

While Albanese lets Gaza starve

TURN PEOPLE POWER INTO SANCTIONS



PALESTINE

Antisemitism report
targets protests

CFMEU

Administration tightens its
grip in Queensland

SETTLER COLONIALISM

Indigenous resistance and
the Australian wars

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

Sydney

Meeting 6.30pm every Thursday
Brown St Hall, 8-10 Brown St
Newtown
For more information contact:
Adam on 0400 351 694
sydney@solidarity.net.au

Melbourne

Meeting 6.30pm every Thursday
Kathleen Syme library and community
centre, 251 Faraday St, Carlton
For more information contact:
Jason on 0456 624 661
melbourne@solidarity.net.au

Brisbane

Contact Mark on 0439 561 196 or
brisbane@solidarity.net.au

Perth

Contact perth@solidarity.net.au

Canberra

Contact canberra@solidarity.net.au

Adelaide

Contact Robert on 0447 362 417 or
adelaide@solidarity.net.au

Or check fb.com/soliaus/events

CONTACT US

Magazine office

Phone 02 8964 7116
Fax 02 9012 0814

Email

solidarity@solidarity.net.au

Website

www.solidarity.net.au

Facebook

Search for "Solidarity Magazine" or
go to fb.com/soliaus

Twitter

@soli_au
twitter.com/soli_au

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Things they say

We have moved this motion because we do not believe that this institution should be denigrated in the way that it was

Penny Wong was very offended by Greens Senator Mehreen Faruqi holding up a sign in parliament calling for sanctions on Israel

I think this is a moment, sort of wake-up call for Australian politics
Federal Labor backbench MP Ed Husic on the Harbour Bridge march

It was a massive crowd—over 100,000 people—and if the weather wasn't appalling, I think it would have been bigger than that maybe even double the size... I accept that there's a huge groundswell
NSW Premier Chris Minns eats humble pie after the march

A performative opportunity for the government to repeat their talking points
Uluru Dialogue co-chairs Megan Davis and Pat Anderson on the Labor government's attendance at this year Garna festival, after their failure on Closing the Gap targets

Trump's commitment to Israel is unequivocal.
Trump's Special Envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff

It's not extra. It's a schedule that we have of a payment that we're making.
Anthony Albanese tries to explain the second \$800 million payment to the US this year under the AUKUS nuclear subs deal

A parent can call me and say their child is really struggling, perhaps she doesn't feel she's taken the right subjects and doesn't know who to approach, I can say, 'Leave it with me.'
Amanda Haggie of Melbourne Girls Grammar School on just one of the privileges of private boarding schools

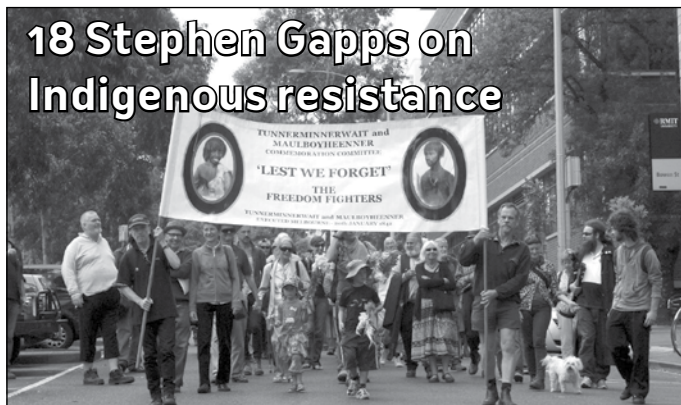
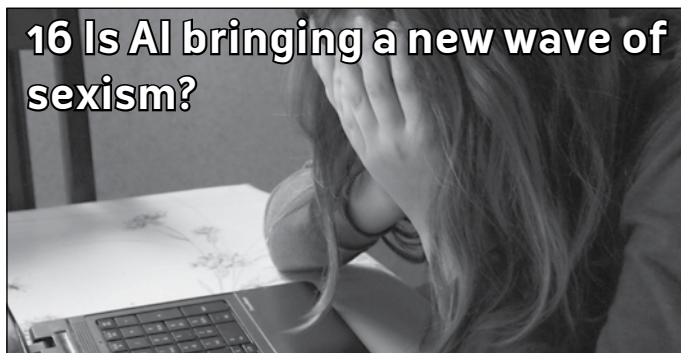
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Government lied about \$900 million Elbit deal

WHEN NEWS broke last year that Israeli weapons company Elbit Systems had won a \$900 million defence contract, the Labor government claimed it was not responsible. Documents published by *Crikey* last month show the opposite.

Defence Industry Minister Pat Conroy claimed the Commonwealth was not “a party to that contract”, which is for weapons systems on Australian infantry fighting vehicles produced by Korean company Hanwha. Defence Minister Richard Marles echoed the denials, claiming, “We are not a direct contractor with Elbit.”

But the documents, obtained under FOI, show the Defence Department reviewed the proposed deal and also co-signed the contract. The Albanese government constantly labels evidence of its military ties with Israel as “misinformation”. But this shows where the misinformation is really coming from.

Children locked in NT watch-houses in overcrowding crisis

CHILDREN ARE being held overnight in the Palmerston watch-house in Darwin, with “the lights on 24 hours a day”, according to the NT’s Aboriginal legal aid body. Last month an 11-year-old girl was left there for a night and two days.

The surging prison population has produced over-crowding, with around 100 people often held in the watch-house including an overflow of prisoners from the jails. Up to 16 people are crammed into cells designed for one or two people.

The North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency’s Anthony Beven told the ABC that as a result, “We’re seeing young people ... in a cell by themselves, with adults in surrounding cells screaming, yelling.”

There were 402 children and teenagers held in NT watch-houses in the first six months since the NT Country Liberals came to power, between 25 August last year and 5 March this year, documents obtained by the ABC show, 96 per cent of them Indigenous.

The surge in prisoners is being driven by new bail laws designed to lock up more Aboriginal people.

Exercises in Australia’s north prepare for war on China



THIS YEAR’S instalment of the Talisman Sabre war games was the largest yet—designed to send a message to China about growing preparations for war. US Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll openly boasted that the exercises were part of “actively designing our army so that we are capable of responding to any threat from China”.

The exercises take place in northern Australia every two years. This time they involved 35,000 military personnel from 19 countries over three weeks. Australian troops were joined by forces from the US and allies including the UK, Canada, Japan, France, Germany, New Zealand, the Philippines and South Korea. This year exercises were also held for the first time inside Papua New Guinea.

The Australian military was keen to show off some of its new capabilities, launching the US’s cutting-edge Precision Strike Missile (PrSM) for the first time. Fired from a HIMARS launcher, it can pinpoint targets 500 kilometres away, well beyond the army’s previous limit of 30 kilometres.

The exercises aimed to increase interoperability for joint operations in war and focused on battlefield scenarios likely in the Pacific, including “island hopping” mirroring US operations in the Second World War, amphibious landings, air and naval combat missions.

The US sent its George Washington Carrier Strike Group, carrying a fleet of F-35 fighter jets, alongside thousands of marines, amphibious assault ships and paratroopers.

Lieutenant General Joel B. Vowell, the Deputy Commanding General of US Army in the Pacific said the exercises were, “A powerful demonstration of our combined strength, trust, interoperability, and readiness across the Indo-Pacific.”

US burns \$10 million of contraceptives

THE US government plans to incinerate \$9.7 million worth of contraceptives intended as foreign aid for poor countries. It will spend \$167,000 to do so.

Offers from the UN and a non-profit organisation to buy or pay the costs of shipping them have been refused. The stocks, held in a warehouse in Belgium, include a range of contraceptive pills, implants and intrauterine devices.

The Trump administration cited its policy of refusing to provide abortion-related assistance to foreign organisations. Earlier this year it also ordering the burning of 500 tonnes of feed designated to feed families and children in Afghanistan and Pakistan, under Elon Musk’s dismantling of USAID.

Climate warrior boss buys private jet

ATLASSIAN BOSS Mike Cannon-Brookes, who thinks of himself as a climate activist, has bought himself a \$120 million jet. His Bombardier Global 7500 cost more than his \$100 million Sydney Harbourside mansion, purchased in 2018.

