not assessed with the appropriate monitoring equipment. The hospital has conceded that there were “unacceptable failings” in his care.

In March the current NSW Labor government passed a law ruling out similar public-private partnerships in future.

“We warned the previous government that this would be detrimental to the community and people of the Northern Beaches”, Michael Whaites, Assistant General Secretary of the NSW nurses and midwives’ union said, pledging that, “we will continue to campaign that no public healthcare services should be privatised.”

Private school opens \$60 million castle

SYDNEY'S HIGH-FEE private school Scots College is set to open a new \$60 million building modelled on a Scottish baronial castle.

Prince Edward was brought in to lay the “foundation stone” for the new student centre 18 months ago. Construction began in 2019 but was repeatedly delayed, due to difficulties importing sandstone and slate from Scotland, among other issues.

The school, which charges over \$50,000 for Year 12 students, even asked for a \$50 entry fee for student attendance at the building's opening event. Six of Sydney's richest private schools have a combined \$600 million worth of new building and facilities planned, according to the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Albanese backs salmon industry profits



A Salmon farming pen in Tasmania Photo: Owen Allen

ANTHONY ALBANESE forced through changes to environment laws just before the election to guarantee that salmon farming can continue in Macquarie Harbour. The laws allow the government to avoid a re-assessment of the industry under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

This follows suggestions salmon farming might be halted or suspended due to the push to save the endangered Maugean skate from extinction.

Salmon farming in the area on Tasmania's west coast has de-oxygenated local waters, putting the ancient species at risk in the only area where it survives.

The federal government also tipped in \$28 million in November to try to improve water quality so that the industry could keep operating.

Albanese has justified this as part of protecting jobs. But the salmon industry has now admitted that there are only 60 jobs in the area, the Australia Institute revealed, producing around 10 per cent of Tasmanian salmon.

The industry, however, is big business, generating \$1 billion of revenue every year. Albanese is determined to make sure their profits can continue.

Liberal millennial who posed as renter owns two properties

The Liberal candidate trying to win back the seat of Kooyong has been exposed for covering up her property portfolio to pose as a struggling renter.

Amelia Hamer, who is trying to topple teal independent Monique Ryan, has pitched herself as a millennial renter who can relate to the concerns of young people, saying she was, “hoping to bring generational difference”.

“I know my rent's gone up significantly, I'm a renter,” she told *Nine's Today Show*.

But she has now admitted she also owns an apartment in Canberra, and another in London, where she worked for Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

Hamer is Liberal Party royalty. The 31-year-old is the grand-niece of former Victorian Premier Rupert Hamer, and also has grandfather who was a federal Senator, and a great-grandfather, Sir William McPherson, who was Premier of Victoria in the 1920s.

Australian exports to Israel increase

AUSTRALIAN EXPORTS to Israel increased by 20 per cent last year, analysis by Kellie Tranter for *De-classified Australia* shows. In total Australian companies sold \$212 million worth of goods to Israel.

Among the exports were \$29.4 million of coal, after the Colombian government halted coal exports to Israel in June, “until it stops the genocide”.

Last year the International Court of Justice reaffirmed that Israel's occupation the Palestinian West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem is unlawful and that it is practising apartheid. It called on member states, including Australia, to sanction Israel by ending any trade that assists the occupation.

Australian coal exports are a prime example of trade that should be sanctioned. According to the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations in the Netherlands, “Energy, or fuel to produce energy, plays a significant role in Israel's military operations and unlawful presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory” both fuelling military vehicles and electricity for the illegal settlements.

JFK files reveal CIA covert operations

IN MARCH, Donald Trump released thousands of files on President John F Kennedy's assassination. Conspiracy theorists were hoping for evidence of a cover-up. But the main revelation was previously secret detail about US spying and intelligence operations.

They show that in 1961 almost half the State Department diplomats stationed abroad were actually undercover CIA agents, including 128 at the Embassy in Paris alone.

Material on US covert operations against Cuba includes CIA plots to assassinate Fidel Castro. The CIA also managed to contaminate an entire cargo shipment of 800 bags of sugar from Cuba to Russia, making it unsafe to eat. Other details include payments of \$10,000 a day to finance protests in British Guiana that helped push the government out of power, and interference in elections in Finland, Peru, Somalia and Panama.

EDITORIAL

Dutton's support drops, but little on offer from Albanese

PETER DUTTON'S imitation of Donald Trump and his plans for racism and cuts are going badly for him. It will be a relief if Dutton is kept out of office. But the main reason for a Labor win will not be enthusiasm for Anthony Albanese.

Albanese is running a dull, uninspiring election campaign, offering very little to improve workers' lives.

In the face of the cost-of-living crisis Albanese promises only minor improvements. This is typified by Labor's new tax cuts of just \$5 a week, not kicking in until the middle of next year.

We need far more. Living standards have been savaged by the surging cost of rents, home loans and groceries.

Household disposable income has plummeted almost 8 per cent since the last election—about \$4800 per person.

Donald Trump is casting a huge shadow over the campaign as his tariffs threaten to tank the global economy.

Australia was hit with direct tariffs of 10 per cent. But the bigger threat is the US's targeting of China—a protracted trade war would have knock-on effects here.

Albanese's efforts to placate Trump failed. In response to the tariffs, he has wrapped himself in nationalism, declaring the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme "not up for negotiation" and pledging to support affected industries. But Labor's support for AUKUS and nuclear submarines is unchecked.

Dutton's imitation of Donald Trump makes him look like an even more dangerous risk.

His plan for nuclear energy has been widely ridiculed. And he can't explain how his proposal to bring down gas prices would work.

Dutton has mimicked Trump and Elon Musk's public sector cuts, vowing to sack 41,000 public servants.

Jacinta Price, who Dutton wants to run a Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) mirroring Musk's, even declared she wanted to "Make Australia Great Again" at a campaign rally.

Dutton has launched "anti-woke" attacks on teachers, suggesting students were being "indoctrinated". But he was forced into a humiliating backdown, dumping his attack on working from home mid-election campaign and walking back his call for public sector sackings.

Trump is creating a dangerous world where the US bullies everyone in its path to advance its own power and profits. He has also shown his willing-



ness to resort to naked force, bombing Yemen and giving the green light for Israel to resume its genocide in Gaza.

He is now escalating tensions with China by singling it out as the prime target of his tariffs. This risks a slide into a devastating conflict between two of the world's largest military powers.

Australia's support for US imperialism only inflames the conflict and increases the danger of war.

We should be scrapping the \$368 billion AUKUS nuclear subs, kicking out all the US bases in Australia, including Pine Gap, and getting out of the US alliance.

Instead Albanese is doubling down on the US and ramping up arms spending.

Albanese has even sought to outdo Dutton in his support for the US, accusing him of suggesting military ties should be a bargaining chip with Trump over tariffs.

Dutton needs to be kept out of office. But a re-elected Albanese government will be just as conservative as its first term.

Labor's betrayals

Labor has betrayed many of those who voted for it last time.

After the referendum for the Voice was lost, Labor has let Indigenous rights go backwards. Labor has given the green light to new coal and gas mining.

Perhaps the most glaring is its attack on the CFMEU. The administration regime is likely to move more aggressively against militant union-

Above: Both Anthony Albanese and Peter Dutton want to keep backing US imperialism and AUKUS Photo: Lukas Coch/AAP Image

ism if the unions' High Court challenge fails. A result is likely shortly after the election.

Labor is still allowing weapons exports to Israel as it escalates its genocide. The ABC revealed that Israel is trialling a new weapons system from Canberra-based Electro Optic Systems.

Understandably many people will vote for The Greens or for independents supporting Palestine in places like Western Sydney to show their disgust for Labor.

But pushing Labor into minority government is not going to bring any serious shift to the left. Labor will seek the support of more conservative independents before The Greens. And The Greens currently holding the balance of power in the Senate has not pushed Labor to the left. Instead Albanese has used Liberal support to pass legislation—such as over immigration or the CFMEU.

It's going to take grassroots campaigns and union organising outside of parliament to force change—both in the lead up to and after the election. The doctors' three-day strike in NSW, defying the Industrial Relations Commission, shows how to fight.

Student activists need to keep standing up to the crackdown against protests for Palestine at universities—and build outwards to deepen the opposition to universities' ties with Israel. The University of WA has just announced the end of its exchange partnership with the Hebrew University in a win for the push for sanctions against Israel.

Whoever forms government, we are going to have a fight on our hands.

