

# Solidarity

Issue No. 195 / May 2025

\$3/\$5

Uni job cuts, Nuclear subs, Carnage in Gaza

**DON'T TRUST LABOR**

**FIGHT FOR REAL**

**CHANGE**



## ELECTION

Why Labor won and what now

## TRUMP

Resisting deportations and the Trump regime

## KANAKY

Rock Haocas on the fight against colonial rule

# 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

### He made it worse by just being himself

ACTU Secretary Sally McManus on how Peter Dutton sealed his fate in the last two weeks of the election campaign

### We have to listen to Australians. They have sent us a message. And our first task is to hear it. And that often takes time

Defeated Liberal MP Keith Wolahan on the message for the Coalition about nuclear power

### If you want to take things seriously, perhaps send an investigative journalist and watch what is happening in remote polling booths

Jacinta Price goes full Trump on election night, claiming electoral fraud was costing the Liberals votes

### Unfortunately, Adam Bandt, you know, in some ways is quite like Peter Dutton

Penny Wong let Labor's election win go to her head

### 77 miraculous years

NSW Labor Premier Chris Minns celebrates Israel's founding at a cocktail gala, without even a word about the horrors in Gaza

### Gaza will be entirely destroyed

Israel's far right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich on its escalation of the war on Gaza

### Well, maybe the children will have two dolls instead of 30 dolls. So maybe the two dolls will cost a couple bucks more than they would normally.

Donald Trump on the impact of his tariffs on US workers

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## US using suggestions from Twitter to bomb Yemen

THE US appears to be bombing targets in Yemen suggested by anonymous Twitter accounts—and killing innocent people as a result.

In early May the Twitter account @VleckieHond issued a public apology after US warplanes struck a site it had suggested was an underground Houthi military position. This turned out to be wrong. Eight civilians died when the US bombed their houses.

The account is one of a number of Twitter users scouring commercially available satellite data and tweeting out the co-ordinates of suggested targets, *Drop Site* reported.

In the last few months the US has bombed more than 800 targets in Yemen in an effort to put an end to Houthi attacks on Israel as well as shipping in the nearby Red Sea. The Houthis managed to hit the perimeter of Tel Aviv airport in Israel in early May. Israel responded by bombing Yemen's airport in Sanaa, killing three people.

In late April the US also reportedly killed 68 African migrants when it struck a detention centre in Yemen's northwest.

## Threat of war in Kashmir as India and Pakistan face off



NUCLEAR-ARMED INDIA and Pakistan are on the brink of war after India bombed nine sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, killing eight.

Pakistan has threatened a “crushing” response.

The two countries have fought four wars over which should have control of the Muslim-majority area that is divided between them.

The latest clashes come in the wake of a terror attack in Indian-controlled Kashmir that killed at least 26 tourists.

A new group calling itself The Resistance Front claimed responsibility. But the Indian government alleges that the Pakistani state stands behind the attack.

India has long brought its own forms of terror to the territory. To clamp down on those fighting to break Kashmir from India it has used targeted killings, torture and rape as weapons.

Up to 700,000 Indian security forces police a population of less than 14 million, nearly 70 per cent of whom are Muslim.

And since 2019, it has extended its clampdown by revoking the area's “special status” that had acknowledged its Muslim majority and accorded a degree of independence.

Many Muslim Kashmiris favour the territory becoming part of Pakistan. But others, including many on the Kashmiri left, favour a vote on independence that the United Nations promised in 1948 following the first war between India and Pakistan.

The solution for Kashmir is to allow the people to make their own choices. But in the context of such fierce big power rivalry, only a revolutionary movement in both India and Pakistan could make that a real possibility.

## Israel deletes post marking Pope's death

THE ISRAELI government posted and then deleted a condolence message to Pope Francis after his death last month. Officials at the Foreign Ministry, which runs the account, told *The Jerusalem Post* that it was removed because the pope had made “statements against Israel”.

In his final Easter address, the pope had condemned the “death and destruction” and the “dramatic and deplorable humanitarian situation” that had resulted. He had continually called for a ceasefire in Gaza, declaring that Israel's offensive, “is not war. This is terrorism” and arguing that, “what is happening in Gaza has the characteristics of a genocide”.

## Liberals' decimation shows desire for change

THE ELECTION saw the Coalition humiliated, with its lowest primary vote on record and the loss of at least another 12 seats.

The result was a decisive rejection of Peter Dutton's Trumpian culture wars and division. It exposed how out of step with contemporary Australia the Coalition is—and has left it thoroughly marginalised.

Once again the Liberals had big problems among women and migrant communities.

RedBridge's final polling sample for the campaign revealed Dutton's approval rating had dropped to minus 28 among women.

Former Liberal strategist Tony Barry said Dutton was also toxic among younger voters, “I think my biggest concern, and we saw this in our research, the Liberal base is now basically boomers”. And this was the first election where voters from Gen Z and millennials outnumbered them.

There were big swings against Dutton in multicultural areas, such as among Chinese migrant voters in Carlingford in the seat of Parramatta, which saw swings of between 10.6 and 18.5 per cent. In two suburbs in Bennelong where 40 per cent of voters have Chinese ancestry, Chatswood and Eastwood, Labor won swings of between 15 and 26 per cent.

The wipeout has almost completely evicted the Liberal Party from the major cities, leaving them without a single MP across Adelaide and Tasmania, just one seat in Perth and as few as seven out of the 56 seats across greater Sydney and Melbourne.

After the last election, the loss of the teal seats saw the Liberal caucus tilt further to the right, dominated by MPs from Queensland. They elected a leader in their own image in Peter Dutton.

Almost all the additional seats the Liberals lost this time are also in the cities. The Liberal and Coalition caucus will be even more of a hard right rump dominated by regional MPs.

So-called moderate Liberal MPs were again among the main casualties, including Bridget Archer in Bass, David Coleman in Banks, and James Stevens in Sturt.

The Liberals' historic collapse means there is a big space for change—but Anthony Albanese and Labor are not willing to take it.

## Palmer's millions fail to buy him votes

BILLIONAIRE CLIVE Palmer spent an estimated \$50 million on advertising during the election campaign to finish with just 1.9 per cent of the national vote.

This included the cost of over 17 million text messages spammed at voters and \$24 million on TV and social media ads, more than Labor and the Coalition.

But there was little interest in his effort to mimic Donald Trump with his “Trumpet of Patriots” outfit, with his vote way down on the 4.1 per cent his party took in 2022. After electing racist conspiracy theorist Ralph Babet to the Senate last time Palmer ended up empty handed at this election.

He told *The Sunday Telegraph* he, “was not really disappointed” with the outcome but may have enough as he was, “getting too old for politics”.



# EDITORIAL

## Dutton's way rejected—but Labor won't deliver change

THE SWEETEST moment of the federal election was seeing the racist Liberal leader, Peter Dutton, lose his own seat of Dickson after 24 years in parliament.

The Liberals have been reduced to a rump in parliament but Labor's historic victory is not the emphatic endorsement of Albanese's agenda that it might seem.

Labor's primary vote increased by only 2.2 per cent. Polling on the eve of the election showed more people disapprove of Albanese's work as Prime Minister than endorse it. Only a third of the population was confident the government would make a difference on the cost of living.

Albanese's support for Israel also saw swings against Labor and big votes for some pro-Palestine independents. In Western Sydney Ahmed Ouf won 20.6 per cent in Blaxland and Ziad Basyouny gained 15.6 per cent in Watson.

US President Donald Trump cast a big shadow over the election. Dutton's embrace of Trumpism was a major factor in seeing the Liberals routed.

Early this year Dutton praised Trump as a "big thinker" and said he'd appoint Jacinta Price to run a local Department of Government Efficiency, modelled on Elon Musk's chainsaw operation against the public sector. Dutton attacked woke politics, pledged to sack 41,000 public servants and end work from home.

But after Trump launched his tariff war, and the stock market crash that followed, the Trump factor became a big negative for Dutton. Yet Dutton kept producing Trumpian outbursts, claiming that children were being "indoctrinated" in schools, then railing against Welcome to Country ceremonies, bashing immigration and denouncing the ABC and *The Guardian* as "hate media".

His pro-fossil fuel policies and wild plans for nuclear power were the icing on Dutton's right-wing cake—altogether too much for many Liberal voters to swallow.