The plane can sleep up to eight people and includes an ensuite bathroom and shower, an “entertainment suite” including a wide-screen TV, and a conference room that converts into a dining room as well as its own kitchen.

On average it will create 162,000kg of CO2 a year, equivalent to 35 cars.

In just a few months it has touched down in Fiji, London, Geneva, New York, Cincinnati, Chicago and Salt Lake City, where Brookes is part-owner of the Utah Jazz NBA team.

Last month Brookes also sacked 150 staff, replacing them with AI technology. Staff were informed via a pre-recorded video sent from Brookes’ home office—apparently his workers weren’t important enough for even a Zoom call, let alone an in-person announcement. Affected staff then had to wait 15 minutes for an email to confirm whether they still had a job.

Police tell Newcastle venue to cancel Palestine fundraiser

A FUNDRAISER gig for Gaza has been cancelled in Newcastle after police told the venue there was a “credible threat” citing “online comments”. The event was to raise money for aid for Gaza.

But neither nor the venue nor the event organisers, Palestine Action Group Muloobinba, said they were aware of any threats.

It was the second event in a week shut down after local police contacted venue owners. A local church cancelled an earlier film screening after police contacted them saying “they couldn’t be sure it was legal to show a documentary”.

Organiser Regan Dubois accused the police of “bullying tactics”, saying, “They’re trying to shut down the event, without even notifying organisers that the threat even exists.”

EDITORIAL

Bridge march shows tide has turned against Israel and Albanese

THE HUNDREDS of thousands who marched across the Sydney Harbour Bridge show the scale of support for action on Gaza. There is growing pressure on Anthony Albanese.

Israel's brutal starvation policy and relentless war crimes have produced a dramatic step change in public sentiment.

It was Sydney's largest protest since the massive march against the Iraq War in February 2003. Organisers of the Harbour Bridge march put the turnout at 300,000—and in driving rain.

The turnout was so big that half of the march didn't even get to other side of the bridge. Police decided to cut the protest in two and turn a section of the crowd back to the starting point.

NSW Premier Chris Minns' immediate call to stop the protest, made almost as soon as it was announced, meant the media gave it saturation coverage in the lead-up and made hundreds of thousands determined to attend.

Momentum was building all week, with hundreds of organisations endorsing the idea including 11 unions. Five NSW Labor MPs spoke out against Minns and pledged to attend the march.

Starvation in Gaza has reached a horrific crisis point. But Albanese's response has simply been to spout platitudes while continuing to allow the export of weapons components being used in the genocide, alongside normal diplomatic relations and trade with the Israeli terror state.

He told ABC's *Insiders* that Israel's withholding of aid was "quite clearly" a breach of international law, and its claims there is no starvation in Gaza were "beyond comprehension". But he is still refusing to take the kind of action against Israel that would impose real pressure to end the genocide.

When Foreign Minister Penny Wong was questioned by The Greens about the export of F-35 fighter jet parts to Israel, she repeated the absurd claim that Australia only exports "non-lethal" parts for the jets.

Yet Israel's F-35s would not be able to drop bombs on Gaza without the bomb bay doors and other parts Australia supplies.

Israel still enjoys access to intelligence and targeting information from the Pine Gap spy base in the NT. This puts the lie to Albanese's claims that "Australia is not a participant" in Israel's genocide.

And Albanese has refused to impose any of the kind of sanctions on trade or weapons exports imposed on



countries such as Iran and Russia.

Israeli ambassador Amir Meron reportedly told journalists that photos of starving Palestinians were "false pictures" and part of a "false campaign that is being [led] by Hamas". Albanese should expel the ambassador and cut diplomatic ties to help isolate Israel globally.

The UK, France and Canada have now announced they will recognise a Palestinian state, alongside Israel. This is not the self-determination that Palestine needs, but Albanese is unwilling to take even this small, token step.

Make Israel a pariah state

The scale of the Harbour Bridge march, along with growing protests across the country, will give confidence to everyone who supports Palestine.

But we know from the historic bridge march for Indigenous Reconciliation in 2000 and from the Iraq war rallies that one major protest, however phenomenal, is not enough to force change.

We need to draw more people into active organising for Palestine.

The wide endorsement for the Bridge march showed the kind of coalition in support of Gaza that exists. Mobilising this support again will require systematic effort.

A national day of action on Sunday 24 August is the next immediate focus.

We need to build maximum pressure on Albanese to impose comprehensive sanctions and to enforce our own "people's sanctions" against Israel.

Above: The march across the Sydney Harbour Bridge
Photo: Solidarity

Union activists need to raise workplace and branch motions to push their unions towards adopting bans on the production and transport of weapons, steel and coal to Israel.

The struggle for boycotts must spread everywhere that ties to Israel exist. In June delegates representing 80,000 NSW nurses and midwives voted to boycott Israeli medical companies profiting from the public health system, including IDF supplier Syqe.

UTS staff and students forced their university to end a ten-year partnership with Israeli university the Technion earlier this year. Campaigns have ended student exchange partnerships with the Hebrew University at University of WA, Ben Gurion University at Curtin Uni and the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design at Sydney College of the Arts.

A union day of action for Palestine on 10 September has been backed by NTEU divisions in NSW and Victoria. This is an important opportunity to strengthen the ties between unions and the Palestine movement. The widest possible support must be built for it in every union and workplace.

The party's Victorian state conference in early August passed a raft of motions calling on Albanese to act. The movement also needs to build on efforts to amplify dissent within the Labor Party, including by putting Labor speakers on protest platforms.

Israel is a genocidal state and it must be turned into a global pariah. We have to break the starvation siege and keep fighting until Palestine is free, from the river to the sea.

The struggle for boycotts must spread everywhere that ties to Israel exist

Albanese's antisemitism envoy wants to silence opposition to Israel

By James Supple

JILLIAN SEGAL, Anthony Albanese's appointed antisemitism envoy, has produced a series of Trumpian recommendations that have drawn widespread shock.

Her calls to withhold funding from universities, cultural institutions and artists and to monitor media reporting are an echo of Donald Trump's authoritarian measures.

Anthony Albanese appointed Segal as the government's "special envoy to combat antisemitism" in July 2024, and appeared alongside her at the press conference to launch the recommendations.

Her plan is a continuation of the efforts to smear the movement for Palestine as antisemitic, and to launch a desperate defence of Israel in the face of growing public disgust with its genocide in Gaza.

As Max Kaiser of the anti-Zionist Jewish Council of Australia put it, "Consistent with her past statements erroneously linking antisemitic attacks with Palestine solidarity protests, Segal seems fixated on driving a pro-Israel narrative and repressing legitimate criticism of Israel's genocide in Gaza."

Antisemitism is a real issue and should always be opposed—just as the movement for Palestine has done consistently. Rallies have frequently featured Jewish speakers and contingents and have never accepted any instances of anti-Jewish racism.

But the media and the government have constantly sought to conflate opposition to Israel's genocide in Gaza with antisemitism. Earlier this year there was an effort to blame supporters of Palestine for a series of attacks on synagogues—even though it turned out organised crime was responsible.

Jillian's Segal report is vague about what constitutes antisemitism. But it's clear from her sweeping denunciation of universities as supposedly showing a "tolerance for antisemitic conduct" that she wants to target opposition to Israel's genocide—and anti-Zionism in particular.

Pressed on ABC radio about what "manipulated narratives" she wanted censored from media reporting, Segal pointed to coverage of Israel's killing of civilians in Gaza.

She cited a 20-month-old ABC story about the bombing of a hospital, which was quickly corrected after sources argued that the deaths



Above: Opposition to Israel's genocide and slaughter is not driven by antisemitism Photo: Solidarity

were actually the result of a misfired Palestinian rocket. Most of Israel's relentless destruction of hospitals and health facilities in Gaza since 7 October 2023 has been ignored by the mainstream media.

Anti-Zionism

Her report also calls for the government to "require consistent application and adoption" of the widely rejected International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism across government and public institutions.

This definition "has been used to silence legitimate criticism of Israel and Zionism", as the Jewish Council of Australia puts it, since it defines opposition to the existence of the state of Israel as antisemitic.