.....
It's going to take grassroots campaigns and union organising outside of parliament to force change

Administrator sets out plan to control CFMEU until 2028

By Ian Rintoul

AFTER MONTHS of inactivity, Mark Irving, the Labor-appointed administrator of the CFMEU has announced the next phase of administration—a plan to implement an undisclosed “Strategic Review” between now and 2028.

The official statement heavily implicates Zach Smith, who was elected as national secretary but since administration has been appointed as Executive Officer of the Victorian branch; both positions are controlled by the administration.

The announcement declares, “The work needed to deliver on this plan within the union will be the responsibility of Zach Smith as National Secretary, and, while it lasts, Administration.”

The administrator’s decree came just one day before Commonwealth prosecutors reported that they expect to proceed with some charges against former NSW CFMEU officials Darren and Michael Greenfield allegedly for receiving bribes from an employer. Although the charges relates to an alleged incidents between 2018 and 2021, well before administration began last year, they are the only charges that have been laid against any sacked CFMEU official. It is pathetic, but no doubt it will be used to try to justify administration. The administration has nothing to show for all the claims that the union was riddled with bikies.

Yet the administration is looking to step up the persecution, with the Fair Work Commission investigating whether NSW officials acted to undermine administration, a charge with a penalty of up to \$187,800 fine and two years jail.

The High Court challenge to administration is still being used as an excuse to delay industrial action against administration. Except for Queensland where the LNP government has moved against the CFMEU by re-tendering government building contracts to secure non-union companies on government sites, there have been no rallies or strikes this year.

But Administration is already taking its toll with some state branches recording significant membership decline. Labor wants the administrator to turn the CFMEU into a tame-cat union.

The administration tries to pretend it is business as usual but it’s not. One Sydney Metro CFMEU member told



Above: The last rally against administration in Sydney last November Photo: Solidarity

Solidarity, “The administration is not doing its due diligence to protect members. Incidents are happening and being swept aside. The union does not have the same power or willingness to help us as it once did.”

In NSW, the MUA and ETU are calling a stopwork rally for 1 May. The Administration will not allow the CFMEU to officially attend, so the bigger the show of defiance by CFMEU members, the better.

The High Court challenge to administration is still being used as an excuse to delay industrial action against administration

What do Trump’s tariffs mean for Australia?

GLOBAL STOCKMARKETS plunged in horror after Trump announced his so called “reciprocal tariffs” on virtually every country on Earth.

Billionaire investment bankers in the US began screaming for a reprieve. In response Trump took a step back.

He has put most of his tariffs on hold for 90 days, imposing a tariff of 10 per cent across the board until then. Trump says he wants to make deals in exchange for dropping his proposed tariffs. It’s unclear how much countries will have to offer for him to accept.

Australia’s tariff rate will remain at 10 per cent, alongside 25 per cent tariffs on aluminium and steel. The US, however, is a relatively minor market for Australian exports, and the direct tariffs won’t have a big effect.

But China has been singled out. Trump has ratcheted up China’s tariff rate from an initial 34 per cent to 145 per cent, and it has now retaliated with its own tariffs of 125 per cent on US imports.

It’s now clear China was always Trump’s main target. Trump has also spoken of negotiating with China, predicting, “we’ll end up making a

very good deal”. But the Chinese government has already signalled that it won’t give in easily. It has also sought to take advantage of Trump’s tariffs targeting US allies across Asia including Japan and South Korea as well as those facing savage tariffs rates such as Vietnam, promoting itself as a more reliable partner on trade.

Trump’s tariffs are likely to send the US economy into recession. But they will also damage the Chinese economy if they remain in place.

This could lead to a global economic downturn—and would have a major impact on Australia, since China is the country’s biggest export market. A Chinese slowdown would see them buying fewer Australian goods, threatening jobs here. The same thing applies if Trump reinstates higher tariffs against South Korea and Japan.

The US is showing itself to be a ruthless imperialist power intent only on advancing its own interests and profits. Trump is only making the motives that have always driven US policy more blatant. We need to end AUKUS, scrap the US alliance and fight for a world run in the interests of working class people not the billionaires backing up Trump.

Delivering housing justice requires ending handouts for the rich

By James Supple

BOTH LABOR and Liberal have announced new policies designed to appeal to anger about the cost of housing. But neither will address the main cause of skyrocketing prices.

Labor is offering subsidies to allow all first-home buyers to get a home loan with a 5 per cent deposit, with the government covering another 15 per cent. This will help some people but it will do nothing to reduce the cost of housing.

It also says it will build 100,000 homes itself over eight years at a cost of \$10 billion. Direct government spending to build housing is a good step. But Labor's plan may not be enough even to reach its existing housing target.

The government is already 30,000 homes behind in the first six months on its target for private sector developers to build 240,000 homes a year for five years.

Peter Dutton is offering to allow a tax deduction for home loan interest payments for first-home buyers of newly built homes. This would be limited to five years on up to \$650,000 of a mortgage. Those eligible could save significant money—around \$11,000 a year.

But the policy could significantly push up housing prices, cancelling out the saving.

And neither party has addressed the fact that housing prices are so high that many people can't afford a mortgage.

Racism

Peter Dutton has also stepped up racist scapegoating, trying to blame migrants and international students for the housing crisis.

Labor has gone along with this racism, introducing new visa rules to restrict international student arrivals. It also adopted the Liberals' policy to ban overseas investors from buying existing properties for two years—even though they only account for 1 per cent of purchases.

Dutton has sought to step up the scapegoating during the campaign. He wants to slash the number of international students by another 30,000 per year, introducing a brutal \$5000 visa fee for students applying to Group of Eight universities—with no refund if the visa is refused.

He also wants a savage cut to net



Above: The government needs a far more ambitious effort to build houses itself in order to bring prices down

migration of 100,000 a year, or almost 40 per cent. This includes people arriving on temporary work visas as well as those who stay permanently. It would be such a challenge for bosses trying to fill work shortages that Dutton backed away from it after he first proposed it a year ago. And he would also cut the refugee intake by 6250 people every year.

But migration is not responsible for the surging cost of housing.

Neither Labor nor the Coalition are willing to deal with the main reason housing prices are through the roof—the rich Australian investors who are buying up houses.

The changes to negative gearing and capital gains tax under John Howard's Liberal government in the 1990s have handed massive subsidies to the rich and made housing an investment plaything. Housing prices began surging immediately after the changes.

The Greens have rightly called for an end to this welfare for the rich, saying negative gearing should be limited to one investment property per person.

Another way to reduce housing prices is to build more public housing. This would both address the appalling public housing waiting list and put downward pressure on prices more generally.

But it would require building far more homes than Labor is contemplating.

The proportion of public homes

in Australia has dropped from 6 per cent in 1991 to 4 per cent today. Other countries have far more—with 17 per cent in France and England.

There is plenty of money to fund this if Labor was prepared to tax the rich.

The handouts for property investors cost the government around \$20 billion every year. Another \$20 billion a year goes in superannuation tax concessions to the wealthiest top 10 per cent. And increasing corporate tax could take back some of big business' obscene profits—like the \$44.6 billion the big banks made last year.

The Greens estimate the government could build 360,000 homes over five years—about six times what Labor is proposing—for around \$28.5 billion a year. This is the kind of spending that could make a real difference.

The government can find \$368 billion for nuclear submarines yet it dismisses the idea of similar spending on housing or services.

Labor's budget just before the election saw another increase of \$10.6 billion for the military over four years. The Coalition has hinted that it is set to promise even more spending on weapons and war.

After the election, we are going to have to fight whoever forms government to demand an end to policies that benefit the rich and powerful and win the kind of spending on housing and services that working class people need.

.....
The main reason housing prices are through the roof is rich Australian investors who are buying up houses

VOICES ON THE ELECTION— SENDING LABOR A MESSAGE, KEEPING DUTTON OUT

Solidarity spoke to activists who have been organising around housing, Aboriginal rights, Palestine and in defence of the CFMEU about the election campaign

Alistair Sisson is a research fellow at Macquarie University and has been involved in Action for Public Housing since 2021



FROM EVERY poll I've seen in the last couple of years, housing has been the number two issue behind cost of living. There's a pretty simple explanation, which is that housing costs have been rising rapidly in the last three years—rents going up around 20 per cent across the board. Interest rates rises have added to what was already

very unaffordable housing system.

How would you describe Albanese and Labor government's response?

It has been very unambitious, generously. They have taken a market-led response, in that they say that the solution is more housing supply, through changing planning laws so it's less restrictive for private developers. There's been some small investments in social housing, and an increase to rent assistance.