By the same token, Albanese said nothing critical of Trump and has even invited him to visit Australia. Trump is now lavishing praise on him, saying he'd "been very, very nice to me".

Labor has won majority government but there won't be any radical policy changes from Albanese. He has dragged Labor to the centre of Australian politics and is determined to occupy the middle ground and manage Australian capitalism.



The Greens' electoral ambitions have also taken a hit, with the loss of leader Adam Bandt's seat and two seats in Brisbane. Their "balance of power" strategy to "deliver outcomes" in parliament hasn't delivered.

Too often they went along with Labor's agenda to avoid Albanese attacking them as blockers. They passed Labor's useless climate policy, the Safeguard Mechanism, helping to promote the dangerous fiction that the parliament had acted on climate. They dug in over housing policies, only to capitulate at the last minute and wave through Labor's bills.

With Labor holding a clear majority, it is clearer than ever that it will be struggle outside of parliament that will be central to fighting Labor over climate change, AUKUS and nuclear submarines and union rights.

### Where now?

The scale of Labor's victory means it can expect to hold office beyond the next election.

It will be harder for Albanese to use the threat of a Coalition government coming to power to silence critics and stifle opposition from the unions and the social movements.

Disillusionment with Labor will only grow as wages fail to keep up with the cost of living while the government spends billions boosting military spending. Albanese talked about closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians but has overseen the sharpest spike in Indigenous incarceration in history.

Labor has no answer to the hous-

**Above: Anthony Albanese claims victory on election night** Photo: Newscom/Alamy Live News

ing crisis, with none of its policies even pretending to bring down prices to affordable levels. Albanese again ruled out an end to the subsidies to rich housing investors in negative gearing and capital gains tax concessions during the campaign.

He continues to allow the export of weapons to Israel as it carries out genocide, dismissing calls for sanctions and any effort to pressure Israel even to respect international law. Albanese has tied himself to US imperialism through the \$368 billion nuclear submarines deal even as Trump creates global chaos.

Labor pays lip service to climate action but it is right behind boosting mining company profits and expanding coal and gas projects.

Hundreds of jobs are being cut in universities but Labor shackles the unions with anti-strike laws while attacking union militancy with the government-imposed Administration of the CFMEU.

The High Court will soon hand down its decision on the union challenge to Administration. It will be industrial action that will determine the future of the CFMEU.

Trump has unleashed economic havoc on the world economy. If his tariff war pushes China into recession, the Australian economy will be hit hard.

To fight climate change, end the genocide in Gaza and win real wage increases, we need to build stronger unions, more strikes and more powerful movements on the streets. Labor is committed to running the system that puts profit before human need: socialists want to smash it.

**Labor's historic victory is not an emphatic endorsement of Albanese's agenda**

# Labor's historic vote hides continued major party decline

By Jacob Starling

LABOR'S ELECTION victory defied expectations, with the Albanese government increasing its majority in the lower house and on track to have the highest number of seats since Bob Hawke's 1987 win.

The ALP's two-party preferred vote, sitting at 54.59 per cent as *Solidarity* went to press, was also a shock—the party's highest winning margin since 1946.

But these figures hide an underlying weakness. Labor's primary vote bounced back to 34.8 per cent. However, this is only a recovery to its 2016 result, when it lost the election to Malcolm Turnbull.

And factoring in the Liberals' disastrous performance, the combined primary vote for the major parties has dropped again to 66.9 per cent, lower than 2022's 68.28 per cent. This means a third of the population voted for independent and minor party candidates.

Most of the teals consolidated their hold on their seats but the Liberals ousted Zoe Daniel in the affluent Melbourne bayside seat of Goldstein. High-profile independent campaigns by the likes of Alex Dyson in the Victorian seat of Wannon fell short.

Labor's big majority will make the teals even more irrelevant than before.

Meanwhile, in a warning against complacency for the left, the minor party vote was polarised between progressive and far-right candidates.

The Greens, who faced a vicious negative campaign led by Advance Australia and financed by fossil fuel companies, dropped 0.5 per cent in the lower house and 0.25 per cent in the senate, losing at least three seats but maintaining their senate spots.

Independents and Greens made the two-party preferred count in a total of 32 seats, five more than at the last election.

But the combined vote for One Nation, Trumpet of Patriots, Family First and other similar far-right groups was only 36,000 below the total for The Greens.

It's a warning that anger with Labor's failures does not automatically flow to the left.

Where candidates campaigned strongly in support of Palestine, they made some impact. In Western Sydney, Ahmed Ouf won 20.6 per cent in



**Above: Labor's campaign did not manage to reverse the long-term decline in its primary vote** Photo: Australian Labor Party

Blaxland and Ziad Basyouny gained 15.6 per cent in Watson—both very safe Labor seats.

In Wills, in Melbourne, a pro-Palestine campaign saw a 7.5 per cent swing to The Greens in two-party preferred terms, helped by an increase of 5.27 per cent for Socialist Alliance's Sue Bolton.

In three other Melbourne seats Victorian Socialists candidates polled between 6.5 and 8.9 per cent.

## Labor's vote

Voters overwhelmingly rejected Dutton and the Liberals. But Labor's primary vote is still well below historic levels. Albanese's centre-right policies failed to win back much of Labor's traditional working-class base.

Until the 1980s, Labor would win elections with close to 50 per cent of the primary vote. Even when they lost, their primary vote never fell below 39 per cent. As recently as 2007, Labor came to power with 43.38 per cent of the primary vote, 8.5 percentage points higher than this year's result.

The decline in support for the Labor party reflects a weakening hold on its working-class base. In 1987, 32 per cent of the voting population described themselves as lifetime Labor voters, according to the Australian Election Study. By 2022, this had fallen to just 12 per cent.

Over the same period, the percentage of those voting for Labor who identified as working class fell from

60 to 38 per cent. This reflects a broad sense of working-class disillusionment with the Labor Party, going back decades.

The Albanese Government's inaction on the cost of living and attacks on the CFMEU are just the tip of the iceberg.

Since the Hawke-Keating Labor government of 1983-1996, Labor has been veering further and further away from its traditionally social-democratic commitment, embracing neoliberalism and attacking their own supporters.

Labor's change in direction reflects its nature as a capitalist workers' party. When the economy is growing, profits are big enough to be shared with the working class without too much complaint from the capitalists.

However, in times of economic crisis, Labor has never hesitated to attack workers and defend the interests of capitalism. Even Gough Whitlam, whose reforms went far beyond anything Albanese has offered, changed tack after the 1974 economic crisis, cutting government spending and trying to restrain the unions.

Despite Labor's thumping victory, Albanese has no intention of moving away from the cautious, right-wing approach that has defined his time in power.

As the global economy looks more and more shaky, we should not expect Albanese to protect workers from the fallout. We will need to defend our rights in our workplaces and on the streets.

**The combined primary vote for the major parties has dropped again to 66.9 per cent**

# Greens lose seats but millions of voters can still be a force for change

By Adam Adelpour

THE GREENS have suffered a heavy blow in the 2025 election, losing most of their lower house seats and failing to win any new ones. The party will have the balance of power in the Senate, but the hopes that gradually electing more Greens MPs could force Labor into minority government have been dashed.

Greens leader Adam Bandt lost his seat of Melbourne, which he has held since 2010. The party also lost two of the three Queensland seats it gained in the 2022 election, including that of Greens housing spokesperson Max Chandler-Mather.

The lesson is that the road to radical change doesn't lie in parliament but outside it.

The mainstream media has been quick to claim that The Greens losses represent voters' rejection of the party's strong stance on Palestine and support for the CFMEU.

The media went into a frenzy when Chandler-Mather spoke at a CFMEU protest against the draconian Administration regime imposed by Labor in 2024.

But this doesn't explain why The Greens lost seats. The overall Greens primary vote was almost unchanged, dipping just half a per cent to 11.7 per cent of the vote nationally.

The most immediate cause of their lower house losses was the shift of primary votes from the Liberals to the ALP. In seats where there was a three-way contest between The Greens, Labor and the Liberals, the Liberals were usually pushed into third place with their preferences going to Labor instead of The Greens.