Already Palestinian-Australian academic Dr Randa Abdel-Fattah has been branded as antisemitic simply for calling for an end to the state of Israel—with her research grant suspended following a right-wing media campaign.

Zionism is the political ideology behind Israel's existence as a state that privileges Jewish people above others. As a result, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has explained, "Israel is not a state of all its citizens". There is systematic discrimination against the Palestinian minority inside its 1948 borders.

Israel also imposes a regime of apartheid on the occupied West Bank and Gaza. There is nothing antisemitic about anti-Zionism and support for a single democratic state in Palestine with equal rights for Jews and Palestinians—yet this would require an end

to the existence of the state of Israel.

Jillian Segal is a pro-Israel activist and an apologist for genocide who should never have been appointed to a government position.

She is the immediate past president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, a hardline Zionist organisation. While in that role she defended Israel's bombing of hospitals and condemned calls for a ceasefire in late 2023, six weeks after Israel's genocide in Gaza began.

In December last year she labelled weekly protests for Palestine "intimidatory", claiming without any evidence that they were "attacking the Jewish community" and calling for them to be banned from the inner city.

Her husband donated \$50,000 to far right campaign group Advance Australia, which is viciously anti-immigration and labels welcome to country ceremonies a plot by "elites" to "delegitimise Australia's history". Segal has claimed she had no knowledge of the donation.

Her antisemitism plan is so extreme that even the Albanese government can see she has gone too far. The government is now stalling as it tries to work out which recommendations it can get away with adopting.

But the efforts to undermine support for Palestine with false accusations of antisemitism are only going to continue.

Smearing the movement for Palestine helps distract attention from Albanese's refusal to end weapons exports or impose sanctions on Israel. It is the last line of defence for Israel's supporters in the face of its now widely recognised genocide.

The media and the government have constantly sought to conflate opposition to Israel's genocide in Gaza with antisemitism

Harbour Bridge march defies campaign against Palestine protests

THE MASSIVE march across the Sydney Harbour Bridge showed the depth of opposition to Israel's starvation and genocide in Gaza—as well as the Albanese government's complicity.

For many people it was their first ever protest march.

It was also the best possible response to NSW Premier Chris Minns' continual attacks on the right to protest. Minns tried to stop the Harbour Bridge march, saying it would cause Sydney to "descend into chaos" and risk public safety.

But the Supreme Court rejected a police application to stop the march. It is clear the wave of support for the protest in the lead up helped sway the court.

In justifying her decision Justice Belinda Rigg said, "The evidence indicates there is significant support for the march."

There is also a right to march recognised in NSW law, won as a result of the right to protest campaign following the first Mardi Gras in 1978.

A number of previous rulings have said that disruption alone is not a reason to stop a march—since any protest march is by definition disruptive.

Minns has attacked the protests for Palestine ever since 7 October 2023. In the run up to the one-year anniversary of Israel's genocide last year, he said he would like to ban regular Palestine protests because of the cost of policing.

Earlier this year he passed new anti-protest laws banning protests near places of worship and increasing police powers.

In June a violent police operation saw Greens candidate Hannah Thomas punched in the face, resulting in facial surgery and the possible permanent loss of vision in one eye.

Police appear to have acted unlawfully in dispersing the planned blockade at SEC Plating even before it had begun.

But it was the climate created by Minns' anti-protest laws that made them feel empowered to act.

The scale of the Harbour Bridge march should give confidence to those who have faced repression for standing up for Palestine everywhere.

It shows how we can push back attacks on the right to protest and win larger numbers of people to join us in active support for Gaza.



Above: Part of the up to 300,000-strong protest across the Sydney Harbour Bridge Photo: Solidarity

The Harbour Bridge march should give confidence to those who have faced repression for standing up for Palestine

Artists' protests win Sabsabi reinstatement

IN A major about-face, Creative Australia has reinstated artist Khaled Sabsabi and curator Michael Dagostino as representatives of Australia at the 2026 Venice Biennale.

The board rescinded their invitation in February in a blatantly racist and politically motivated decision that sparked community outrage and widespread pushback from artists, community members and arts workers, including some at Creative Australia.

The decision to reinstate the pair is a powerful sign that community pressure can win, even when institutions are determined to shut down political expression amid the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

The saga began with an outrageous scare campaign, initiated by Liberal senator Claire Chandler in parliament, who accused Sabsabi of creating art supporting terrorism. Sabsabi had created work dealing with Lebanese politics and depicted Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. His work also dealt with the events of 9/11 and how George Bush used this context to invade Afghanistan.

After a call from Labor MP and Arts Minister at the time Tony Burke to the Creative Australia CEO, the board rescinded Sabsabi and Dagostino's appointment just five days after it was announced, citing concern about a "prolonged and divisive debate".

But a prolonged response is exactly what they got. More than 4000 people, many of them artists

and arts sector workers, signed an open letter calling for Sabsabi and Dagostino's reinstatement and 14 of Australia's former Venice Biennale pavilion curators issued a similar joint statement. A group of Creative Australia workers walked out of work in protest.

All five of the other artist and curator teams shortlisted for the Biennale penned a statement in solidarity with Sabsabi and Dagostino, and it soon became clear that no other team would be willing to fill the appointment, effectively forcing the Australian pavilion in the Biennale to remain empty.

The issue struck a chord with community members outside the arts too, in a context where teachers, academics, nurses, public servants and others workers had been threatened or disciplined by employers over Palestine.

Community members held a small rally outside Creative Australia offices, with speeches including a teacher from Teachers and School Staff for Palestine who made the link to censorship in schools.

The avalanche of support for Sabsabi and Dagostino forced an independent review, which finally led the board to reverse its decision. This is a great example of how we can resist the repression of pro-Palestine voices. As the genocide worsens each day, a growing number of people are unwilling to accept "social cohesion" as an excuse for censorship.

Matilda Fay

Kumanjayi Walker inquest exposes systemic racism in NT police

By Paddy Gibson

ON 7 July, NT Coroner Elizabeth Armitage delivered a long-awaited report on the death of Kumanjayi Walker, a 19-year-old Warlpiri man shot dead at point-blank range by former NT Constable Zachary Rolfe in the remote community of Yuendumu in 2019.

The findings come as the Yuendumu community is still reeling from the death of another young Warlpiri man, Kumanjayi White, who was killed by off-duty police in Coles in Alice Springs on 27 May.

Armitage's report lays bare the "entrenched, systemic and structural racism" at the heart of the NT Police including "normalised" usage of racist, violent language that paints Aboriginal people as subhuman.

Rolfe himself routinely used such language and often bragged about his violent arrests of Aboriginal people, showing off body-worn footage to his mates.

Rolfe was involved in 46 reported violent incidents before shooting Kumanjayi. Despite some incidents being under investigation, he had faced no consequences and indeed won acclaim from senior officers.

Rolfe served in the ADF in Afghanistan and carried this "us and them" military mindset into frontline policing in the NT. He had been rejected from the Queensland police for lying about previous offences but was welcomed in the NT.

Rolfe described working as part of the paramilitary-style Immediate Response Team deployed to remote communities as "a sweet gig" where "you just get to do cowboy shit with no rules".

He led the lethal raid on the house where Kumanjayi was staying against the arrest plan made by local police. Another former ADF soldier involved in the raid guarded the back door with an AR-15 assault rifle.

Armitage's findings about "systemic racism" were welcomed by the Justice for Walker campaign, representing Kumanjayi's family and Warlpiri community leaders.

A host of Aboriginal, legal and human rights organisations signed onto a statement from Justice for Walker, demanding the NT government implement Armitage's recommendations for increased resourcing of community-based programs and authority for Warlpiri people.



Above: There were protests all across the NT for justice following Kumanjayi Walker's killing
Photo: Justice for Walker campaign

But despite her damning findings, Armitage did not make any recommendations that would deliver accountability for anyone responsible for Kumanjayi's death.

Rolfe was charged with murder soon after the killing but found not guilty in 2022. Not a single Aboriginal person served on the jury and evidence of Rolfe's racism and violence was disallowed in the trial.

Movement

Murder charges following a death in custody are virtually unheard of. In the case of Rolfe, the charges came after an unprecedented wave of protests at police stations across remote NT communities.