They [have announced the] Hous-

ing Australia Future Fund and a couple of billion dollars of investment in social housing. But they won't consider bigger investments in public housing, or anything that they say would discourage private investment in the housing system because they rely on property developers to build housing.

That includes [refusing to consider] rent control, but also reforms to negative gearing or capital gains tax.

They've been trying to show the public that they've been taking action, but in terms of material changes, I don't think there's been much at all.

Valerie Napaljarri Martin is a Walpiri woman and community spokesperson from Yuendumu, currently living in Alice Springs

'Our communities used to be behind Labor but look what they have done to us'

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES in the NT are really suffering. We face so much racism.

Since the NT Intervention [in 2007] everything has been taken away from us and the government has so much control over our lives.

This Labor government with Anthony Albanese has done nothing to help. There are still no jobs for the young people. What future will they have? We are still on the BasicsCard that started with the Intervention.

But we don't want the Liberal-National Party (LNP) in power. Jacinta Price would be the Minister for Indigenous Affairs and this is frightening, she has all the racists

behind her.

Jacinta's mother was from Yuendumu, a Warlpiri woman, but she doesn't speak for us. We get very angry and sad the way she talks against our culture.

The LNP government in Darwin is putting ten year olds in prison! So many of our people are all jammed up in prison.

The LNP also changed the laws that protect our sacred sites. Mining companies, pastoral companies, they will be able to do any damage that they want.

I am on the sacred sites authority and the Minister, Joshua Burgoyne, when he first visited us, he told us he was happy with the laws as they were. But then, without any consultation at all, they just changed the laws.

We feel like we are on the edge, scared about the future.

Our communities used to be behind Labor but look what they have done to us—who are we supposed to vote for?

We don't trust any government anymore. How in the world can we survive, us First Nations of Australia?

We need to get together, each one of us, throughout the NT and across Australia and make some noise. Stand and fight, rally together, this is not fair how we are being treated.

What kind of measures would make a more substantial difference?

In the short term rent control would make a big difference. Even though we need more public housing, it takes time to build it.

There's not much that's dealing with the urgency of the problem, like protecting people from eviction and protecting them from rent increases. No grounds evictions are about to be outlawed in NSW but that has been a long time coming, and some states are still refusing to do it.

What do you hope will come out of the election?

If the Coalition win I think things will get worse. All they're talking about is winding back some of the restrictions on bank lending so that it's easier to borrow money, and letting first home-buyers access their superannuation, which is like adding fuel to the fire. And also toxic immigration policies, blaming migrants for the housing crisis and scapegoating international students.

If there's a minority government, then maybe The Greens will be able to extract some better policies out of a Labor government. I'd expect them to push pretty hard on housing because that's been one of their key issues. I think that in a minority government, the role of grassroots activism in pushing the Greens to push Labor hard in negotiations is really important.



Sheikh Wesam Charkawi is the convenor of the Muslim Vote, which is promoting a vote for candidates who support Palestine

Why did you decide to help form the Muslim Vote campaign?
 Palestine is a point of no return and a line in the sand. It's essential that we stand for justice and we can't stand idly by and do nothing. Australia can affect policies, both foreign policies and local. And I think it's about time that the community realised that it has the power to mobilise to get the leverage to make a difference.

The Muslim community is outraged, and they're outraged because they did expect more from the government. All we've seen so far is weak lip service. We haven't seen any meaningful action, such as expelling the Israeli ambassador or calling for sanctions against Israel. And this is despite having a blueprint in what Australia did to Russia when it invaded Ukraine.

The Muslim vote is raising awareness, educating the community, showing that this model of mobilising the Muslim community is one that may gain the leverage that it needs to make a difference for our own future.

Talking to people on the street, talking to people in mosques and community centres, holding conversations and running social media campaigns, all of this is essential to the education and the mobilisation of the community.

Many people are worried about Dutton winning the election and his right-wing, Trumpist agenda. Do you think people should preference Labor before Liberal to avoid that?
 I think there's a lot of fear about Peter Dutton and the Liberal Party. There is an encouragement from us to preference Liberal last and put Labor just above them.

So what that does is that holds Labor to account, but it also ensures that there's no assistance to Dutton and the Liberal Party, who's been who's been very clear in its policies on Palestine and Gaza.

Taking away a margin of 15 per cent from Tony Burke [Labor MP for Watson in Western Sydney] and reducing that to 1 per cent, or potentially lower than that is a win, because that will mean that he will struggle to win the seat the next time around.

But if there is an outright win where Tony Burke is unseated, this is a win for the entire community,



Above: Sheikh Wesam Charkawi at a protest for Palestine

because it will mean that the community decided that enough is enough,

and now is the time for a new way forward.

Kris W is a CFMEU member in Melbourne involved in campaigning against the government's forced administration of the union

CFMEU members are feeling left down and betrayed by Anthony Albanese.

They have drafted draconian legislation that takes away [sacked CFMEU officials'] right to any fair trial. It takes away our right to politically organise. This administration has got the right to sell our assets. It's trial by media. No one's been charged. No one probably will be charged.

There's the cliché that the Liberal and the Labor Party are two sides of the same coin, but the harsh reality is only one of them is committed to deregistering us. If the Labor Party don't win back government we lose our coverage in the Fair Work Commission for any industrial disputes. We're trying to educate members around the threats and how bad it's going to be if we end up under a Coalition government.

We're trying to come up with a strategy to vote for CFMEU friendly candidates, vote for CFMEU friendly independents if they exist, and vote for the Greens and vote for the ALP.

I think telling people put the Liberals last doesn't quite go far enough. I'm not a huge fan of the Labor Party at the moment. We need to, in my personal opinion, return the Labor Party to its working class roots.

Many workers don't understand that the Labor Party is a capitalist party. They don't understand that

there are avenues through having active members within the ALP branches to go and make change. It's a long winded, drawn out process to make these changes. Workers get very impatient.

I still strongly believe in strike action and in rallies and raising our collective voice on the streets. But it has to be in lockstep with returning the Labor Party to its working class roots.

People know that in order to make any real change, there's a strong possibility that we're going to have to hit the grass, not just the streets.

You've got 30,000 CFMEU members in Victoria, 120,000 members countrywide that are going to have a very hard time voting Labor. There's an attitude within the Labor Party that they don't want us. That also is contributing to people's anger and not wanting to vote Labor this time around. We understand people's frustration. But the harsh reality is we need to put the Liberals last, put working class candidates along with the Greens and Labor, at the top [of the ballot paper].

I'll be handing out how to votes for my local Labor branch because I know they're all ex-union officials and organisers. They understand the trade union movement and the CFMEU. We've passed some great motions to condemn and try and shut down the administration. And I know that's what a lot of members will be doing.

'The Muslim community is outraged, and they're outraged because they did expect more from the government'

Student protests defy uni attacks on right to protest for Palestine

By Julie Monteiro

HUNDREDS OF students and staff rallied at universities nationwide on 26 March to defy the crackdown on protests, joining a National Day of Action for Palestine.

At the University of Melbourne over 300 students and staff rallied, defying new university restrictions on the right to protest. This was the biggest rally on campus since the student encampment last year.

The rally received widespread support, including endorsements from the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), BDS Unimelb, and Free Palestine Melbourne.

Emboldened by the turnout, organisers made the snap decision to challenge new protest rules by marching into Mahmoud’s Hall—the university building students occupied for ten days last year, forcing the university to disclose its ties to weapons manufacturers.

Over 100 people filled the Hall. This significantly defied the university’s attempts to restrict the right to protest on campus, showing that mass mobilisation can challenge Unimelb’s attacks on Palestine protest and its complicity in the genocide.

On the first day of the academic year, new Vice-Chancellor Emma Johnston introduced new rules that prohibit any protests inside buildings or near building entrances. These rules also ban any protests that are unreasonably disruptive or undermine individuals’ capacity to participate in university activities. The new restrictions are a direct response to the success of the Mahmoud’s Hall occupation last year.

NTEU branch committee member Sophie Rudolph told the rally that attacks on protest were a result of the, “corporate university [which] is interested in maintaining the power of elites”, arguing that, “we must stand together and fight against that kind of repression”.

The announcement of the new protest rules coincided with Universities Australia adopting its new definition of antisemitism. This exposes students and staff to misconduct for any attempt to criticise Zionism or call for the end of the apartheid state of Israel.

“We refute this idea that this is what antisemitism is”, anti-Zionist Jewish scholar Dr Jordy Silverstein told the crowd. “We refute this idea



that there is a hierarchy of racisms and that anti-Palestinian racism and Islamophobia don’t matter. We refute the idea that Palestinians don’t matter”.