Many people voted Labor to keep Peter Dutton out. But The Greens also failed to benefit from the disillusionment against Labor that exists over the cost of living, climate action and Palestine.

The Greens promote their ability to "deliver change" by supposedly using the balance of power in parliament.

But their attempts to use the balance of power in the Senate over the last three years delivered little. The concern they would be seen as blocking Labor's agenda actually saw them pass Labor measures on housing and climate action without gaining serious improvements.

It was mistaken for The Greens to



**Above: Greens campaigners during the election** Photo: Australian Greens

.....  
**Their attempts to use the balance of power in the Senate over the last three years delivered little**

give their tick of approval to Labor's fraudulent climate Safeguard mechanism. This simply allowed Labor to give the impression it was acting on climate, all while expanding fossil fuels. Similarly, on housing, The Greens eventually capitulated and waved through Labor's bills.

Going into the election The Greens made the right call to "Keep Dutton Out" but their goal to hold the balance of power in a minority Labor government has pulled them more and more to focus on parliament.

This explains The Greens' decision to release a policy supporting "defensive" arms spending for the first time in order to be seen as a responsible partner for Labor. It was a dangerous concession to Labor and the warmongers who are preparing for war on China and stands in stark contradiction to their general anti-war position and their principled stand on Palestine.

The last three years have shown the weakness of balance of power politics. Labor always has the option to go to the Liberals to pass legislation, as it did over refugees and to impose Administration on the CFMEU.

### Focus on parliament

In Queensland, Chandler-Mather has championed a long-term strategy of gradually growing the number of seats The Greens hold with the aim of forming a Greens government by 2040. But the election result has

blown this scheme to pieces.

The bedrock of this strategy was large-scale door-knocking campaigns. In 2021 Chandler-Mather laid out an "18-year plan for a Greens government" over six election campaigns. He placed a strong emphasis on how the resources that came with winning each seat—staffers and so on—would build momentum for the next victory.

It should be clear from The Greens' fate in this election that the electoral road to radical change is a dead end.

There is a danger in the wake of Bandt's defeat that The Greens will move further to the right. That has to be resisted. Millions of people voted Green because they want a left alternative to Labor.

The Greens could play a powerful role building and promoting movements for change if its MPs focused on mobilising those millions to struggle outside parliament. It was a step forward when Max Chandler-Mather spoke at the CFMEU rally, but defending the CFMEU didn't feature in their election campaign.

Change comes from the struggle in the streets and the workplaces. This is the only way that The Greens' principled stand on issues like Palestine, unions and refugees can be turned into real gains.

And it is the only way we will build the power needed to overthrow the system and win a world for the billions, not the billionaires.

# Albanese's 'Australian values' mask Labor's pandering to the rich

By David Glanz

A TRIUMPHANT Anthony Albanese started his victory speech on election night addressing “My fellow Australians”—and went on to invoke Australia no fewer than 43 more times over the next 22 minutes. Values also scored six mentions.

In a typical passage he declared, “For Australia to realise our full potential, for our nation to be its very best, every Australian must have the opportunity to be their best. To serve our Australian values. We must value every Australian. And Labor will govern for every Australian.”

It was a festival of Australian nationalism, ending in a sly dig at Trump (and therefore at Dutton). “Our government will choose the Australian way ... We do not need to beg or borrow or copy from anywhere else. We do not seek our inspiration overseas. We find it right here in our values and in our people.”

Albanese was not the only one to talk of Australian values. Earlier, in outlining the Liberals' priorities, Peter Dutton wrote, “It is our compact with Australians to govern with respect for the views, values and vision of everyday Australians.” His soon-forgotten Get Australia Back on Track document mentioned values eight more times.

“Values” is a weasel word. It's used by politicians as a short-cut that avoids spelling out concrete policies and disguises their real agenda. When former Liberal Prime Minister John Howard talked of values, he was promoting, in the words of academic Carol Johnson, “Anglo-Celtic identity, social conservatism, the Christian Right and a neo-liberal ‘entrepreneurial culture’.”

### Class hatred

Dutton's version of values was resoundingly rejected on 3 May. Many voters looked at Dutton and saw greed, racism, class hatred and inhumanity—and they said, No thanks. It was a progressive reflex that showed that most workers weren't fooled by the Coalition and its Murdoch echo chamber.

But Albanese's “Australian values” are shot through with contradictions.

He hopes that people understand him to be talking of fairness and kindness. Indeed, he gave his slogan from



**Above: Anthony Albanese has tried to wrap Labor in the flag, even claiming support for Medicare is a national value**  
Photo: Anthony Albanese/Facebook

2022 another outing—“no one held back and no one left behind”.

Yet Labor in practice has embraced the racist argument that migrants and international students are to blame for the housing crisis, smeared supporters of Palestine as antisemitic and supported the gas company Santos over the rights of the Gomeroi people in the Pilliga in NSW.

Where is the fairness in putting the construction division of the CFMEU into Administration and stripping rank-and-file workers of their rights?

Where is the kindness to asylum-seekers trapped in the wreckage of the fast track system or the 80,000 people potentially facing deportation under Labor's Trump-like new laws?

The heavily nationalist flavour of Albanese's speech was not an accident. Labor has a pro-business agenda that runs counter to the interests of workers—so Albanese wraps himself in the green and gold and waves his Medicare card to try to convince us that he stands for us all.

As he said in his speech, “Australians have chosen to face global challenges the Australian way.”

### National interest

But Australia is a country bitterly divided by class. Since December 2019, consumer prices have risen 18.1 per cent while wages have grown by only 14.5 per cent. Workers have suffered with Australia being the only advanced country to suffer a real fall

in disposable income over the past two years.

Meanwhile in the last quarter, business profits roared ahead by 5.9 per cent.

While workers struggle to pay household bills, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has declared Australian supermarkets to be among the most profitable in the world.

Households are struggling to make mortgage payments while in 2024 the major banks made a combined profit after tax of \$29.9 billion.

There is no “national interest”, however much Albanese declares, “Together we are turning the corner and together we will make our way forward.”

There can be no unity between overpaid vice-chancellors and the hundreds of university workers they are aiming to sack.

No unity between supporters of Palestine and those who applaud genocide in Gaza and turn a blind eye to military exports to Israel.

And no unity between those who want to demonise trans people and ban puberty blockers and those who stand for trans liberation.

If Donald Trump's tariff wars lead to global recession, Albanese will take the side of Australian capitalism. We can expect him to preside over job losses and cuts to services in the name of restoring profitability.

Workers and the oppressed will need to reject the “we're all in it together” spin and fight.

.....  
**Australia is a country bitterly divided by class**



# Unions stop work against CFMEU Administration in Sydney on May Day

By Luke Ottavi

MORE THAN 1500 unionists walked off the job to rally on 1 May in Sydney.

The Electrical Trade Union (ETU) was out in force, making up the bulk of the rally, alongside members of the plumbers' union. Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) members also shut down Port Botany for four hours to join the march.

Other workers included a contingent of AMWU members from bus company Keolis Downer Northern Beaches, on strike for a wage rise.

Hundreds of rank-and-file CFMEU construction union members also took part.

But as the ETU's NSW Secretary Allen Hicks told the crowd, "[The] ALP have put a person in charge of the CFMEU in NSW who is telling workers not to turn up to International Workers Day ... he should hang his head in disgrace."

Chris Christodolou, the NSW Administrator, sent a letter to all members saying that "the CFMEU is NOT authorising a stoppage" and that "there is nothing in your EBA [enterprise bargaining agreement] which allows you to stop work to attend an event on May Day in working hours."

The Fair Work Ombudsman also encouraged bosses to do in anyone who stopped work for May Day, threatening workers with pay deductions and prosecution.

CFMEU members were forced to use a day's leave if they wanted to attend.

Since 2019, thousands of CFMEU members in Sydney have downed tools almost every year to rally for workers' rights on 1 May. But this year the government-appointed administration banned it.

But as Hicks declared, "We're never going to step away from our resolve and our determination to put the CFMEU back in the hands of its members."

The rally also featured calls for workers to unite against our ruling class's drive towards war, and heard from Bashir Sawalah of the General Union of Palestinian Workers, who appealed for further action by the union movement to break the Labor government's complicity in the genocide of Palestinians.