On the night Rolfe was charged, hundreds of Warlpiri people were making their way to Alice Springs for a mass march on the police and solidarity marches were being held across Australia. The murder charge defused this explosive momentum.

But a grassroots protest movement needs to be urgently rebuilt to stop continuing deaths in custody, escalating incarceration rates Australia-wide and a tidal wave of racist "law and order" policies being enacted by the NT government.

Snap protests of thousands of people across Australia in June responding to the death of Kumanjayi White show there is a real mood to fight back.

Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro responded to the Walker inquest report with contempt, threatening to cut

funding to the Coroner's office and change legislation to limit its powers.

On 31 July, the Country Liberal Party rammed through changes to the Youth Justice Act to lock up children as young as ten, remove limitations on the use of force by guards, reinstate the use of spit hoods and allow deployment of attack dogs in youth prisons.

Forty-five NT based paediatricians wrote to Finocchiaro opposing these reforms, only for her to dismiss their opinions as a "waste of time".

But anger is growing. A number of these doctors spoke at a protest outside the Palmerston watch-house outside Darwin, organised by the grassroots campaign group Justice not Jails (JnJ).

JnJ is calling on the federal government to "sanction the NT"—cut off funding to the NT government until it respects Aboriginal rights and redirects funds to Aboriginal organisations.

At a media conference following a historic joint meeting of the four NT Land Councils on 24 July, Central Land Council Deputy Chair Barbara Shaw condemned the government's "disgusting racist policies" that were "stacking and racking" Aboriginal people in prison.

Shaw tabled a letter from Ned Jampijinpa Hargraves at the meeting, grandfather of Kumanjayi White, calling on Land Council delegates to join his family and other supporters and community leaders in a major march on the NT Parliament when it sits in October.

Rolfe was involved in 46 reported violent incidents before shooting Kumanjayi

Administration tightens grip but it's not too late to defend the CFMEU

By Ian Rintoul

THE TWO-DAY strike and protest at Brisbane's CFMEU office following the High Court decision in June upholding Administration was fantastic. It was exactly the response that was needed.

But with no similar response anywhere else in the country the Administration has moved quickly to tighten its grip on the union.

Just days after the show of strength, a Brisbane delegates' meeting was told by CFMEU union officials there would be no more strikes and that delegates would be expected to follow the new leadership, following Administration's removal of Michael Ravbar and Jade Ingham, the elected secretary and assistant secretary, respectively.

The delegates' acceptance of the ultimatum is an enormous setback and Administration was quick to take advantage of the retreat. Just a few days later, Dennis Mitchell, one of the Queensland officials who declared there would be no more strikes, was given the option of resigning or being sacked by the Administration. He resigned.

Since then ten other organisers have been sacked or forced to resign. It's no coincidence that many of the officials targeted by the Administration had played a role in the Cross River Rail dispute where CFMEU members fought for weeks against the bosses, the Fair Work Commission and the AWU for a CFMEU agreement that had a real wage increase and safety protections like the heat-stress policy.

More mud thrown

Administration's hired gun, Senior Counsel Geoffrey Watson, has produced yet another report full of unsubstantiated allegations of violence, this time into the Queensland branch.

The report again made allegations of misogyny. But it's the Administration that has shown its contempt for women union members by sacking three women organisers in Victoria. This comes on top of the sacking of Victorian organiser Esther Van Arend in November 2024 for a verbal exchange with the mud-throwing journalist, Nick McKenzie.

Queensland Premier David Crisafulli has seized on the Administration's report to announce a judicial



Above: The 48 hour strike in Brisbane held in response to the defeat of the High Court challenge to Administration
Photo: Solidarity

inquiry into the CFMEU—a witch hunt that is expected to last a year. The inquiry will include investigating the CFMEU framework agreement which the Master Builders has called to be “scrapped altogether”.

The Strategic Plan announced by Administrator Mark Irving is yet another step to Administration strangling the militant culture of the CFMEU.

In particular, the proposal for national delegates training, the requirement for delegates and officers to sign an, as yet unseen, national code of conduct that they will abide by Fair Work rules and serve probationary periods to prove their loyalty to Administration, are all about attacking militant unionism and reducing the CFMEU to a totally compliant union, another AWU.

National Secretary Zach Smith has once again meekly fallen into line and announced his own 12-point plan that mimics the Administration's Strategic Plan.

But Melbourne's well-attended CFMEU branch meeting last month hit back. While Smith sat in silence the meeting almost unanimously carried a resolution calling for the Labor government to end Administration, lift the ban on so-called “removed persons” holding union office and hold open union elections under existing rules this year.

Another resolution called for Administration to make a full financial disclosure, something the Administration has not produced despite a legislative duty to do so.

But without action to back up the

vote of condemnation, Smith and the Administration will ignore resolutions and grind on.

Going to the High Court was never going to beat Administration and waiting for the High Court's ruling has meant the campaign against Administration has lost momentum. Some officials are again arguing that all we can do is “keep our powder dry” and re-emerge when Administration ends. But that is years away.

Organisation can't wait. Yet another construction worker has been killed and another seriously injured on a Meriton site in NSW.

It is not too late to fight. The Crisafulli inquiry is an opportunity to cohere active opposition to Administration as it throws up a serious challenge to hard-won conditions. The strikes by Queensland teachers and nurses are an opportunity to counter the propaganda campaign against the CFMEU and build support to oppose Administration in other unions.

The fight against Administration will have to be organised independently of Administration-appointed officials. Delegates and rank-and-file activists can keep the fight alive by continuing to organise against the bosses and Administration. Every worksite and branch should carry a motion of no confidence in Smith to force him to resign from his Administration roles.

What Labor has done to the CFMEU, they can do to any union that fights the bosses. Every unionist has a reason to oppose Administration and defend the CFMEU.

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Ten other organisers have been sacked or forced to resign

ANU fights back against savage cuts to jobs and courses

By Finnian Colwell

ON WEDNESDAY 30 July, more than 100 ANU students marched against the university's proposed Renew ANU cuts. Vice-Chancellor Genevieve Bell has already slashed 1092 jobs since March last year, according to the staff union, the NTEU.

Students are demanding that the cuts are reversed, that Bell resign and that the government provide funding for quality education at universities.

In early July, ANU released its "organisational change proposals" for further staff cuts. In Arts and Social Sciences, there will be 63 job redundancies.

The university is justifying its cuts to specific disciplines based on research rankings and expectations of external funding. Sub-disciplines like biological anthropology and quantitative research in sociology will effectively cease to exist.

A merger between the schools of art and design, music and museum and heritage studies will cut one visual arts course and funnel students in the three areas of study into another. Students at the school of music will no longer be able to specialise in performance, composition or theory.

Also notable is the merger between political science, international relations and public policy. The three initially separate undergraduate degrees will now become one, leaving students lacking the opportunity to gain specialised knowledge in each.

In Science and Medicine, there are 68 redundancies. The university is gutting the Biology Teaching Centre, which provides crucial specialised teaching to first-year biology students.

The proposed changes will deprive staff of their livelihoods and force those who still have a job to work harder. Students, who come to university on the promise that they will be able to explore ideas in whichever discipline they choose, will find their study options severely restricted.

The corporate university

The Vice-Chancellor has justified the cuts by suggesting that the university has a \$250 million budget deficit. But the *Financial Review* reported that chief analysts at the university have revised that figure down by \$60 million, and there are other competing estimates.

Bell's manipulation of the budget



Above: Rallying against the cuts at ANU Photo: NTEU ACT

deficit figures underlines how her role is to preside over a corporatised university.

Government funding as a percentage of university revenue has more than halved over the last 40 years: in 1989, 80 per cent of university funding came from the government while in 2019 it was 33 per cent. Meanwhile, the private sector has enjoyed lower corporate tax rates.

To deal with underfunding, universities have appointed representatives from industry. Bell retained a salary from chips company Intel on top of her \$1 million salary at ANU in 2024.

Universities as a result have increased student fees, competed for private funding and cut staff. These cuts have typically but not exclusively affected areas where it is difficult to get private funding, such as the humanities.

It is not surprising that other universities around the country, including Wollongong, UTS and Macquarie, have copied ANU's cuts: each must make itself more attractive than its competitors for industry.