Students diligently posted, stalled and lecture bashed to build the protest. Some were met with reluctance from staff members, despite

Above: At Melbourne Uni 300 students and staff rallied, defying attacks on the right to protest

their support for Palestine, who feared university reprimand.

But with Israel’s breaking of the ceasefire and continued bombing of Gaza, the outrage of students and staff on campus shows both the potential and necessity to mobilise for Palestine.

Students in Sydney win opposition to antisemitism definition

IN SYDNEY, up to 80 people protested at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), with students marching to join a crowd of over 100 at the University of Sydney (USyd).

Both rallies were a testament to the appetite to fight for Palestine that still exists on campuses. The rally at USyd was the largest rally on campus so far this year.

Since the encampment was forcibly ended in June, the University has unleashed a wave of repression. The Campus Access Policy (CAP) prohibits protests that do not follow the University’s strict notification scheme, and further proposals include a ban on lecture announcements and the display of banners.

The result has been that many students and staff are now afraid to publicly support Palestine. In this context, having a large and defiant rally was important.

After the rally at Sydney Uni, a number of students received letters informing them that they had breached the CAP by setting up a trestle table outside the administra-

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On the day of the protest, UTS’s Vice-Chancellor announced the university would not implement the new definition of antisemitism

tion building at the rally, and warning that any further breaches would constitute misconduct. The next week, the University hosted soldiers from the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in the board room of that same building.

At ANU, Palestinian and Jewish speakers also addressed the antisemitism definition. One student received a warning from the university for chanting “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”, which it says now violates the student code of conduct.

But students and staff can push back. On the day of the protest, UTS Vice-Chancellor Andrew Parfitt announced the university would not implement the new definition of antisemitism. UNSW has also refused to adopt it. But at USyd, an endorsement of the definition was hidden in the next Student News email.

Students Against War at USyd are organising a Student General Meeting on 14 May to register official student opposition to the new antisemitism definition, call for an end to the crackdown on protest and demand an end to all ties to Israel.

Angus Dermody

Thousands of NSW doctors strike for conditions, pay and public health

By Adam Adelpour

THOUSANDS OF NSW doctors from over 30 hospitals in NSW have taken strike action for the first time since 1998.

The doctors defied NSW Industrial Relations Commission orders not to strike and walked out on strike for three days to join angry protests outside Sydney and regional hospitals.

Their union, the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation (ASMOF), is calling on the government to agree to, "safe working hours, a minimum 10-hour break between shifts, and proper staffing".

Pay is also an issue, with NSW massively lagging behind other states. Western Sydney doctor Zachary McPherson told SBS, "Any one of our doctors here striking today could make 20 or 30 per cent more money just by simply moving to Brisbane or Melbourne."

At the St George Hospital rally Dr Benhy Samati, an intensive care specialist, told the crowd:

"This is not just about us doctors. This is about trying to unbreak a broken system. How can we keep patients safe when we ourselves are not safe and we work in unsafe working conditions?"

But the doctors face an intransigent Minns government that is determined to hold down public sector pay and conditions.

The government met the strike with a vicious campaign of smears as well as threats of disciplinary action and even de-registration. At Westmead Hospital security guards were used to intimidate doctors, instructing them to remove union badges and posters.

Dominic Horne, an Anaesthetics registrar speaking at St George Hospital said: "Stop trying to bully us. We've all had threats of litigation. We've all had threats that our registration will be pulled."

The government's lies were appalling. The office of Health Minister Ryan Park told the media 486 chemotherapy appointments had been cancelled due to the strike. But not long after his office was forced to admit this was an "error".

It is the Minns government that is endangering patients, not the strikes. According to ASMOF:

"Doctors across this state are working 16-hour shifts, day after day, with little rest and no end in sight.



Above: Doctors on strike at St George Hospital in Sydney
Photo: Solidarity

They are exhausted, they are leaving, and they are not being replaced."

Outside Westmead Hospital one doctor told the crowd that he had worked 135 hours in the past fortnight, with one day off, covering 150 patients per shift.

Meanwhile Minns is building a new \$309 million stadium in Penrith and pouring billions into the Western

Sydney Aerotropolis which includes a major arms manufacturing facility. Minns has clearly been shaken by the strike. But ASMOF has now given him what he wants and agreed to obey an IRC order for a three month ban on strikes as a show of "good faith". Expecting any good faith from Minns is a dead end—for the doctors to win the strikes must continue.

Parents stranded as childcare chains collapse

THE COLLAPSE of two childcare centre operators last month has left hundreds of parents stranded, affecting 15 Genius Childcare and HEI Schools centres in Melbourne and ten others in WA, Sydney, Brisbane and Canberra.

A number of the centres have closed permanently, while others were shut while administrators sought to sell them to another company.

Genius's Taylors Lake centre in Melbourne closed its doors after almost 20 staff refused to turn up to work, having gone four weeks without pay.

It's the result of a childcare system where more than 70 per cent of centres are now run by for-profit companies.

This is also leading to sub-standard care. A *Four Corners* report in March found 10 per cent of childcare centres had never been rated by regulators for safety and quality of care, with many others failing to meet the standards.

3 Bears childcare operated three centres for a decade before it was shut down following repeated safety failures, over-enrolments and abuse of

staff.

In February, two of the Genius childcare centres were also forced to close temporarily by regulators before the company's collapse, one in northern Adelaide for "operating in a manner that poses an immediate risk to the safety, health or wellbeing of children", and another in Canberra.

The centres that continue to run on a not-for-profit basis have higher levels of staffing, and are more than twice as likely to exceed national minimum quality standards than the for-profit centres.

Instead of funding childcare centres directly as it once did, the government now subsidises parents for the cost of childcare fees. This has pushed up costs and failed to deliver childcare centres where they are needed.

The free market model in childcare has failed. Instead of simply increasing subsidies, the government should take the system over completely, and run it as a public service.

.....
The doctors face an intransigent Minns government that is determined to hold down public sector pay

Climate emergency means we need to get off the gas

By James Supple

PETER DUTTON is railing against renewable energy and promoting fossil fuels, in an echo of Donald Trump’s climate denial. But Anthony Albanese is doing little to challenge him, desperate to hide his own climate inaction.

Australia recorded its hottest 12 months on record in the year to March. Extreme weather events like Cyclone Alfred are becoming increasingly common.

But in the face of the cost-of-living crisis, Dutton has dishonestly blamed rising power prices on what he calls, “Anthony Albanese and Chris Bowen’s reckless renewables-only policy.”

Renewable energy is not responsible for soaring power bills. These are mainly a product of breakdowns at the country’s ageing coal power stations and the global increase in gas prices.

Dutton’s own plans for nuclear energy are a fig-leaf designed to allow the Coalition to stop renewable energy projects and extend the life of coal power stations. The Smart Energy Council estimates his seven proposed nuclear reactors would cost the government \$600 billion and supply less than 4 per cent of the country’s energy by 2050.

Even based on his own optimistic predictions, nuclear power would not come online until 2035, with no impact on power prices for a decade. The plan has become such an embarrassment that it has virtually disappeared from Dutton’s campaign.

Instead, Dutton announced plans to further expand fossil fuel extraction through mining more gas. He promised to audit possible gas projects on the east coast to speed up new mines, and fast-track the approval of Woodside’s North West shelf project in WA.

But there is no need for any more gas. Currently 80 per cent of Australia’s gas is exported, ironically leading to fears of a local shortage in coming years.

Dutton also promised a gas reservation policy that, he said, would, “Prioritise domestic gas supply, address shortfalls and reduce energy prices for Australians.” He has even proposed a new tax on mining companies to force them to supply gas to the domestic market at cheaper prices.

A gas reservation policy is a good idea in principle. It would mean



Above: Expanding gas for power and exports is only further fuelling the climate disaster
Photo: Aman Kapur

reserving a certain amount of gas production for domestic use, as WA has done since 2006, resulting in lower prices.

But the claim this would reduce power prices looks very shaky. After a week of confusion, the Coalition eventually produced modelling claiming their policies would lower household power prices by 3 per cent, or \$1 a week, and gas prices by 7 per cent.

Yet they failed to include the cost of shipping the gas from Queensland to where it’s needed in NSW and Victoria, which would wipe out any price reduction.

The Coalition have also suggested increasing the amount of power produced using gas, currently just 6 per cent in the east coast market, as a stopgap until nuclear power comes online.

This would push up power prices, since electricity produced from gas costs far more than using renewable energy or coal. The cheapest option is to cut back the use of gas altogether.