The Administration is tightening the screws on the CFMEU to try and



**Above: CFMEU members during the march in Sydney on 1 May** Photo: Solidarity

turn it into a tame-cat union.

## Administration's plans

Campaign group Your Union Your Choice has published leaked documents detailing the Administration's "Strategic Plan" that aims to centralise control of the CFMEU through increasing the powers of the national office at the expense of state branches.

In a video on Instagram, sacked Queensland CFMEU Secretary Michael Ravbar rightly rubbishes the Strategic Plan as "centralisation by stealth", and points to the collaboration of CFMEU National Secretary Zac Smith with the Administration.

"Zac Smith, handpicked by the Administrator, is pushing this so called 'strategic plan' that would nationalise and centralise total control of the CFMEU into the hands of the few at the top. That means taking power away from the branches, taking away state autonomy, and more importantly, removing the voice of rank-and-file members."

The plan would transfer all media staff (apart from those in WA, which has refused to be involved) to the control of the National Office.

It would also create a new "Campaigns Department" and a "Research and Policy Department" as well as centralising delegates' training nationally. This would make it easier for Administration to put an end to the CFMEU's militancy and willingness to break anti-strike laws in defence of members' wages and conditions.

"This [Strategic Plan] isn't about improving the union. It's about removing opposition. It's about

silencing dissent. And it's about giving Zac Smith and the administrator unchecked power," Your Union Your Choice say.

In response, Smith has taken full ownership of the restructure saying it is "my plan, not the Administrator's" and is similar to one developed before Administration. Smith also claimed that, "I have stayed in the union for one reason—to work with others to get us out of Administration as soon as possible."

But by serving under Administration he is agreeing to do the bidding of the Administrator.

The two remaining branch secretaries who survived Administration, WA Secretary Mike Buchan and Acting ACT Secretary Michael Hiscox, published their own letter rejecting Smith's restructure and warning that an "almost identical restructure of the Forestry Division of the CFMEU [caused] disastrous consequences for members".

CFMEU members should reject the Strategic Plan, Zac Smith's collaboration and Administration in full.

But it's wrong to put any hopes in the High Court challenge against Administration. Now the election is done a decision is expected soon.

Should the High Court rule against Administration, Labor will simply collaborate with the Liberals to pass more legislation to over-ride it, just as it did to introduce it in the first place.

There need to be nationwide stop work rallies called to protest when the High Court hands down its decision.

More strikes and a willingness to break the industrial laws are essential to defeating Administration.

**Sacked Queensland CFMEU Secretary Michael Ravbar rightly rubbishes the Strategic Plan as 'centralisation by stealth'**

# Victorian Labor locks up more Black kids in law and order rampage

By Lucy Honan

THE VICTORIAN government has passed a bail law that includes removing the requirement to consider remand as a last resort for children.

It is part of a suite of changes that Labor Premier Jacinta Allan boasts will give Victoria the toughest bail laws in the country and “jolt the system”.

Victorian Labor is sinking in the polls and facing a media onslaught claiming a crime epidemic. Allan has responded by ripping up Labor’s own 2023 bail law reforms and acting “tough”.

Imprisoning children is a sign of catastrophic system failure. Indigent people are imprisoned at about 15 times the rate of all people in Victoria. Victims of intergenerational poverty and poor schooling are also over-represented in prisons.

Incarceration of children entrenches cycles of disadvantage and increases the likelihood of further offending.

Victoria Police acknowledge it is a misconception that children are most involved in stabbings. The Crime Statistics Agency Victoria chief statistician makes it clear that the state has identified only “about 300 children and young people that commit these crimes”.

Allan said: “An expanded recruitment campaign is being prepared for corrections and youth justice workers.” It costs \$3000 a day to incarcerate a child in Australia; this equates to a million dollars a year that could be spent on housing, education and welfare for each of these known 300 children and their communities, now. But Labor will instead spend lavishly on their punishment.

The new law also means that someone who commits an indictable offence while on bail for another indictable offence will need to show “compelling reasons” before being granted bail.

Although the term “indictable offence” sounds serious, the term covers offences including shoplifting and drug possession. This means that a person on bail for stealing food who is then charged with possession of cannabis will face the same bail test as a person charged with manslaughter.

The new law directs judges and magistrates to consider community safety first before deciding whether someone is placed on bail. The safety



and wellbeing of the community is important to everyone, but remand is a short-term option with harmful long-term consequences.

### Disaster

In 2023, the Victorian government loosened the state’s bail laws, which were labelled an “unmitigated disaster” during the inquest into the death in custody of Aboriginal woman Veronica Nelson.

But in February, responding to community concerns about youth crime, Labor hastily announced a review of Victoria’s bail laws in the lead-up to the Werribee by-election, with the Premier later conceding the government had “got it wrong”.

The new law is likely to hit Indigenous people hardest. Victorian bail law changes in 2013 and 2018 have been linked to a 560 per cent increase in the number of First Peoples entering prison unsentenced. In 2021–22, 87 per cent of Aboriginal women who arrived in prison were unsentenced.

Labor is promising a second round of changes to bail laws in mid-year, to hit what it calls serious, repeat offenders.

Allan admits: “The second Bill is expected to result in a further increase in the number of adult and youth offenders on remand, for which the system must be ready.”

Changes to the bail laws have been condemned by organisations including justice group Flat Out and the National Children’s Commissioner. Rank-and-file Australian Education

**Above: Protest in Footscray following the police shooting of Somali man Abdifatah Ahmed** Photo: Ibrahim Abdulahi Ali/ Facebook

Union members ensured a strong motion opposing the bail laws was passed at the union’s state council.

### Racially profile

Meanwhile, Labor has passed another new law expanding police power to “designate” an area and carry out searches for weapons without a warrant. Previously, a designated area was for 12 hours—now it can be for six months.

Sarah Schwartz, the Legal Director at the Human Rights Law Centre, said the government was handing “Victoria Police carte-blanc powers to racially profile marginalised groups, target and harass protesters and silence dissent”.

On 11 April, Victoria Police launched a “high-visibility” operation in Footscray, deploying uniformed officers, the Public Order Response Team, Dog Squad and Highway Patrol to crack down on rising crime and anti-social behaviour. Within a week, they had shot and killed Somali man Abdifatah Ahmed.

The Black Lives Matter protest calling for justice for Abdifatah, for an end to police racism and brutality and for investment in services was 250 people strong, and withstood still more police violence.

With increased powers, and the endorsement of Labor’s reactionary agenda, police will kill again. We urgently need a campaign to stop their law and order offensive, involving unions, youth and community groups, and civil liberties organisations.

**Victorian bail law changes in 2013 and 2018 have been linked to a 560 per cent increase in the number of First Peoples entering prison**

# Labor’s gas expansion: Climate vandalism that tramples on Aboriginal rights

By Paddy Gibson

ON TUESDAY 6 May, Gomeri people led a 150-strong crowd of trade unionists and climate activists on a march from the NSW Supreme Court to Parliament House.

The protest took place ahead of a decision by the Native Title Tribunal on whether resource giant Santos can establish a massive coal seam gas field in the Pilliga forest.

The Pilliga is a biodiversity hotspot in north-western NSW with huge cultural significance for Gomeri people. Gomeri have fought against coal seam gas for more than two decades and overwhelmingly rejected Santos’s project at Native Title meetings.

The Native Title Tribunal almost always rules in favour of resource companies seeking permission to over-ride the rights of Aboriginal people. The decision is expected any day as *Solidarity* goes to print.

Disgracefully, both the federal and NSW Labor governments support the gas field, providing evidence and submissions for Santos’s case in the Tribunal.

## Hypocrisy

In his victory speech on election night, Anthony Albanese told the cheering crowd he “acknowledged the traditional owners of the land, their elders past and present, today and every day”, promising “we will be a government that supports reconciliation with First Nations people”.

This was a pointed response to Peter Dutton’s racist attacks on Welcome to Country.

Albanese also promised to govern “for every Australian who knows climate change is a challenge”.

But as Suellyn Tighe, a Gomeri woman from Coonabarabran who travelled to Sydney for the protest, told *Solidarity*: “Albanese’s words are empty. Our elders in Coonabarabran are staunch, they are in their 80s and when Santos came to town for meetings they sat there in the sun for hours as part of a non-engagement protest.