Fightback

Students and staff returning to ANU for second semester were quick to express their anger at the cuts with a rally of more than 400, which marched to the Chancery on 23 July.

Music students played on the march and then launched an overnight, 12-hour protest concert against the

music cuts.

To build the 30 July rally, student activists took votes in classes around the university, calling on Bell to resign, the cuts to stop and the government to fund quality education. In many classes, students overwhelmingly if not unanimously voted against the cuts.

At the rally, we marched to the schools of music and art and design, then marched back into a teaching building and voted to continue to disrupt business as usual until ANU stops the cuts.

The extra step of entering the building was important in showing that the fight against the cuts must be one of mass disruption, not lobbying or convincing Bell, because the cuts have a structural cause.

A poll in an NTEU meeting the next day showed that 35 per cent supported unprotected industrial action to save their jobs, while only 18 per cent voted against.

The campaign has also demonstrated the need for a socialist organisation which can respond to the compounding crises of capitalism.

The capitalist system prioritises war over education: at the same time as Bell cuts courses in arts and STEM, she refuses to cut scholarships and research programs with arms companies complicit in the genocide in Gaza.

We need everyone who attends a cuts rally today to help organise and politicise the fightback tomorrow.

Students and staff returning to ANU for second semester were quick to express their anger at the cuts

South Australian toxic algae another climate disaster

By Angus Dermody

A TOXIC algal bloom twice the size of the ACT is causing apocalyptic scenes in South Australia. Since March, the algal bloom is estimated to have killed almost 14,000 marine animals from more than 400 species. Reports describe beaches covered in brown foam, clumps of seaweed and rotting fish.

While the federal and state governments have announced a combined \$28 million to deal with the impacts, federal Labor Environment Minister Murray Watt stopped short of declaring it a natural disaster. And no meaningful action will be taken to deal with the causes of this catastrophe.

This is a disaster fuelled by the climate crisis. The algal bloom is caused by a species known as *Karenia mikimotoi*, which occurs naturally. When the species is present in massive amounts like it is now, it effectively drowns marine animals.

The amount of algae off the coast of SA has exploded thanks to a combination of climate-related incidents. Flooding in 2022-23 saw run-off from rivers enter the ocean. This was followed by cold upswelling which caused nutrient rich water to come to the surface. Most recently, a marine heatwave has seen temperatures skyrocket by 2.5 degrees above normal.

These events, and the toxic algal bloom that has come from them, are a reminder of the climate inaction that has defined Albanese's Labor government. The wide-reaching roots of this crisis also mean that it's unlikely to go away any time soon. Early modelling suggests that while the algal bloom might get smaller over winter it's likely to spread even further over the summer.

A report released by the Biodiversity Council claims that this marine heatwave is "likely to be equivalent in wildlife impacts" to the horrific Black Summer bushfires which killed three billion animals in 2019 and 2020. The same conditions are causing an algal bloom in California in the US right now.

These algal blooms are the symptoms of a sick system. What's needed is urgent action to deal with the roots of this crisis. Albanese's Labor government must act to stop the expansion of fossil fuels if there is to be any hope of dealing with this type of environmental breakdown.



Above: Toxic algae along the South Australian coast
Photo: Barbara Pocock/x.com

The amount of algae off the coast of SA has exploded thanks to a combination of climate-related incidents

Protest at security headquarters in Egypt shows rage over Gaza betrayal

ON 25 July, young Egyptians launched a courageous action in solidarity with Gaza, exposing the appalling complicity of Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's dictatorship in Israel's genocide.

A group calling themselves the "Iron 17" stormed the State Security headquarters at the Ma'asara police station in Helwan, holding officers captive for several hours.

Videos broadcast to the Telegram channel "Nation's Flood" showed them condemning the closure of the Rafah crossing, Egypt's border with Gaza, and the regime's arrest of activists collecting aid for the Palestinians. The footage went viral and was seen millions of times.

Their act was a cry of rage against the regime, which has done nothing as Israel seized control of the Rafah crossing and blocked the entry of aid. In June its police beat and arrested participants in the Global March to Gaza who tried to take aid to the border.

In exchange El-Sisi receives \$1.4 billion in US military aid annually.

The regime fears that opposition to its betrayal of Gaza might fuel a new uprising, remembering how support for Palestine led to the revolution of 2011 that toppled Egypt's last dictator.

El-Sisi is more hated than ever, with the last few years bringing an economic crisis and crippling inflation that has savaged living standards. The

regime maintains power through ruthless repression.

Two of the men involved in the "Iron 17" action, Mohsen Mustafa and his cousin Ahmed Sherif Ahmed Abdel Wahab, disappeared after one of them posted on Facebook about his part in it. It's believed regime security forces have kidnapped them. There are around 60,000 political prisoners.

Jordan's government has also directly aided Israel by assisting in shooting down drones and missiles from Iran.

Its government has also launched a major crackdown on support for Palestine, arresting and interrogating hundreds of activists, including anyone who has sent financial donations to victims of Israel's genocide in Gaza.

The action in Egypt followed a week of protests at Egyptian embassies worldwide.

Protesters descended on the Egyptian Embassy in Beirut demanding Sisi be "put in chains" for his complicity and Tunisian protesters maintained a 40-hour siege of the US embassy.

There is overwhelming support for the Palestinians among the workers and poor of the Arab world. If this bursts out into mass protest, it can challenge both the regimes that collaborate with Israel and imperialism's wider hold on the Middle East.

Are ideas enough to change the world?

The dominance of right-wing ideas reflects capitalism's control of society, writes **Jacob Starling**, but new ideas alone are not what drives social change, in the next article in our series on what socialists say

SOCIALISTS SPEND much of our time fighting against right-wing ideas and arguing that a better world is possible.

Often it can feel like we are swimming against the tide. Only a tiny sliver of the Australian working class would call themselves revolutionary socialists, and conservative ideas have much more influence.

When the Indigenous Voice to Parliament was voted down in 2023, it was seen as evidence that Australian society was hopelessly racist. Similarly, many on the left have been dismayed to see sections of the American working class side with Trump against their own interests.

What explains the influence of these ideas? This is not a new problem for socialists. Marx famously argued that “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas”. We live in a society run by capitalists, in the service of profit, and the capitalist class has many ways of spreading their ideas.

Anyone who has turned on the news over the past two years will have noticed how much the mainstream media sides with Israel in its genocidal war, while attacking supporters of Palestine.

The media has a massive influence on popular opinion, dictating what is common sense and what is “extreme”. Some media platforms, like the Murdoch press, have a conscious commitment to spreading right wing ideas. Even less overtly ideological platforms are still owned and funded by the rich and have an interest in promoting ideas which preserve their wealth and influence.

These ideas are in turn reinforced by the education system, parliament, the courts, social media, and every other institution of the ruling class.

How can ideas change?

In fact, there are many examples throughout history of ideas changing quickly on a massive scale. Just over 50 years ago, homosexuality was still categorised as a mental illness, but now gay marriage has massive popular support.

Many people mistakenly believe

that these changes are simply the result of society becoming more “enlightened”, as better ideas replace worse ones in a logical sequence. History would then be the story of rationality gradually defeating irrationality. This is what Marxists call “idealism”.

However, ideas do not bring change on their own. If it hadn't been for the decades of struggle from below in support of gay rights, homophobia would be far more mainstream today.

Socialists believe that ideas come primarily from our concrete experiences of living in any given society. If capitalism is all we know, it is easy to take for granted that inequality, war, selfishness and oppression are inevitable and natural features of human society.

Similarly, medieval peasants accepted their exploitation by feudal lords as divinely ordained. In the ancient world, slavery was taken for granted.

Because capitalist society is a class society, with a working class that faces exploitation and a cost-of-living crisis, and a ruling class that profits from their work to amass huge wealth, an individual's experience of life is deeply affected by their position within society.

The ideas propagated by the ruling class are reinforced by the lack of control workers have over their lives under capitalism. At work, they are under the control of a boss, and the products of their labour belong to somebody else. Many workers therefore come to accept that they are not suited to make decisions about how their workplace, or how society as a whole, should run.