Labor’s climate failure

Anthony Albanese promised “to take the country forward on climate action”. But he has avoided the issue during the election campaign.

This is no surprise given Labor’s record. It has also thrown its weight behind expanding fossil fuel mining, approving 12 coal developments and five oil and gas projects since it came to power.

Last year it released a “future

gas strategy” that saw its Resources Minister Madeleine King declare that mining had to continue “out to 2050 and beyond”.

This committed Labor to opening huge new gas fields like the Pilliga/Narrabri in NSW and Scarborough in WA and handed \$650 million in subsidies to the industry.

Labor has also put up \$1.5 billion to build a new gas hub at Darwin’s Middle Arm precinct.

Since Labor won office in 2022, Australia’s emissions have barely moved.

The latest figures show they are down just 0.7 per cent. At this rate it would take between 355 and 426 years to reach zero emissions—well beyond the 2050 target in 25 years.

Its Safeguards Mechanism, designed to deal with emissions from industry, allows companies to buy their way out of action through purchasing carbon offsets. Studies have repeatedly called into question whether these offsets schemes actually do anything to reduce emissions.

Initial data from its first year of operation shows “zero noticeable difference”, according to analyst Ketan Joshi.

Labor even postponed a decision on a 2035 emissions reduction target to push it beyond the election. Countries are supposed to take targets to the global climate summit this year.

The large protests for climate action we saw before the last election may have died away. But the fight for action is most urgent than ever.

Border policies breed racism and division among workers

We should oppose not just scapegoating migrants over the cost of housing, argues **Jack Stubley**, but borders and immigration restrictions altogether, in the first of a new series on what socialists say

ANTI-IMMIGRATION rhetoric is on the rise globally.

Donald Trump wants to deport 11 million immigrants and massively increase the capacity of the notorious Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Here in Australia, Labor and Liberal are competing to announce cuts to immigration and ever more ruthless measures against refugees.

Liberal leader Peter Dutton is looking to copy Trump. He has continually blustered about Labor running, “a migration program that’s been taken advantage of”. Dutton has promised to cut permanent migrant and international student visas, scapegoating migrants over the price of housing.

Anthony Albanese himself has deployed anti-migrant rhetoric, cutting international student numbers and banning non-residents from buying homes.

Dutton was adamant that Australia should not take any Palestinian refugees, claiming they are a security risk. He doubled down on this with the completely fabricated claim that Gazans were receiving fast-tracked Australian citizenship to allow them to vote in the election. This came despite the Albanese government’s own boasts about rejecting the vast majority of Gazan refugees.

Blaming migrants is a distraction from the real causes of problems like the cost of living, stagnant wages, poverty level welfare payments and cuts to services like the NDIS. This racist scapegoating must be opposed.

The real threat to workers’ living standards comes from our own bosses and governments. Grocery prices are skyrocketing while the super-market duopoly of Woolworths and Coles rake in record profits. Social services, from education to health-care, are chronically underfunded by government while they cut taxes for the wealthiest and binge on military spending.

But even many on the left accept that there must be a limit on immigration. This means accepting the idea that migrants pose some kind of threat. Socialists oppose all immigration controls and support open

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Blaming migrants is a distraction from the real causes of problems like the cost of living

borders.

Local jobs

The idea that immigration either takes jobs, causing unemployment for locals, or undermines wages, is widespread. In fact, immigration helps to create more jobs through increasing demand in the economy. Every extra person is someone whose work and consumption generates economic activity, someone to build the houses, pick the fruit and staff the social services.

Mass immigration has been a feature of Australian history. After the Second World War Australia adopted a high immigration policy with the slogan “populate or perish”. The economy boomed and jobs grew. Although laden with the racist White Australia Policy, this showed mass migration does not threaten local jobs or wages. In recent years migration has been one of the only things driving jobs and Australia’s economic growth.

Economic studies have repeatedly shown that immigration does not create unemployment. A 2016 report for the federal Productivity Commission found “almost no evidence” that immigration either increased unemployment or reduced wages. It examined different types of workers including those who never completed Year 12, diploma graduates and university graduates, concluding that the only evidence of any negative impact on wages from immigration was for recent university graduates.

Yet trade unions often assume that immigrant labour undermines pay and conditions for local workers. Head of union peak body the ACTU Sally McManus claimed that temporary migration was “shipping in exploitation, and it is taking away jobs for local people”.

The idea is that immigrants will accept lower wages. Bosses are entirely willing to abuse the vulnerable position of migrants, such as food outlet Sushi Bay which was fined \$15.3 million last year for systematic underpayment of Korean temporary visa holders. But capitalists are just as willing to exploit local workers if they can too.

According to a Grattan Institute

report, up to 16 per cent of recent migrant workers are paid below the national minimum wage. That same report found up to 9 per cent of all Australian workers were also being paid below the minimum.

Migrant workers are made more vulnerable when their visas are dependent on employment and their right to stay in the country is under threat. The solution is to fight for permanent visa rights and to organise them into the unions.

Borders

Borders reinforce national, ethnic and racial divisions between workers here and those overseas. Meanwhile the rich are free to travel and invest all around the world.

Borders encourage workers to identify with the nation and to see the Australian way of life as a privilege under threat from outsiders. This means identifying with Australian bosses and the well-being of Australian company profits instead of with workers around the world.

Yet we have far more in common with workers in China, the US or India than with the billionaires in Australia who run companies that exploit workers here and abroad.

Hostility to migrants also weakens the solidarity between local and migrant workers that is necessary for trade unions and workers’ strike action to succeed.

Most people think open borders would be unmanageable.

But we have recent examples of “open border” policies that did not bring catastrophe. In 2004 eight Eastern European countries joined the EU, leading to 560,000 migrants arriving in Britain over two years. This resulted in wages that were actually slightly better in areas with higher immigration.

In the US, the plans for mass deportation don’t promise a brighter future for the average US worker but potential economic collapse. Migrant workers, undocumented migrant workers especially, are crucial to many industries.

Borders only serve to divide workers and weaken our ability to fight back against exploitation.

Adolescence shows the pressures on women and families that lead to violence

Adolescence
 Directed by Philip Barantini
 Screening on Netflix

NETFLIX IS setting viewing records with *Adolescence*, a gritty four-part British drama about a 13-year-old working class boy who stabs a girl from his school to death in a car park.

The show is worth watching. Each hour-long episode was filmed in one take, creating an intimate, sometimes claustrophobic but very gripping experience.

Episode three, set in a youth detention centre, sees a psychologically compelling hour-long interaction between Erin Doherty (the psychologist) and Owen Cooper (the 13-year-old Jamie), producing masterful TV.

Adolescence strikes a chord because it depicts the increasing pressures that confront working class communities and families, and the ways that growing economic pressure and cuts to the welfare state are reinforcing sexist gender-roles in family relationships.

An important thread in *Adolescence* explores how extreme gender-based violence—femicide—is a shocking consequence of the gender inequality and misogynistic stereotypes embedded in the nuclear family.

The show subtly highlights young Jamie's view of his Mum as weak and irrelevant, and his Dad's anger problem, having been beaten as a child. We also see Jamie's Mum consistently trying to placate and mediate the Dad's emotions. All this rings true.

Adolescence shows the economic pressures on the family, the under-



Owen Cooper plays 13-year-old Jamie Miller, who is arrested for murdering his classmate in *Adolescence*

funding of the school and its incapacity to address the real problems students face at home. However, this particular insight is just one of many.

The message that has most widely been taken up is that parents need to police their teen's use of social media to protect them from misogynistic manfluencers like Andrew Tate, who portray men as victims and coach men and boys on how to dominate women.

But the manfluencers on social media are only a symptom of the more general social backlash against women's rights seen most dramatically in the Trump policies that remove funding from universities that have diversity programs, ban transgender healthcare, defund schools and consolidate the ban on abortion in many states.

Proposals such as Albanese's ban on social media access for under-16s leave the underlying social causes of male violence untouched.

The family
 In Australia the nuclear

family performs an estimated \$650 billion annually in unpaid labour (equivalent to half of GDP)—caring, cleaning, cooking—to ensure that workers are regenerated daily to provide the labour that generates the corporate profits.

This unpaid labour is possible only because of imposed, oppressive gender roles that socialise women to feel responsible for the care of the household, children and the elderly, while men are

Gender-based violence is a product of the nuclear family's reliance on women being socialised to be subordinate and men socialised to be in control

still socialised to be the “bread-winners”.

While they are experienced as deeply private, these gendered roles and family relationships are continually economically and ideologically imposed by the ruling class through the media, the gap between women's and men's earnings, and the economics of housing.