“Elders of the Gomeri nation don’t want these fossil fuel companies on our country. So where is Albanese’s actual respect for our elders? He needs to actually listen to them. We want climate action, we don’t want talk”.

Federal Labor is also backing Santos’s massive Barossa offshore gas development north of Darwin, despite



**Above: Rally ahead of the Native Title Tribunal decision in Sydney on Santos’ gas project in the Pilliga** Photo: Paddy Gibson

consistent objections from Traditional Owners trying to protect their sea country from destruction.

The Barossa project was granted final federal approval in April and is set to start production later this year.

Therese Wokai Bourke, a senior Tiwi elder from the Malawu clan said in reaction to the approval: “I feel devastated by this decision. I can’t understand how the government can ignore what this gas project will do our planet. It’s like they don’t care at all.”

## Safeguarding fossil fuels

Despite his rhetoric on climate, Albanese’s first term failed to deliver any reduction in Australia’s domestic greenhouse gas emissions. Exports of fossil fuels increased.

Labor refuses to regulate to stop new coal and gas projects. Instead, their emissions reduction strategy relies on the “Safeguard Mechanism”, passed into law in April 2023.

This scheme is a scam. Instead of reducing emissions, fossil companies and other major emitters can buy credits to meet their meagre obligations.

Many of these credits are carbon offsets based on vegetation growth—but this will do nothing to stop the global warming caused by burning fossil fuels.

Disgracefully, after initially criticising the scheme for being based on carbon credits, the Greens voted for the Safeguard Mechanism.

Then Greens leader Adam Bandt tried to convince supporters that the party had used its position on the cross-

bench to secure meaningful amendments to the laws.

He told the media after his deal with Labor, in March 2023: “Coal and gas have taken a huge hit ... pollution will actually go down and we’ve derailed the Beetaloo and Barossa gas fields.”

Now Barossa is steaming ahead and it’s Bandt who has been derailed.

According to climate analyst Ketan Joshi, while renewable energy expanded under Albanese’s government in the first half of its last term, it then stalled.

“Renewables are about 39 per cent of the Australian main grid but the modelling that Labor relied on before they were last elected assumed it would reach 50 per cent. So that’s a really significant slow-down,” he said in a pre-election video.

Making any progress for Aboriginal rights and climate action will require a serious fight outside parliament.

Gomeri people and supporters have shown the way, working hard to build support in the union movement, with strong contingents from the ETU, Teachers Fed, Nurses and Midwives Federation and other unions at the 6 May rally and speeches from union leaders.

We need to prepare to confront Santos’s Pilliga project on the ground, regardless of what the Native Title Tribunal decides, and build a force that can stop all new fossil fuels and force Labor to urgently invest in publicly owned renewable energy.

.....  
**Federal Labor is also backing Santos’s massive Barossa offshore gas development north of Darwin**

# The 1998 waterfront dispute— MUA here to stay, but not in the same way

**Conspiracy? War on the Waterfront**  
ABC Rewind  
Produced by Radio National

THE ABC'S seven-part podcast "Conspiracy? War on the Waterfront" tells the story of the infamous 1998 waterfront dispute, in which more than 1400 workers were sacked by anti-union boss of Patrick stevedores, Chris Corrigan, in a full frontal assault on the Maritime Union of Australia.

Corrigan, backed to the hilt by John Howard's Liberal government, hoped to de-unionise the docks and break one of the country's strongest unions, threatening the future of the entire union movement.

It is a useful recount of the history with rich interviews around this pivotal struggle of the workers' movement against neoliberal reforms. It is particularly valuable for those not old enough to remember the pictures of dogs and men in balaclavas driving workers off the wharves and locking the gates on 7 April 1998.

Non-union workers including former military personnel were trained to replace the union workforce in a clandestine operation in Dubai—an operation scuttled only by threats of a blockade of the entire port of Dubai by the International Transport Federation.

Another alternative workforce was put together by the National Farmers Federation, allowing Corrigan to sack his workers across the country.

But picket lines at the docks successfully held back the operation of the ports by scab labour—



Above: Mass pickets at the docks were vital to stopping the effort to bust the MUA

preventing the transport of any goods out of the Patrick docks.

The vibrant pickets were the only thing stopping the employers and the government creating "facts on the ground" of an alternative operation on the wharves.

The memorable morning at East Swanson dock in Melbourne when 1000 police removed their hats and retreated after thousands of workers and community members defended the picket overnight showed the potential of industrial power to beat Corrigan and the government.

It was at nearby Webb dock that Palestine activists stopped work on ships from the Israeli company ZIM last year, with wharfies respecting a community picket line.

The MUA was not defeated on the waterfront—it was here to stay.

But their strategy also relied ultimately on a drawn-out set of legal disputes and appeals in the courts.

The courts' final ruling inflicted an industrial defeat. Corrigan was ordered to reinstate the union workforce—but not to reverse a sham corporate restructure that had left them employed by companies that were effectively bankrupt.

This meant the union was forced to agree to humiliating conditions including working for nothing and to a series of negotiations with Corrigan.

They ended up accepting 600 job cuts as well as a new productivity based bonus system that divided the workforce.

The result is summarised by then Sydney branch MUA secretary, Jim Donovan: "We lost part of our body but we didn't lose our soul."

## Howard's complicity

The podcast focuses on the degree of complicity

of John Howard's Liberal government in the attack, providing new evidence that the Howard government was "like a dog with a bone" determined to break the Maritime Union and its hold over the wharves.

Howard and his Industrial Relations Minister Peter Reith denied any prior knowledge of Corrigan's plan to sack and replace the workforce. But interviews with Transport Minister John Sharp place himself and Peter Reith in a room in 1997 when a plan was discussed to "train an alternative workforce in Dubai".

And newly unearthed papers show that John Howard received a letter from his chief of staff explaining that a "major stevedore wants to see you ... and needs to know whether he should reactivate the training of Australians offshore to cope with a waterfront dispute".

This evidence confirms the complicity of the Liberal government in the plot to smash the MUA.

But perhaps the most important conclusions are in the seventh, "bonus" episode, where the implications are drawn out for a union movement that has so far failed to learn the lesson of relying on a two-pronged strategy of legal action in the courts alongside public demonstrations.

There was never any need to accept sackings and concessions to get back in the gate.

The MUA leadership deliberately chose to work within the law, refusing to call out P&O workers, the other stevedoring company on the docks, to strike in solidarity.

Yet previous national strikes had shown the union's ability to paralyse shipping and bring the economy to a halt.

The precedent set by the 1998 MUA dispute, that union fights need to stay within legal restrictions on the right to strike, including secondary boycott laws against solidarity action, continues to shackle the Australian union movement.

The CFMEU, one of the few unions willing to defy the law, is facing its most serious attacks in decades, but industrial action has been subordinated to legal action in the High Court.

The union movement needs all of its body and soul to take on the new challenges of today, from the cost of living, casualisation, the attacks on the CFMEU, the genocide in Palestine, to the new global threats from Donald Trump's US. That means not only remembering but going beyond the politics of the 1998 waterfront dispute.

**Sophie Cotton**





# BEYOND THE GENDER BINARY WHERE DOES TRANSPHOBIA COME FROM?

**Casey Forsyth** looks at why the right is so obsessed with gender and how transphobia is part of maintaining the sexist and oppressive gender roles in the family

DONALD TRUMP and the far right globally have launched a wave of attacks on trans rights. In his inauguration speech, Trump declared, “It will henceforth be the official policy of the United States government that there are only two genders: male and female.”

The Trump administration has brought in a flurry of executive orders attempting to erase trans people from every aspect of social life.

All passports and identification must now be in accordance with the sex assigned at birth. The US State Department has ordered permanent visa bans for anyone trying to enter the US who is “seeking to misrepresent their birth sex on their birth certificate”, as well as orders to restrict or ban gender-affirming care, banning trans women and girls from sports and removing references to trans people in government data.

But the attacks against what the right calls “gender ideology” are coming from across mainstream institutions. Last month the UK Supreme Court declared “sex is binary” and that those who change their legal sex by obtaining a Gender Recognition Certificate cannot be considered as their affirmed gender under the UK Equality Act.

The UK Supreme Court ruling is already impacting trans lives, with the Equality and Human Rights Commission releasing an interim guidance calling for organisations to ban trans people from single-sex spaces in light of the ruling.