Our experience of life is also the basis for changes in ideas.

Key to this is the contradictory nature of life under capitalism. Capitalism alienates workers, encouraging passivity, but it also forces them to work together, often in large numbers. As the capitalists fight to squeeze more and more profit out of their workers, they can provoke working class resistance and opposition to how society is run.

The ideas propagated by the ruling class are reinforced by the lack of control workers have over their lives

The history of capitalism shows how massive waves of resistance can erupt seemingly out of nowhere, as workers unite to demand better wages and conditions.

This means that most workers have a mix of ruling class ideas and working-class ideas. Involvement in struggle is the most powerful way to challenge ruling class ideas.

During the 1984-85 miners' strike in Britain, the right-wing ideas of many of the workers were challenged by their experiences of solidarity from other oppressed groups.

At first, when gay and lesbian groups raised money to support them, workers turned them down. However, after police attacks, and right-wing smear campaigns, they realised that they shared a common struggle against the ruling class. As a result, the 1985 Gay Pride march was led by a group of striking miners.

Racist ideas can also be challenged by class struggle. Racism is a tool used by the ruling class to divide workers and create a scapegoat for popular frustration. However, it is only through challenging racist ideas that working class unity can be forged. Without this unity, it is almost impossible to win major strikes and struggles.

Revolutions offer us the most vivid examples of how quickly ideas can change during collective struggle. In the 2011 Egyptian revolution, religious sectarianism between Muslims and Christians was broken down by the united fight against the dictatorship. Christians formed a human chain to protect Muslim worshippers as they prayed, and Muslims defended churches from pro-regime thugs.

However, this doesn't mean that ideas change evenly and automatically across the whole working class.

Inside every struggle there is a contest over ideas that is crucial to their victory or defeat.

This is why revolutionary organisations, and revolutionary newspapers, are so important. We are fighting a war of ideas against the ruling class. Only the socialist transformation of society can consign their ideas to the dustbin of history.

Syria's new regime stirring sectarian tensions again

By Maeve Larkins

A NEW wave of sectarian violence has erupted in Syria, centred around the majority Druze area of Suweyda in the south.

The violence began in early July, after a Druze man was attacked by Bedouin fighters. This started a tit-for-tat conflict between Druze and Bedouin groups, which prompted the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) self-declared government to send in troops and armoured vehicles to try to assert control.

This worsened the conflict, leaving more than 1000 dead and over 25,000 displaced since the start of July, including many Druze and Bedouin civilians.

HTS fighters have targeted the Druze, using sectarian violence and collective punishment, such as forcing Druze civilians to shave their moustaches.

Israel seized this opportunity to launch missile strikes on Damascus, hitting the Syrian Defence Ministry and presidential palace, killing three.

Israel justified these strikes by claiming that it was protecting the Druze but it is obvious that Israel is not seriously committed to protecting minorities given it runs a racist apartheid state.

In reality, Israel is exploiting the growing sectarianism of HTS to extend Israel's dominance, by exploiting sectarian divisions within Syria to further fragment the country.

President Ahmed Al-Sharaa claims he wants to protect Syria's minorities. But since the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad's dictatorship last year, HTS has looked to consolidate control over the various armed minorities across Syria, including the Kurds in Syria's north and the Druze in Syria's south.

HTS has demanded that these relatively autonomous regions disarm and incorporate into the national army. But HTS has monopolised its top roles, handing them to Sunni Islamists, many of them former members of jihadist groups who committed sectarian atrocities during the civil war—such as Al-Sharaa himself.

And while HTS has announced that there will be elections in Syria next month, the population will not get to vote. A third of the seats will be appointed by Al-Sharaa and the re-



Above: Forces aligned to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham's Syrian government in Suweyda Photo: Abaca Press/Alamy Live News

mainder appointed by "electoral bodies" whose members will be similarly selected by HTS.

So far, both the Kurds and the Druze factions have refused to disband, sceptical of HTS's new regime after similar sectarian massacres carried out by HTS-linked fighters earlier in the year against Christians and Alawites.

In March and April, the regime targeted Alawite groups along the coast after accusing them of being supporters of the old regime.

A wave of sectarian killings saw whole families murdered after some Alawite fighters attacked government forces. More than 1600 people were killed.

Sectarianism

This sectarianism has historic roots within Syria. During the civil war, Assad tried to use sectarianism to rally support among Alawites and other minorities by falsely claiming that the revolutionary movement was entirely Sunni jihadists.

The initial mass protests against the regime in 2011 raised democratic and anti-sectarian slogans, drawing in Syrians across the sectarian divide.

Assad carpet-bombed the most democratic and anti-sectarian sections of the movement and released hundreds of jihadists from his prisons.

He refrained from cracking down too hard on the Druze in Suweyda to maintain their support and present his regime as a bulwark against sectarian

violence.

Similarly, Israel has long sought to use the Druze for its own advantage.

But while some of the Druze in Syria see Israel as an ally against the current HTS persecution, most have rejected Israeli intervention.

Inside Israel, Druze citizens have more rights than other Arabs, are allowed to serve in the IDF and have a history of loyalty to the Israeli state.

But Israel is no real friend of the Druze. When Israel occupied Syria's Golan Heights in 1967, it displaced thousands of Druze and has since set up Israeli settlements, treating Syrian Druze much like it does Palestinians in the West Bank.

After the fall of Assad, Israel quickly sent troops to seize further territory inside Syria around the Golan Heights, demolishing homes and committing to doubling the number of Israeli settlers in the Golan Heights.

Israel is insisting on a demilitarised zone, that it controls, south of Damascus as part of its broader efforts to reshape the region so that US and Israeli domination is unchallengeable.

HTS's use of sectarianism to crush opposition and its dictatorial control of the state, while imposing sweeping austerity measures, must be opposed.

Genuine Syrian liberation and a free Palestine requires the return of the anti-sectarian and democratic revolutionary movement of 2011, which can both challenge HTS and the US and Israeli domination of the region.

Israel is exploiting sectarian divisions within Syria to further fragment the country

40 YEARS SINCE A HISTORIC DEFEAT HOW UNION LEADERS BLEW IT AT SEQEB

James Supple looks at the lessons from the historic union defeat at SEQEB in 1985, when Joh Bjelke-Petersen took on the unions and won

UNIONS TODAY face vicious laws, with massive fines imposed for unlawful strikes and effective picketing. Labor has imposed Administration on the CFMEU for its record of effective industrial action and history of defying the law.

The 1985 SEQEB dispute, when 1007 electricity linesmen were sacked by Queensland premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen, was a heroic struggle, fought from below not just against a conservative government but a state and federal union leadership unwilling to call the industrial action needed to win.

Their betrayal of the workers' willingness to fight was a key turning point in weakening union power.

When Bjelke-Petersen sacked the workers, he had already prepared the ground. Coal had been stockpiled at power stations and power station operators had been progressively shifted out of unions like the electricians' union, the ETU, into professional associations.

The ETU had been a thorn in the side of the Bjelke-Petersen government. Action by power workers had been key to a general strike that had forced Bjelke-Petersen to drop the use of the Essential Services Act against workers fighting for a 38-hour week in 1982.

Internationally all eyes were on the British miners' heroic struggle against the Thatcher government's pit closures, as conservative governments everywhere used state power to weaken unions. Now the struggle was in Queensland.

The sackings sparked a full-blown confrontation with the National Party government. Solidarity action from power station operators caused ten days of blackouts that saw 17,500 homes without power each night and cost business about \$1 billion.

Coal miners in central and north Queensland declared an indefinite strike, followed by building workers. Maritime workers banned oil sup-

plies, hundreds of railway electricians went out and unions imposed bans on phone repairs and transport to government departments.

Lift maintenance workers at parliament house stopped work, forcing the Premier to walk up many flights of stairs. Even the liquor supply to government ministers was cut off.

More than a million workers in Queensland were either on strike or stood down due to power cuts. Bjelke-Petersen admitted the dispute had "spread to the point where they can cripple the government".

Yet the strike ended in a disastrous defeat as union officials rushed to compromise.

Iron fist

Bjelke-Petersen ruled Queensland with an iron fist from 1968 until 1987. An electoral gerrymander helped keep Labor out of office.