Gender-based violence is a direct product of the nuclear family's reliance on women being socialised to be subordinate and men socialised to be in control.

Add in long work hours, financial stresses and the impossibility of living up to the gender roles and the result can be violence and abuse.

The show's explanation for Jamie's capacity to kill is the rage created by feeling humiliated and rejected by his female victim and his resulting violence to control and hurt her.

This depiction of gender-based violence as a rage-fuelled attempt to dominate resonates with the experience of domestic and family violence that

resulted in the killing of 69 women in Australia last year.

More profoundly, 39 per cent of women report suffering emotional and physical harm from the controlling and abusive behaviour by partners and ex-partners.

Empower women

Once gender-based violence is located as a product of the capitalist nuclear family, it becomes clearer how we can fight it. Everything that empowers women and removes the pressure on families will help—free quality childcare, more staff in schools to help support children and families, free quality aged and disability care.

Crucially every fight that promotes social equality and women's economic independence to leave abusive relationships without being thrust into poverty—funding public housing, rent caps, secure jobs, real wage rises—will lessen the incidence of gender-based violence.

The fact that British Labor leader Keir Starmer is slashing social spending while calling for *Adolescence* to be shown in schools shows how Andrew Tate and social media are used as a cover for the far more significant attacks coming from our rulers.

Adding more pressure on parents to “be it all” for their children, including monitoring their online presence while working ever greater hours, is no solution to the real problems raised in the show. Fixing them will take a fight that goes beyond the symptoms, and attacks the fundamental causes.

Jean Parker

Putin holds the cards over Ukraine as Trump pushes for a deal

By Jacob Starling

DESPITE DONALD Trump's campaign promise to end the Ukraine War on "day one" of his presidency, his hopes of a peace deal have so far come to nothing.

Russian President Vladimir Putin remains aggressively committed to continuing the war, claiming that Russia is close to "finishing off" the Ukrainian military.

Russia now has the upper hand in the war and thinks that Ukraine's position will weaken further without ongoing support from the US.

It has continued to launch murderous drone strikes on Ukrainian cities. Putin has avoided a ceasefire, even suggesting that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky might have to be replaced before there could be peace.

Trump's actions over Ukraine are not a result of him acting as "Putin's puppet", as the liberal media implies. He is frustrated with Putin's refusal to accept a ceasefire, telling NBC news last month that he was "very angry" with Putin, and threatening to impose tariffs on any country buying Russian oil. He later declared that "Russia has to get moving".

Trump's aim is to get the US out of a war he sees as a waste of time and to extract deals for the benefit of the US—with both Putin and Ukraine. He also wants to prioritise the US challenge to China.

Putin and Trump both have an interest in looting Ukraine, even if they cannot come to an agreement about how Ukraine should be carved up between them.

The US's continued insistence on a minerals deal with Ukraine makes blatant how crude and predatory American interests really are. The proposed deal would see America gain sweeping control over Ukraine's natural resources through a joint investment fund.

The fund would control half of all income from Ukraine's resources including rare earth metals, oil and gas and associated infrastructure. American appointees would have the deciding vote in the fund's investment decisions.

The US would also have the right to all profits and a 4 per cent annual return until they recover their total military and financial investment in Ukraine since the Russian invasion



Above: Russian President Vladimir Putin Photo: premier.gov.ru

(about \$200 billion).

Proxy war

Ukraine's dependence on the US for military and financial aid means it will accept whatever Trump demands.

New reporting from the *New York Times* has made clear just how much the war has been a proxy war between NATO and Russia. The US military has essentially controlled Ukraine's strategy and tactics since the Russian invasion.

The US was closely involved in planning military operations, with Ukraine relying heavily on intelligence and targeting information from the US. It provided crucial weaponry such as the HIMARS artillery system on the condition Ukraine would strike only targets provided by the US military.

Although Trump's public humiliation of Zelensky in the White House was a shocking departure from diplomatic decorum, it made clear exactly which state was in control.

With the Trump administration unwilling to approve further military aid to Ukraine, and threatening not to defend Europe unless it takes on a greater share of NATO defence spending, European countries have responded with a massive increase in arms spending.

European leaders have argued that the possibility of further Russian expansion, as well as the steady rise of China, makes this urgent. Last month, European leaders met in Brussels to agree on a \$1.45 trillion plan to

increase EU defence spending. Shortly after, the German parliament voted to amend their constitution to pass a massive defence spending plan, worth up to \$1.7 trillion.

The UK, too, has vowed to greatly increase spending. Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer has promised that his government will "begin the biggest sustained increase in defence spending since the end of the Cold War", increasing its military budget to 2.5 per cent of its GDP by 2027.

This spending is not about defence but about ensuring the wealthy European powers can dominate the economies of southern and Eastern Europe.

The Ukraine War is a product of this imperialist competition. Both Russia and the West want influence over Eastern Europe, competing both economically and militarily to control its markets and industries.

These increases in defence spending will promote a never-ending arms race, a vicious cycle which brings the prospect of a major war closer and closer.

The trillions being wasted on weapons also divert resources away from welfare and services. The British government is already cutting disability benefits to afford to boost arms spending.

The logic of capitalism prioritises the maintenance of profits through wholesale slaughter over the needs of the vast majority of people. We have to reject their push for more spending on weapons and war.

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The continued insistence on a minerals deal with Ukraine makes blatant how crude and predatory American interests really are

TRUMP'S TARIFF WARS AND THE THREAT OF GLOBAL ECONOMIC CHAOS

Jayden Rivers looks at why Trump is imposing tariffs on China and other countries, and whether this can restore the US's declining economic position

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump is imposing dramatic new tariffs on US allies and enemies alike. He claims higher import tariffs will raise government revenue to fund tax breaks for the rich and force the reshoring of production on American soil.

Most dramatic have been Trump's global "reciprocal tariffs", targeting virtually every country. While he has now paused tariffs including 20 per cent against the European Union, 46 per cent against Vietnam, and 25 per cent against South Korea, each country has been told to negotiate a deal or see the tariff rate imposed in 90 days. In the interim Trump has imposed 10 per cent tariffs across the board, including on Australia.

But China was given no reprieve, with an enormous tariff of 145 per cent imposed immediately.

Shock at the scale of the new tariffs sent US stock markets tumbling to lows not seen since the COVID-19 recession. They briefly recovered before falling again as the scale of the tariffs on China became clear.

According to Marxist economist Michael Roberts, if fully implemented the average US tariff rate would reach 26 per cent, "the highest level in 130 years". Economist Joseph Politano reported that "the costs of these actions are enormous, covering \$1.3 trillion in US imports or roughly 42 per cent of all goods brought into the United States".

Trump's moves are a break with the free trade policies and economic globalisation the US has promoted for decades.

Trump's logic

Trump's tariff plans are often seen as crazy and irrational. They are unlikely to work. But there is a logic behind what he doing. Trump's trade policy is a response to the rise of China and the relative decline of US economic power.

He is obsessed with the idea that other countries are ripping the US off through unfair trade deals, blaming this for the decline of US manufacturing and the shift of industries abroad. In an address to US Congress after 100 days in office, Trump claimed "tariffs are about making America rich again and making America great again".

In 1885, Friedrich Engels observed that when a capitalist economy is dominant worldwide, it typically prefers free trade.

This allows the dominant nation easy access to markets in other nations. The free movement of capital to poorer nations can also lead to profitable investments.

From the 1840s to 1870s, Britain adopted free trade policies. But after the 1880s depression, Britain turned to protectionist measures to deal with its waning economic strength relative to Germany.

The US is repeating history. At the height of its economic power following the Second World War, the US dominated global manufacturing. Able to produce cheaper goods than its competitors, the US demanded the dismantling of global trade barriers to foreign markets.

From 1949 until the financial crash of 2008 global trade grew on average at 10 per cent per year, roughly twice the growth of world production.

In 2001 the US brought China into the World Trade Organisation (WTO). It was an attempt to further expand US production and gain access to Chinese markets. As Bill Clinton said in 2000, "Our companies will be able to sell and distribute products in China made by workers here in America without being forced to relocate manufacturing to China."

But China's entry into the WTO gave its exporters access to global markets for goods they could produce

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The rise of China threatens not just the profits of US companies but the US's military dominance as well

cheaper than anyone else. It attracted a flood of foreign capital, rapidly expanding its economy. Today China accounts for 35 per cent of global manufacturing, almost three times the US's share and equal to that of the next eight nations combined.

The rise of China threatens not just the profits of US companies but the US's global power and military dominance as well.