This follows the British Labour government’s decision last year to ban the use of puberty blockers and hormones for under 18s after the appalling Cass Review into trans healthcare.

We’ve seen echoes of this here, with the recent ban on puberty blockers and gender-affirming hormone therapy for under 18s in Queensland. Labor’s response—to call a review

into this essential and safe health-care while refusing to oppose the Queensland ban—is a worrying sign they will capitulate to further attacks.

## Sex, gender and biology

Underpinning this wave of transphobia is the assumption that being a man or a woman is hardwired into our biology.

There are clearly physiological differences between the groups we categorise as women and men. Humans have two sets of physical traits on the basis of our reproductive system.

But sex characteristics are not the simple binary issue that is often assumed. Physical characteristics that are associated with one sex, such as physical strength, body hair and hormone levels, vary between members of both sexes.

Some people develop a mix of male and female characteristics where, for example, they have female sex chromosomes but some male characteristics—what we call intersex.

This includes at least 30 different conditions that altogether are found in around 1.7 per cent of the population. Intersex people are either forced to undergo surgery at birth or to “choose” life as male or female.

These examples show that male or female characteristics are not just a biological question. They are also a social question that determines how we are perceived and how we perceive ourselves. They connect us to a set of assumptions, about both our physiology and our social roles, beyond what has been determined by our biology.

This flies in the face of the dominant thinking about gender, that women and men are fundamental opposites and that this is hardwired into our biology.

One popular book on this topic, *Men are from Mars, Women are from*

## The socially accepted gender roles of women and men have differed significantly across different societies

*Venus* has sold more than 100 million copies. Scores of scientific studies have been dedicated to understanding the differences between women and men. They have instead revealed just how similar we are.

There is a whole field of study, “evolutionary psychology”, which seeks to trace social differences, such as those between men and women, back to evolutionary instincts. The effect has been to popularise the idea that everything gendered, from men cheating on women to women being “better” at shopping, is biologically programmed.

The effect of this ideological onslaught, connecting our gender to our biology, is to make the role of women as primarily responsible for caring for children and families seem natural and inevitable.

But we know that the socially accepted gender roles of women and men have differed significantly across different societies. Gender roles are far from fixed.

## Reproduction

The biological processes of human reproduction take place in a distinct social setting.

This is not a mindless process determined by our evolutionary instincts but a result of the kind of society in which we live. The ways we organise the making of food, shelter, clothing and other social needs has a fundamental impact on the ways we organise sexual relations and the raising of children.

For the majority of human history, from the emergence of our species some 300,000 years ago until the development of agriculture around 10,000 years ago, children were raised collectively, and people lived in egalitarian societies.

This was because societies were generally kept small and mobile, and it was in everyone’s interests to share what was produced. As a result,

childrearing was not the responsibility of only two people, separate from society, but of society as a whole.

Women could therefore play a leading role in societal affairs, were sexually free to have multiple partners and did not suffer the continual subordination to their husbands and a male-dominated society that has since become the norm.

At the same time, the evidence we have strongly suggests that trans people, gender variant and non-binary people as well as various sexual orientations have existed in most if not all human societies, and there is an abundance of evidence of different forms of gender transitions in these pre-class, egalitarian societies that were accepted and even revered.

Gendered oppression came as the emergence of class societies led to a re-organisation of the way we raise children.

This transition was based on the creation of a surplus in agricultural societies so that people could accumulate more than they needed.

Over time, this created a set of people not directly engaged in productive activity, who safeguarded this surplus on behalf of society. This group developed an interest independent of those working, relying on their exploitation to maintain benefits the rest of the population could not enjoy.

It is in this process that the ability to give birth developed an increased importance, because societies that produced larger numbers of children and a larger population could increase agricultural production and wealth. The introduction of heavy ploughing also meant that those who carried babies were excluded from production for long periods.

In addition, the transition to private property and the potential to pass that on to the next generation meant that ruling class men wanted to control their wives' fertility and ensure their children were their own.

For the first time there arose a division between productive labour, labour spent in society producing a surplus for a ruling class, and reproductive labour that was spent raising the next generation of workers.

It is this division that entrenched the subordinate position of women in society and created systems of gendered organisation that required a strict division between men and women's roles.

With the emergence of capitalism, this division appeared under threat as factory work drew in men, women



**Above: Part of the 30,000-strong protest for trans rights in London following the recent Supreme Court ruling** Photo: Steve Eason/Flickr

and children alike. Conditions at work were so brutal that they threatened to undermine the ability to reproduce the workforce needed for the capitalist system.

The capitalists excluded (most) women and children from work and encouraged the ideology of the nuclear family, with women's role in the home at its centre.

This promotion of gender roles helped guarantee the reproduction of a healthy workforce.

Outsourcing the reproduction of the workforce to women in the home is integral for capitalism. It would cost the government about \$570 billion a year to pay for the cooking, cleaning, raising of children, caring for the elderly and all the other domestic labour done mostly by women, academic Dr Leonora Risse has estimated. That is 70 per cent of the federal government budget.

As well as the cost for the system, the family provides a place of love, care and sexual satisfaction that helps to reconcile its members to the harsh reality of capitalism, as well as to discipline them against taking risks that could jeopardise the family unit.

Central to justifying this are ideas about gender roles that match the division of labour created by the family. Women are to be submissive, caring, empathetic, willing to put others above themselves, interested in making things pretty and clean and to love children with all their hearts, while men are tough, insensitive, in pursuit of "things" more than relationships,

resilient and suited to the hard world of work and exploitation more than the world of love and care.

Trans people undermine the assumption that this division is natural, which is why the right see us as such a threat.

For the ruling class, this is not simply a question of enforcing gender roles. It's about making our bodies, as well as our social roles, conform to the gender binary and the needs of the nuclear family.

For this reason, trans liberation and women's liberation fundamentally go together—both are a struggle against biology determining our destiny. Both are a fight for bodily autonomy against right-wing forces that would restrict women's rights to abortion and contraception and trans rights to medical transition.

But to get rid of transphobia and sexism we must do more than challenge bigotry and hatred. We need to build working-class power behind demands for trans rights, to open up access to all spaces and services trans people need to live in their preferred gender.

We must fight to reduce the burden on the women and the family that is the source of sexist and transphobic ideas, by fighting for equal pay, universal childcare and aged care to make reproductive labour the responsibility of society as a whole.

Ultimately, this will require overthrowing the capitalist system that uses transphobia to help justify women's oppression.

# KANAK REVOLT: A HISTORY OF ANTI-COLONIAL RESISTANCE

**Rock Haocas**, of the USTKE (Union of Kanak and Exploited Workers) from Kanaky-New Caledonia, spoke at this year's Keep Left on the movement for independence from France

NEW CALEDONIA is an island in the Melanesian arc including Vanuatu, the Solomons, Fiji and Papua. It's located 1000 kilometres east of Brisbane and more than 18,000 kilometres from Paris.

All these islands have more than 4000 years of history and a civilisation with their own language and tradition.

New Caledonia became a French colony on 24 September 1853—a prison colony and a settlement colony. The clash of civilisations was brutal.

The first contact with Europeans profoundly destroyed Kanak society, with the destruction of customary chiefdoms, the impact of imported religion, the spoliation and privatisation of land, displacement of the population and the ravages of alcohol and disease.

The Kanak almost disappeared, dropping from more than 300,000 people to less than 30,000 people in the early 1920s.

The Kanaks were confined to native reserves and excluded from employment. Until 1946 Indigenous Kanaks were denied access to school and the right to vote.

Some of the first Kanak who went to study in France were active participants in the May 1968 movement. They returned to demand independence.

With the nickel boom, in 1972 the French Prime Minister encouraged the arrival of more people from France and other colonies in the Pacific islands in order to reduce the Kanak demand for independence to a minority. This led to the emergence of several pro-independence parties, with the creation of the Nationalist Front in 1979.

The secretary of the pro-independence party Union Calédonienne, Pierre Declercq, defined a Kanak as neither a race nor an ethnic group, and said the constitution of [a Kanak society means] a multiracial, united

and fraternal people. The right to difference will be respected.