In 1977 Bjelke-Petersen banned street marches, triggering a defiant campaign for the right to march that led to thousands of arrests, before he was forced to back down.

The unions had previously faced him down and won. Power workers in the ETU staged a 48-hour strike in 1980 and won reduced working hours.

In 1982, when the government reneged on delivering a 38-hour week for public sector workers, it triggered a general strike. After the normally timid Australian Workers Union held a public sector stopwork, Bjelke-Petersen declared war, imposing a state of emergency.

The unions responded with a 24-hour strike. Mass meetings in Townsville, Mackay and Ipswich voted to go out for 48 hours instead. The government escalated the dispute, suspending 3500 railway workers and moving to deregister 11 unions. Strike action spread as rank-and-file workers took the initiative across the state.

After a week Bjelke-Petersen

More than a million workers in Queensland were either on strike or stood down due to power cuts

capitulated, dropping the suspensions and de-registrations and ending the state of emergency.

But the strike ended without securing the 38-hour week. Bjelke-Petersen had survived—but the ruthless measures he was willing to take to break union power were clear.

SEQEB dispute

"The SEQEB dispute was about the use of contractors," replacing permanent jobs on standard wages and conditions, Dick Williams, former Secretary of the ETU in Queensland and an organiser at the time, recalled.

"A SEQEB document fell off the back of a truck and clearly stated that they were going to contract out all new line work." The government aimed to cut the permanent workforce by 10 per cent.

On 6 February 1985, the ETU called an indefinite strike. When 1000 electricity linesmen defied a return-to-work order, Bjelke-Petersen declared another state of emergency and sacked them, announcing individual \$1000 fines as well as the loss of all entitlements including superannuation. It was war.

The unions responded with power cuts and a wave of action that brought the government to the brink of defeat. But the Queensland Trades and Labor Council (TLC) told the power station operators to end the power cuts after the Premier supposedly promised to reinstate the linesmen.

The next day the government reneged. Worse, it demanded that workers reapply for their jobs and accept longer hours, brutal cuts to conditions and a no-strike clause.

But the union leaders refused to call workers back out. They had been spooked after Bjelke-Petersen began legal action against the power workers and the ETU for staging an illegal secondary boycott.

Instead they put their hopes in legal

action. Bjelke-Petersen ended that option by passing legislation to remove access to the court for SEQEB workers. But the fight was far from over.

The sacked workers held a mass meeting demanding the TLC call a 24-hour general strike. They stormed the TLC Secretary's media conference, accusing him of betrayal. Coal miners stayed out on strike for three weeks and railway electricians remained on strike.

The sacked SEQEB workers set up a rank-and-file strike committee and began picketing SEQEB depots, leading to at least 200 arrests, including Labor Party figures such as Senator George Georges.

But Bjelke-Petersen was out for blood. He imposed a series of extreme new anti-union laws making strikes and pickets across the power industry illegal, introducing \$1000 fines and the threat of dismissal for refusing to follow the Electricity Commissioner's directions. Deregistration of unions was made easier and secondary boycotts in solidarity with other workers became illegal.

However, the pressure for action pushed the ACTU into announcing a national blockade of Queensland in May. Freight deliveries were blocked for days at a time. But the ACTU gave Bjelke-Petersen a week's notice of the action, making it less effective. And it was never intended to lead to the all-out strike needed to win.

Instead the ACTU called off the blockade after Bob Hawke's federal Labor government agreed to allow the Arbitration Commission to consider shifting power workers onto a federal Award. It was a hopeless gesture, supposedly to get around Bjelke-Petersen's attacks on conditions in the industry.

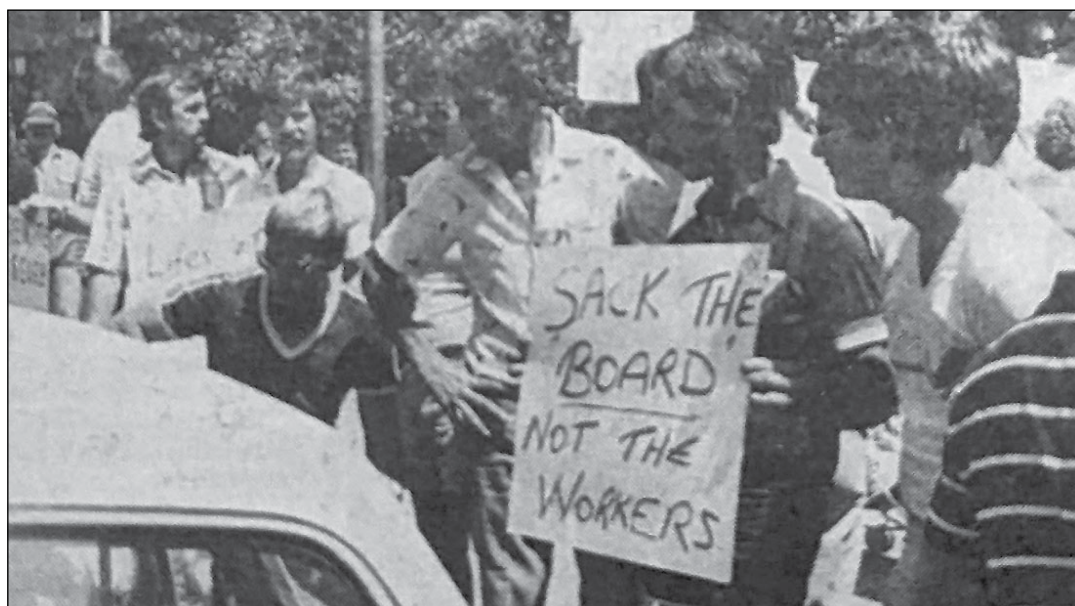
The sacked workers were totally sold out. Labor pathetically claimed, "There is absolutely nothing we could do ... The Arbitration Commission can't directly order reinstatement."

Even this wasn't the end. Pressure from the sacked workers and other unionists forced the TLC to call another mass stopwork meeting. On 20 August 260,000 workers across Queensland went on strike. But the union leadership had no intention of calling any further action.

The SEQEB workers battled on for two years—but never got their jobs back. Bjelke-Petersen bragged, "We have got the formula now to deal with the unions."

Union officials

The failure of union leaders in the



Above: Sacked electricians picketing the SEQEB headquarters during the dispute Photo: The Battler

TLC and ACTU to deliver the solidarity action that could have defeated Bjelke-Petersen left the sacked workers, and supporters, extremely bitter. Ray Dempsey the then-secretary of the TLC was openly condemned as a "sell-out".

Bernie Neville, one of the leading sacked SEQEB workers, told a protest outside the ACTU conference in Sydney on 9 September 1985, "The lights were off for ten days. We were close to victory. We were so close to a victory that would have meant the end of that bastard Petersen.

"But the TLC under the Secretary Ray Dempsey folded and turned on the lights. The decision to retreat and turn on the lights had the backing of every union official (left and right) in Brisbane ... Yet the truth is that when the lights were turned on, we the striking workers were betrayed and sold out."

Why did the union leaders leave the SEQEB workers to fight alone? Time and again union members showed they were willing to fight, with widespread solidarity strikes. Yet union officials continually called off action. They were desperate to avoid the all-out confrontation with Bjelke-Petersen that was the only way to win.

Union officials' role as professional negotiators between workers and bosses leads them to seek compromise. Just as we have seen with the legal challenge to the Administration of the CFMEU, the officials favour working within the law.

Officials' jobs and influence depend on the union's assets and its bureaucratic machine. Bjelke-Petersen's anti-union laws, which threatened large fines and union deregistration, made them draw back.

There were further factors at the time. A serious recession in 1982 had seen unemployment rise. It made workers less confident in their economic power.

This made union leaders even more willing to collaborate with government and the bosses. They had already agreed to prevent strike action and accept wage cuts under the Accords negotiated with the federal Labor government in 1983. Channeling Bjelke-Petersen, the Hawke Labor government ruthlessly smashed the Builders Labourers Federation in 1986 when they refused to go along with the Accord.

Going beyond the limitations of the officials requires rank-and-file workers organising independently. The SEQEB strike committee and the women's committee set up by the sacked SEQEB workers showed the way. But without a rank-and-file network right across the electricity industry with links to other unions they were unable to organise the necessary statewide strike action.