Manufacturing provides skills, technologies and logistics which are transferrable to military production. For example, car assembly lines can be repurposed to produce military vehicles. Recent high-tech innovations like artificial intelligence also have military applications, such as in targeting systems.

As the Australian Strategy Policy Institute analysed, "China is ahead of the game. In its bid to have the most technologically advanced military in the world, Beijing applies a strategy of military-civil fusion to boost its military and defence capabilities, using civilian research and heavily subsidising domestic commercial sectors." This is why China is such a threat to the American ruling class. As US Vice Present J D Vance stated, "Military power is downstream of industrial power."

The driving force behind Trump's trade offensive is reinforcing US imperialism. Today imperialist power brings together the geopolitical competition between states with the economic competition between firms.

Capitalist economies are dominated by huge industrial firms which compete with overseas rivals: think China's Huawei and America's Nvidia, which compete in the fields of microchip design, cloud computing and networking services. If Huawei outcompetes Nvidia, then the US loses a major innovator, employer, and source of tax revenue. If Nvidia fails, other giants further down the supply

chain can fail, too.

Manufacturing jobs

Trump thinks tariffs will bring back manufacturing and jobs to the US.

Tariffs are import taxes, imposed on goods when they are brought into the country. This results in higher prices for working class people when they are eventually sold. The idea is that higher prices for imports protect local manufacturing companies, increasing domestic production and jobs.

Five million manufacturing jobs have been lost in the US in the past 25 years, replaced with casualised work on lower wages. Workers in communities worst hit by manufacturing job losses voted overwhelmingly for Trump.

As a result United Autoworkers Union president Shawn Fain responded to Trump's automaker tariffs by saying, "We applaud the Trump administration for stepping up to end the free trade disaster that has devastated working class communities for decades."

Tariffs are also popular among sections of the union movement here in Australia, such as the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union. They argue that tariffs will protect jobs from overseas competition.

History shows they're wrong. The car industry in Australia grew behind tariff protection until the 1980s. Yet workers at Holden and Ford were among the lowest paid in heavy industry and far worse paid than car workers in America, Japan or Europe.

Later on, subsidies replaced tariffs. Between 1997 and the final closure of Holden and Toyota in 2017, governments handed the car industry \$30 billion. But they continued to cut jobs and wages. The car companies had already axed 45 per cent of jobs between 2005 and 2012, before the decision to close completely.

But the unions' support for tariffs and subsidies saw Holden workers continually accept wage cuts and job losses in a vain bid to keep the company afloat.

Tariffs and subsidies do not protect workers' jobs—only company profits. Supporting tariffs encourages workers and unions to accept cuts to jobs and conditions to maintain company profitability—instead of fighting to maintain jobs and conditions.

Tariffs will not bring back US manufacturing jobs today either. The Economic Policy Institute reported that, "Eighty per cent of lost jobs were not replaced by workers in China but



by machines and automation."

Protectionism was used successfully to build up early industries in many countries, including the US, Germany and Australia. In the mid-1970s South Korea and Taiwan successfully deployed trade barriers to establish manufacturing industries. But this was aimed at building industries able to compete on the global market—not permanently sheltering uncompetitive companies.

Production today is also far more internationalised. Studying the effects of tariffs on American businesses, The New York Fed found that "extracting gains from imposing tariffs is difficult because global supply chains are complex and foreign countries retaliate".

Globalisation has made disentangling supply chains near impossible. Take the iPhone for example. It's made up of 180 components produced in more than 40 countries by different suppliers. So Apple cannot simply move all its production chains to the US.

Another problem is that countries retaliate with their own tariffs. China has already announced tariffs of 125 per cent on all US imports, Canada is imposing a 25 per cent tariff on US auto products and Europe has also vowed to respond.

This threatens to ignite trade wars that will end up damaging the US economy as well as its rivals. As the downward spiral of retaliation swallows up more trade, consumer prices will rise dramatically and Trump will find it difficult to maintain high tariffs.

The tariffs will almost inevitably cause a US recession. A Yale University study concluded that the increase

Above: Donald Trump's tariffs threaten to crash the US economy

Photo: Gage Skidmore/The Star News Network

in domestic prices in the US would reduce consumer demand so much that it would cut US economic growth by 25 to 30 per cent this year. According to a UBS forecast, US real GDP this year could fall by 1.5-2 percentage points and inflation could rise to near 5 per cent.

Tariffs will raise the cost of living for working class people as well as the risk of recession, potentially creating mass unemployment for workers all over the world.

Alternative

Trump's protectionist trade policy is no alternative for the working class. Yet free trade has also destroyed millions of people's lives.

Free trade globalisation has driven down labour and environmental standards. It meant the rampant privatisation of state industries to turn them into profit-making avenues for big corporations, as well as the prising open of foreign markets so the US could flood them with cheaper goods.

Both free trade and protectionism are policies implemented at different times to ensure the profits of big business and the rich at workers' expense.

The alternative is to build union power to organise and strike to fight the bosses head-on. This is the only way to save jobs and win the pay and conditions workers need.

Trump's trade war has the potential to push the US and the rest of the world into recession and has exposed the rot at the heart of world capitalism. The booms and slumps of the stock exchange and the demands that workers sacrifice will continue until we end the system itself.

BREAK THE US ALLIANCE AND SCRAP AUKUS BUT NO NEED FOR ALTERNATIVE MILITARY SPENDING PLANS

David Glanz explains why proposals for weapons to ‘defend Australia’—such as from The Greens—are no alternative to AUKUS and mean buying into warmongering against China

DONALD TRUMP has thrown US allies—including Australia—into total disarray. His humiliation of Ukraine, his threats towards Canada, Greenland and Panama, his demand that Western powers dramatically increase military budgets and now the imposition of tariffs on almost every country has torn up the rule book.

Until now, the Australian ruling class has relied on the US to guarantee the “rules-based order” that has underpinned global trade since the Second World War.

Under this system, Australia’s exports of goods and services grew from \$3.2 billion in 1963-64 to \$331.2 billion in 2013-14.

Australia’s bosses have looked to the US as their key ally since 1941, seeing the US Alliance as the guarantor of their imperialist role in the South Pacific, Melanesia and South East Asia. But a serious debate has broken out in ruling circles—can Australia rely on the US’s military support?

While the election is under way, Anthony Albanese and Peter Dutton are avoiding the issue. But others with less skin in the game are already speaking up.

Former Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating declared that Trump’s tariffs represented the effective death knell of NATO, “a severing that will inform all other allied relationships with America including ANZUS with Australia ... If NATO is expendable, what credible rationale could underpin US fidelity to ANZUS?”

Former Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said he still wanted the US as an ally in the region but, “The United States under President Trump does not share the values we have shared with every single one of

his predecessors.”

Former independent senator, Rex Patrick, argued, “Australia must focus on our own defence in the near to medium term. Contributions to alliances and ambitions for capabilities decades away must be lesser priorities.”

The biggest surprise was the announcement by Greens senator David Shoebridge that the party was committing for the first time to military spending—\$4 billion on items such as drones, unmanned underwater marine craft, and short and medium-range “defensive” missiles.

What all these men share is an assumption that Australia must develop military independence, breaking the AUKUS deal for nuclear-powered submarines but buying or manufacturing enough weapons to defend the continent from attack.

An end to the AUKUS deal with the US and Britain would be welcome. But a strategy of building up Australia’s military strength is no alternative.

The Australian military exists to enforce Australian imperialism and the debate that is under way is about how best to shore up its imperialist interests.

The nature of the Australian Defence Forces will not change no matter which pro-capitalist party is running Australia—there is no progressive ADF.

Echidna strategy

Shoebridge is pitching his \$4 billion plan as a saving because The Greens would cancel not only AUKUS but a range of other military acquisitions that he argues are not about defending Australia.

He’s been holding meetings to sell his proposals to peace groups. Some

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The announcement by Greens senator David Shoebridge committed the party for the first time to military spending

have cautiously welcomed his proposals. The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network supported Shoebridge’s call for a sovereign Australian defence industry to arm a self-defence force.

Shoebridge’s likened his pitch to the Echidna strategy, named after a 2023 book by Sam Roggeveen of the Lowy Institute entitled *The Echidna Strategy: Australia’s Search for Power and Peace*.

Under attack, an echidna curls into a ball with its sharp spikes pointing outwards. Roggeveen argues for a purely defensive posture, backed by missiles, mines, cyber weapons and limited maritime resources.

There are several problems with this supposedly minimalist approach. The first is that, like all other Australian defence strategies, it assumes that China is the enemy. As China builds its military—and has twice recently sailed vessels through Australia’s economic waters—the warmongers call for an *escalation* of military power.