New Caledonia has been on the UN list of non-self-governing territories to be decolonised since 1986. During the period of violence between 1984 and 1988, more than 90 people were killed and eventually a new agreement was signed, the Matignon Accords. The pro-independence groups accepted a referendum on independence under this agreement in 1998.

In 1998, independence activists and French loyalists negotiated a new agreement, the Noumea Accord, known as the Decolonisation Agreement, which included the creation of a nickel plant in the [northern independence movement-run] province, and a new local parliament. USTKE supported the creation of this plant in the name of the social and geographical re-balancing.

It has stuck to this basic demand and after 20 years has drawn up a negative assessment of this agreement in growing social inequality between the local population, particularly disadvantaging the Black and Oceanian population.

[The Noumea Accord also set out a plan for three referenda to be held on independence from 2018.] In 2021, the state validated the third referendum provided for under the Noumea Accord, which we consider illegitimate due to the boycott of the Kanak people, who requested its postponement due to COVID.

## Nickel industry

The reason we are colonised is because we have resources like nickel. The country is rich in mineral resources, making French the world's third largest nickel producer. New Caledonia holds a quarter of the world's nickel reserves.

The French have interests in New Caledonia due to our resources and

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## The revolt of May 2024 by Kanak youth revealed the failure of the political agreements such as the Noumea Accord

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our position in the Pacific. The country's position in the Pacific Ocean, with Indo-Pacific access makes it like an aircraft carrier, allowing France to say it's the only European country that has connections with the Pacific.

The problem is we cannot develop the nickel industry ourselves. We have three nickel manufacturers today, previously there was only one, the French owned one. The nickel industry made the city of Noumea, the only large city in Kanaky.

During the Noumea Accord, we called for more industry in the north of the country to rebalance for the Kanak people. Most of the Kanak people live outside Noumea, although 70 per cent of the total population lives there.

It is difficult for people to live in Noumea who are unemployed and, as a result, 90 per cent of prisoners are Kanak people. So according to this 1998 agreement, they agreed to put another nickel processing plant in the north of the country.

But the mining companies built a third processing plant at a mine in the south. So there are three nickel manufacturers, one in the north and two in the south. That is not rebalancing. At this time the processing plant in the north at Koniambo has closed.

So now there are one and a half companies that function, the French-owned one and the other one in the south. Many people in the north, which is managed by Kanak Independents, have no job.

The political and social situation post-referendum has been uncertain. In the beginning of 2021, the state revised the electoral rules for the local election [allowing another 25,000 recently-arrived settlers, mostly from France, to vote. This threatened to make it impossible to win any future vote on independence and reduce further the weight of the Indigenous Kanak in the local parliament.]

The insurrection of May 2024 was



the result. The revolt of May 2024 by Kanak youth revealed the failure of the political agreements such as the Noumea Accord.

The outcome of this is that 14 people died, including 12 young Kanaks. Several dozen Kanaks were arrested as political prisoners, including seven now awaiting trial in France, including the president of the FLNKS [the independence front, the Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front].

Demonstrations were forbidden until last week and it's still difficult to go out to protest with large numbers of people with our Kanak flag.

New Caledonia's economy has collapsed.

The Kanak have always fought injustice and extended the right to everyone to construct our common destiny together. Royalists, as we call the pro-France people in our country, have sought to preserve their economic interests with the support of France.

To circumvent international law France sought to impose an agreement, manufacturing a local majority in its favour.

Today, in this highly unstable political and social context, we need talks.

Dialogue began two months ago with the French government, the pro-independence side and non-independence side holding talks. The French government seems to be trying to reconcile the unreconcilable between the parties involved by striking a balance between the two positions.

The pro-independence movement will meet to take stock of this exchange and will set the terms and conditions for a new local dialogue with the Minister.

Last year we had elections for the French assembly. There were two candidates, one pro-independence, the other against.

The pro-independence candidate got 10,000 votes more, with everybody in the country able to vote.

The independence question is not the only issue, people want change. They think that the democratic system from France does not work in our country.

Kanak people are less than 40 per cent of the population. And the pro-independence candidate winning by 10,000 votes shows that many people in our country who are not Kanak want to be represented by Independents. So that gives us some hope that we can win the vote for independence.

We must be able to put an end to



**Above: Rock Haocas speaking at Keep Left 2025**

colonial control. History has shown this, whether in Kanaky or in other countries, like in Palestine or in West Papua.

The Kanak people will never give up to their dream of independence. Peace requires independence con-

structed by all through negotiation. International support of the Kanak people's struggle is vital.

**Rock Haocas is the co-ordinator of external affairs of the USTKE (Union of Kanak and Exploited Workers)**

## Fighting for Kanak and exploited workers

THE USTKE, the Kanak and Exploited Workers Union, was created in 1981. It has as its motto: tribe and factory, same struggle. Kanak workers and the exploited combine the struggle for social liberation with the struggle for national liberation.

The main demands of the USTKE are: rebalancing through training, integration and promotion of Kanak workers in all sectors, and development through demanding the means of production and workers' rights.

The union fight is every day because every day you have to put bread on your table. You know what the people need because you have meetings and you go to talk to the boss every day. Some of our politicians, when they get a seat, they forget the people. As a union we talk about how people live, how

they find their relationship with the government. And we talk about how imperialism impacts workers' lives.

The young people know that they are the victims of colonisation. Even if they go to school because they want to have a job, they do not succeed. They find that even their brothers like me who to France to study and come back, have difficulties to get a job. So they say why bother to go to school?

We have a local government that is pro-France that manages the society. All the businesses are controlled by pro-France settlers. There are no businesses owned by Kanak people. So it's difficult for Kanak people to get jobs.

When the USTKE sees that there is a job that local people can take, and they bring people from France to take this job, we go on strike.

# ARE WE SEEING THE END OF THE NEOLIBERAL ORDER?

**Joseph Choonara** spoke to Socialist Worker UK about the breaks and continuities of neoliberalism as Trump’s trade war escalates

**Do today’s trade wars signal the end of the neoliberal era?**

The issue here is what you mean by neoliberalism. No two writers agree on what the term means.

What’s true is that there were a series of policies and strategies adopted by sections of the ruling class in the 1980s, often badged as neoliberalism. These included policies such as the outsourcing and privatisation of public services.

After that initial implementation, you have a period in the 1990s characterised by what you could call “neoliberal imperialism”.

You saw parts of the ruling class, including United States president Bill Clinton and British prime minister Tony Blair, trying by force or persuasion, to extend the supposed benefits of neoliberalism abroad.

They wanted to construct a global economy in which market forces would have enormous power and firms could trade and invest freely across borders.

Back then, trade tariffs tended to fall year after year. That seems to have been brought to a halt.

**To what extent did neoliberalism make life under capitalism worse?**

We must be careful about nostalgia for the pre-neoliberal era, which the left falls into quite a lot. You often hear left-wing commentators saying the enemy is neoliberalism, when, more fundamentally, the enemy is a capitalist system built around profits, exploitation, oppression and imperialism.

The “Keynesian consensus”, policies that managed capitalism predominantly in the West in the post-war period, really began to break down amid the crisis of the 1970s.

There were two things happening in this period. First, there was a growing integration of capital across borders. Powerful corporations found national economies too restrictive and wanted to spread their operations.

Second, the global economy entered a series of crises that the old Keynesian policies of state intervention were unable to solve.

Accompanying this, from the late 1960s and into the 1970s, there was a huge wave of workers’ struggles internationally.

The ruling class looked for ideological support to give policies and practices more coherence.

This included reviving ideologies centred on free-market mechanisms that first emerged in the 1930s and 1940s.

However, rulers also responded to the crisis pragmatically. So, neoliberal theory said the state should withdraw from the economy. But that’s not what happened. In major capitalist economies, state spending still makes up approximately 40 per cent of GDP.

So, it’s not true that the state disappears in this neoliberal shift. But you do get shifts in government policies—and sharp attacks on the working class.

**What has brought the neoliberal period to an end?**

The ruling class have continued to enrich themselves, but neoliberalism’s problem was that it did not unleash a new period of capitalist dynamism.

There were occasional bursts of growth. But not a restoration of levels of the kind of sustained expansion witnessed in the immediate post-war decades.

The crisis of the 1970s was rooted

**Neoliberalism did not unleash a new period of capitalist dynamism**

in a long-term decline in profitability, something that Karl Marx talked about a century before. He argued this came because more investment builds up across the system relative to the amount of profit it can squeeze out of workers.

So, Marx argues that to restore profitability, capitalism needs a thoroughgoing crisis that can destroy or devalue large chunks of that investment and pave the way for a new boom.

That didn’t happen under neoliberalism. The units of capital had become so huge, so intertwined with the state, that allowing giant firms to go under risked a wider slump.

Instead, we had escalating state intervention to bail out big sections of capital, and to stop the crisis fully taking hold.

The consequence of that is that profit rates remain low.

**Was it over reliance on the financial markets that broke neoliberalism?**

Growing debt and financial innovation were important elements of neoliberalism, helping to drive the economy forward and give the impression of dynamism.

But in the 2008-9 financial crisis we began to see the limits of this credit generated growth.

Two other things were also happening by then.

First, there was the dramatic rise of China, accompanying the long-term decline of the US’s economic dominance.

In 1960, the US controlled 40 per cent of global GDP. Today, it’s down to 25 per cent.

If we go back to the high point of neoliberalism—to 2001 when China joined the World Trade Organisation—there was a notion that China

was going to become more like the US. Commentators expected that as China joined global markets, there would be political liberalisation, and it would then be welcomed into the Western camp.

Instead, by deploying the state extremely powerfully to direct capital, China forced the West to think about how it deploys its own states to compete.

Second, the multiple crises that rocked the system generated huge antipathy towards neoliberalism. Politicians, from both the centre left and centre right, had earlier converged around neoliberal policies. But now more radical politicians, both those of the left and right-wingers such as Donald Trump, have capitalised on that antipathy.

### **The pandemic saw the return of the state as an economic player in the West. Is that something socialists should welcome?**

We're entering a new phase, which will contain elements of previous periods, but also, big differences. To navigate this we must break the association of statism with socialism.

The state remains a capitalist state. It has evolved over a long period to help to manage and protect capitalist accumulation.

Even in the most extreme cases of statism, if it's still an economy that's competing with other units of capital on a global scale, it's not socialism.

That's why our political tradition always rejected the idea that the Soviet Union was a socialist society. We argued it was a form of state capitalism.

The return of the state to the centre of economic life is a shift within capitalism, one that can be associated with deepening authoritarianism.

We also must understand that the kinds of policies enacted by Trump, though in some ways different from neoliberalism, remain heavily pro-market, de-regulationist, and tax-cutting.

We are not seeing a clean break with neoliberalism and the embrace of some Keynesian agenda.

### **If neoliberalism is over, what policies will shape the world in the future?**

There will be a lot of pragmatic experimentation from ruling classes as they move towards a new approach.



**Above: Donald Trump's enthusiasm for tariffs are a break with the free trade order** Photo: White House

And they still face constraints.

US President Joe Biden tried to use government investment and industry policy to promote US manufacturing in new technologies such as semiconductor chips, electric cars and batteries.

This was driven by the fear that China is going to dominate these new sectors.

In Australia, Anthony Albanese has sought to develop his own version of this with his "Future Made in Australia" policies.

This will see billions of dollars of investment to establish manufacturing of solar panels, hydrogen, as well as the mining of critical minerals and rare earth metals that are vital for technologies including batteries, electric vehicles and electronics.

Alongside this is a massive expansion in the domestic arms industry, producing everything from missiles to nuclear submarines, as part of the military build-up against China.

These state investments, however, are small in comparison to those in the US and manufacturing in China. Albanese has pledged \$22.7 billion, and over ten years, compared to the \$2.4 trillion Biden announced.

And whether they will work to

establish new industries is uncertain. The decision to hand over \$2.4 billion to keep open and upgrade the Whyalla steelworks shows the difficulties for domestic manufacturing.

Labor here is constrained not just by the size of the Australian economy, but by pressure from big business to limit government spending and avoid any need to raise taxes.

The internationalisation of capital reinforces that problem.

The government is constrained by the globally integrated financial markets that would punish any move to seriously increase government spending and debt.

However, a feature of the return of the state to the centre of economic life is that it becomes a political question for workers and the left.

A lot of working class people looked at the response to the financial crash of 2008-9, when there were huge bank bailouts, and then looked at the furlough scheme and the measures to protect capitalism during the pandemic. And they say, if you can bail out the system, why can't you intervene to make my life better?

That opens terrain where the left should make demands of the state. And, critically, we have to talk about struggle, and how we might enforce those demands.

**Socialist Worker UK**

# ISRAEL SET TO STEP UP KILLING AS IT STARVES GAZA

By James Supple

ISRAEL HAS approved a new escalation of its offensive in Gaza, preparing to seize more land for a possible permanent occupation.

The Israeli security cabinet has endorsed plans for “conquering” Gaza and setting up a “sustained presence there”, according to government officials.

It is calling up tens of thousands of reservists for the army and wants to flatten any buildings that remain standing, as well as to herd Palestinians into a single zone in the south of Gaza.

Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu has made it clear he has no interest in ending the war. Israel has rejected ceasefire offers from Hamas to return its remaining hostages in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal and a permanent end to the war.

The humanitarian situation inside Gaza is now the worst it has been since Israel launched its murderous offensive more than 18 months ago, killing at least 52,000 people.

Israel has completely blocked all aid and medical supplies from entering Gaza since it broke the ceasefire in March.

In early May, Amnesty International condemned the siege as, “A genocidal act, a blatant form of unlawful collective punishment, and the war crime of using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare.”

Israel is inflicting malnutrition and brutal suffering on the entire population. Last month more than 36,000 children were admitted to health facilities with acute malnutrition. The World Food Program says its supplies are so depleted that community kitchens that many have relied on to eat will soon have to shut.

“My children beg me to get them meat or eggs and I have to tell them there is none and I can’t. What crime have my children committed? Why must they starve?” Abdallah Shaqurah, a father of three in Khan Younis told B’Tselem.

“The hunger imposed on us now is crushing. There is nothing available except a little flour, canned goods, rice, grains, peas and beans ... Without the soup kitchens, we would have



**Above: Desperate Palestinians queue for food in Khan Younis** Photo: IMAGO/Doaa el-Baz apaimages

died of hunger by now.”

Israel has bombed tents in displacement camps at least 99 times since it broke the ceasefire, according to a UN Human Rights office (OHCHR) count, including repeated attacks in the Al-Mawasi area, previously designated as a safe zone. It has murdered more than 2300 Palestinians since the end of the ceasefire.

It is also escalating its ethnic cleansing in the West Bank, with the highest death toll there in the last 20 years since 2023. Regular military operations are demolishing homes and seizing more land for Israel settlers. More than 150 Palestinian homes and other structures were demolished in April, including virtually an entire village in Khallet al-Dabaa.

## End Israel’s impunity

With the indifference of the Arab rulers and backing from the US, Israel has become even more brazen and violent.

The Freedom Flotilla, attempting to carry aid to Gaza by boat, was hit twice by military drones in international waters shortly after it left Malta early this month. “Armed drones attacked the front of an unarmed civilian vessel twice, causing a fire and a substantial breach in the hull,” it said.

Israel is also continuing to bomb

Lebanon at will, including strikes on Beirut, as well as continuing to bomb Syria and Yemen.

From inside Gaza, UN aid worker Olga Cherevko said governments worldwide have, “A choice—to keep scrolling through the grisly images of Gaza being suffocated and starved or muster the courage and the moral fibre to make decisions that would break this merciless blockade.”

Yet the Albanese government has done no more than issued muted statements saying aid should be allowed in and that “all parties” should return to a ceasefire—refusing to recognise that it is Israel that has unleashed hell and refuses to stop the bombing.

It has done nothing to impose sanctions, end the arms trade or impose any pressure to isolate Israel and demand it end its war crimes.

Dock workers in Morocco have shown the kind of action needed, refusing to service a Maersk ship in April believed to be carrying F-35 fighter jet parts for Israel.

Palestine was an important issue during the election campaign—driving big votes for pro-Palestine independents standing against Labor. But we are going to have to keep fighting to demand that Labor stop covering up for Israel and cut all ties.

.....  
**The more the world allows Israel to act with impunity, the more brazen and violent it becomes**

**Solidarity**