Hugh White is a fierce critic of AUKUS who wrote *How to Defend Australia* on the assumption that the US would not defend Australia from an attack by China. He argued that Australia would need to build more submarines and fighter jets, and potentially acquire nuclear weapons, almost doubling military spending to at least 3.5 per cent of GDP.

When he wrote the book in 2019, that suggestion was bad enough. Today, as Trump threatens to abandon NATO allies, governments across Europe are scrambling to boost military spending. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has proposed a Rearm Europe Plan costing up to \$1.45 trillion. Even Shoebridge admits that his \$4 billion plan

is just a beginning.

Arc of instability

The second problem is defining what is meant by defending Australia. Colonial leaders were focused on extending Australian business interests and repelling rivals, as was the federal government from 1901.

Military strategists saw the Melanesian islands to the north and the islands of the South Pacific as an “arc of instability”, providing the justification for urging Britain to seize New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu).

That logic is still at work today. As the Department of Defence puts it, “Australian Defence Force personnel are deployed to operations overseas and within Australia, in order to actively protect Australia’s borders and offshore maritime interests.”

That includes RAAF planes flying out of the Malaysian airbase at Butterworth to monitor sea lanes to the north. The RAAF and the RAN are actively involved in reconnaissance in the South Pacific.

In the hands of our rulers, “defending the continent” means dominating the region—approving Indonesia’s takeover of West Papua, sending troops to Malaya, and invading Vietnam and East Timor.

Australia is an imperialist country in its own right. Even under Shoebridge’s scenario, the ADF is likely to operate well beyond the Torres Strait, meaning Australia will continue to bully its smaller, poorer neighbours.

Apron strings

There’s a third issue. Most of those advocating for an increased focus on continental defence talk of Australia operating an independent foreign policy—arguing that too often Australia has been dragged into wars by its US masters.

As Shoebridge puts it, “It’s time to cut the apron strings to the US, to end the endless scare-mongering and cultural cringe and start asking what we can do ourselves to keep us safe.”

Breaking the US alliance would undoubtedly be a step forward, weakening US imperialism by denying it the use of the spy base at Pine Gap or the nuclear submarine base in Fremantle. But Australia’s record of going to war—from the Sudan in the 1885 to Iraq in 2003—has never been a result of foreign domination.

The Australian ruling class has long calculated that it needs a stronger ally to guarantee its ability to dominate the region, to make profits from



Above: The Greens’ alternative defence strategy would see more spending on drones and missiles Photo: Chris Hunkeler/Flickr

investments such as gold and copper mines in PNG or the Lynas rare earths processing plant in Malaysia, and to defend vital sea lanes.

So joining British or US-led wars has been a down payment on future, reciprocal support, a calculated decision by the Australian ruling class to ensure its own power and influence—an independent strategy to defend Australian capitalism.

An “independent” Australia would continue to be a capitalist state looking to defend and extend its sphere of economic, political and military influence.

A strategy of continental defence would not rule out the repeat of actions carried out by Australia in recent decades, like the bullying and bugging of Timor Leste, the arming of the PNG military against Bougainville freedom fighters or the 17-year deployment of Australian troops to patrol the Solomon Islands.

International solidarity

Proposals for continental defence may seem less aggressive and potentially cheaper. But as we have seen, the logic of defending the capitalist nation state can still lead to an arms race, regional bullying and potential conflict.

Such proposals also buy into the logic that Australian workers should subordinate their interests to defending the nation state. But the Australian state is not neutral. It exists to defend the interests of Australian capitalism at home and abroad.

It is not “foreigners” who have shackled our unions, privatised key sections of industry, imposed draconian restrictions on Aboriginal communities and run down health and education services.

The Australian state has the option of using the military against workers. Federal Labor governments deployed Australian soldiers to break a coal miners’ strike in 1949 and the RAAF to break a pilots’ strike in 1989. Soldiers patrolled the western suburbs of Sydney to enforce COVID stay-at-home orders. And the Defence Act allows for Australian troops to shoot to kill if protests or uprisings threaten the state.

Effective struggle against the wars waged by our rulers, and the billions they spend on weaponry, requires confronting the ideas that are used to justify imperialism—that rivals such as China are a “threat” to ordinary people, that the military exists to serve the “national interest”. Shoebridge’s policy, however, strengthens these ideas.

To end the warmongering and intimidation, we must completely disarm the bosses and the Australian state.

During the First World War, in 1915, the German Marxist Karl Liebknecht issued an anti-war leaflet which concluded, “The main enemy is at home!”

We need to draw the same lessons. Rather than treating Chinese workers as our enemy, we need to be building international solidarity. When Keating and Shoebridge say defend Australia, we say workers of the world unite!

ISRAEL RAMPS UP WAR CRIMES AS IT RE-OCCUPIES GAZA

By Luke Ottavi

ISRAEL IS ramping up its killing in Gaza, seizing more land to prepare for permanent military control and at times murdering more than 100 Palestinians a day.

Israel's lies that it targets only Hamas fighters were exposed when phone footage taken by an assassinated Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) paramedic was released by the *New York Times*. The video shows clearly marked ambulances being ambushed by IDF soldiers, killing 15 medics in PRCS uniforms.

Israel originally claimed that the PRCS workers were "terrorists" approaching in "suspicious vehicles". It tried to cover up this war crime by burying the medics in a mass grave.

Re-occupying Gaza

After breaking the ceasefire, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plan is to seize more land for long-term occupation, cage residents into containment zones and force Palestinians to leave Gaza.

The IDF have established a new "Morag corridor"—a narrow strip running between Rafah and Khan Younis to its north, designed to separate the cities and control movement. The IDF now claims the entirety of Rafah as part of its "security zone".

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz has been explicit about Israel's aims, saying during a visit to the Morag corridor that "we are working to advance a voluntary emigration program for the residents of Gaza in line with the US President's vision".

Trump's plan to ethnically cleanse Gaza has stalled because Egypt and Jordan have refused to take in the two million Palestinians. Israel is reportedly trying to pressure African countries to accept them.

Israel now controls more than 50 per cent of the land in Gaza. Its military buffer zone within Gaza's boundary has doubled in size—in some places to three kilometres wide—with the IDF making the area uninhabitable by razing homes, farmland and infrastructure. Israel continues to hold the Philadelphi corridor along the border with Egypt.



Above: Destruction in Rafah after Israel withdrew during the ceasefire in January
Photo: UNRWA

Israel has completely prevented any aid from coming into the strip for over six weeks

It has completely prevented any aid from coming into the strip for over six weeks—meaning food and medical supplies are again running out. And the IDF have reoccupied the Netzarim corridor just south of Gaza city, bisecting the strip into north and south.

IDF soldiers say that when expanding the corridors and buffer zones, they were told by their commanders to shoot to kill any Palestinian—including women and children.

Netanyahu still says he wants Hamas obliterated—something military experts and Israel's former defence minister Yoav Gallant say is impossible.

Despite Israel's genocidal onslaught, Israeli intelligence estimates that Hamas still has 20,000 fighters, compared to 25,000 to 30,000 before October 2023.

Although it has lost many commanders it has attracted thousands of young and inexperienced recruits. There are plenty of weapons and explosive devices in Gaza, many fashioned out of unexploded IDF bombs.

There are signs of increasing dissent inside the Israeli military. Nearly 1000 current and former Israel Air Force reservists signed a letter to Netanyahu demanding Israel end the war in exchange for all Israeli hostages. They also gained the support of another 250 intelligence reservists.

But the signatories are not calling for an end to Israel's occupation of Palestine and full democratic rights for Palestinians. Rather, they are disagreeing with the government over how best to control Palestine and the acceptable cost of occupation.

Mainstream media and Israel have been claiming that protests inside Gaza that at times chant slogans like "Hamas out" prove Hamas does not enjoy popular support.

The protests are the result of the catastrophic conditions in Gaza and the desperate desire for the genocide to end. Protest organiser Saad told *Al Jazeera*, "The people's demands stem from an unbearable reality—if ending the war requires Hamas to step aside, then so be it."

Hamas has already accepted this, saying it would give up political control of Gaza. But it refuses Israel's demand that it disarm and leave. And its role resisting Israel's occupation still has significant popular support.

The genocide has no end in sight. Trump and Western leaders like Anthony Albanese who continue to allow the export of weapons to Israel have given Netanyahu the green light to escalate the slaughter.

We must keep campaigning to demand sanctions on Israel and a halt to the arms trade until there is justice for the Palestinians.

Solidarity