There are lessons here for the fight against Administration of the CFMEU. The law is a straitjacket to constraint working class struggle.

Workers' industrial power is the only way to win. Relying on full-time union officials working under the Administration, like the Victorian branch Executive Officer Zach Smith, is a dead end.

It was the strike committee and determination of the rank-and-file that kept the fight alive for two years. Forty years later, it is going to take similar organisation and determination to beat Labor and the bosses and win back control of the CFMEU.

IS AI ENABLING A NEW AGE OF MISOGYNY?

Laura Bates's new book *The New Age of Sexism* claims that violence against women is being 'coded into the fabric' of our future. But sexism has deeper roots than new AI technology argues **Sarah Bates**

LAURA BATES is scared. She's looked at the "glittering new world" of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and found it to be a particularly fertile breeding ground for sexism.

Her latest book, *The New Age of Sexism*, argues that harassment and violence against women are being "coded into the fabric" of our future.

In lots of ways, she's bang on the money.

AI chatbots spew out sexist lies, software is used to stop women getting jobs and a wave of new apps make it easier to harass women.

Bates is absolutely correct that the scale of scope of AI is vast. One often overlooked effect of that is how it is used as a tool to target women, particularly young women and teenagers.

For instance, she investigates how some apps can seamlessly impose a naked body onto a picture of a face. The implications are obvious—supposedly "nude" photos can be shared around within seconds.

"Deepfakes", digitally altered videos, are another example. "Deepfake pornography is a new form of abuse, but its underlying power dynamics are very, very old," writes Bates.

Bates shows how deepfakes are often presented as a future threat to democracy.

London mayor Sadiq Khan was a victim of a deepfake last year when he appeared to be on camera calling for a "one million man Palestinian march" instead of Armistice Day commemorations.

But that's not the reality for the vast majority of deepfakes already swirling around the internet.

Instead of men in suits making proclamations from a lectern, they are generally manufactured to put women in pornographic material.

"Research suggests that 96 per cent of deepfakes are non-consensual pornography, of which 99 per cent

feature women.

"Over the past few years, deep-fakes have proliferated exponentially, with the number of such videos online doubling every six months," writes Bates.

"Just one of the most popular websites gets around 17 million different visitors a month."

As Bates shows so well, deep-fakes aren't some abstract threat, but a tool already readily employed to abuse, degrade and humiliate women.

The "metaverse" is another example. This is a virtual reality world where users can build 3D rooms where they can interact.

Women do come under real harm in these spaces—experiencing verbal and sometimes physical abuse. Because, to a degree, it feels real to the users.

But as powerful as Bates's descriptions are, there are limits to her wider analysis.

For instance, a central argument of Bates's work is that the more lifelike these various technologies

AI chatbots spew out sexist lies and a wave of new apps make it easier to harass women

become, the more emboldened men will be to unleash violence on real women.

One example she uses are lifelike, plastic sex dolls in a Berlin "cyber-brothel".

Here, men pay an hourly rate to wear a virtual reality headset and have sex with a doll.

Actual and virtual reality combine to make it a more convincing erotic experience for the user.

Bates asks, "What does it mean to manufacture an illusion of consent in a situation where it doesn't really exist?"

"And what will the knock-on effects be for the real-life women who will later encounter these men who have been interacting with robo-dolls?"

"These robots are only going to be more and more realistic, closer and closer to being seen as human by their users and abusers."

Bates herself talks about feeling a degree of empathy with the sex doll she visits. "When I leave, I fight an absurd sense of guilt for abandoning her there... I realise how hard it is for me to remember that she is a doll and how easy it must be for the men fucking her to imagine she is not."

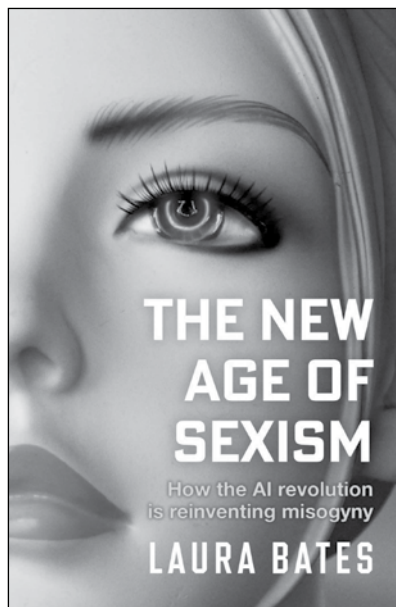
At one point she describes how people are "raping and abusing" the dolls.

But sex dolls are not people and cannot be raped. It can appear a minor linguistic point, but it's important to be concrete about the differences between actual harm and the potential for violence.

And it's worth thinking about the political framework that produces such an analysis.

Where does sexism come from?

In the 1970s and 1980s, some feminists who campaigned against pornography used the slogan, "Porn is the theory, rape is the practice," to outline their position.



The New Age of Sexism: How the AI Revolution is Reinventing Misogyny, By Laura Bates, Simon & Schuster \$36.99

They meant that pornography normalised sexual violence so much, it drove men to commit acts of violence.

But a sexist culture—with new opportunities to abuse—does not create violence against women and girls.

As disgusting as the details are, men have not been waiting for virtual reality headsets, vibrating sex dolls or reactive chatbots to abuse women.

These developments in AI, like sexist advertising, stiletto heels and Barbie dolls before them, are cultural constructs of a sexist world.

They're not progressive. They're not a challenge to a society that harms and oppresses women—they're a symptom rather than a cause of sexism.

Men abuse women because they live repressed, alienated lives in a world that enables and sometimes encourages violence against women.

Most people live unfulfilled lives where their basic needs often go unmet.

They may have enough food on the table. But are they getting access to nature, deep social connections, time to rest, opportunities to create and so on?

These unmet needs are also shaped by women's oppression, and in particular, the capacity for violence, control and abuse.

Instead of people being given opportunities to meet their own needs—including sexual—in healthy, non-violent ways, they have commodities marketed towards them that further distort their relationship with sex.

It's no wonder then, that "we are building a whole new world, but the inequalities and oppression of our current society are being baked into its very foundations", as Bates argues.

But, here's the thing. We can only understand the role of AI with a fuller appreciation of the society in which it's built.

In the last century we have seen the advent of erotic movies, video technology at home, Playboy, internet pornography and sex phone lines.

Violence against women and girls predates any of these developments. And it continues to be experienced overwhelmingly within the institution of the family.

Sexism is a long-running feature of class society because of the vital role it plays in justifying women's labour within the family.

The secrecy and the hierarchy of



Above: AI and other new technologies are being used to target women and reinforce sexism

the capitalist family is why this continues today.

The material conditions of society shape our relationships, including when that world is built from pixels and code rather than bricks and mortar. This is why online spaces are so riddled with every type of oppression.

For instance, "AI girlfriends"—essentially chatbots with an avatar—are wildly popular. One app, Replika, has been downloaded 50 million times. Another app Xiaoice, has 660 million users worldwide.

But for all the millions of downloads, they have one thing in common—they are all women. Bates writes, "There is no AI boyfriend.

"There is almost no demand from women to degrade and abuse men in the same way they routinely degrade and abuse us, and therefore no profit for the tech companies that provide these apps in creating such an option."

Replika's free version has some 25 million active users—and this version of that app doesn't have an erotic element.

In other words, tens of millions of people use this app to seek company, connection and friendship.

Solutions

Bates argues strongly for stricter moderation to put responsibility on the shoulders of the tech companies.

"This would require concerted efforts, technological infrastructure and innovative execution, with equality and safety at the centre of all virtual planned and creation.

"That's not impossible. But none of it is happening, because it simply isn't a major priority for tech companies.

"We have a fleeting moment of opportunity to define whether they will create a world that is full of new possibilities," she writes.

A world that is "accessible to everybody, or a world in which existing inequalities are inextricably embedded—a dazzling future that drags women and minoritised groups backwards."

The issue isn't that we'll "miss the moment"—the issue is that building this world sits directly opposed to the interests of tech billionaires.

Metaverse founder Mark Zuckerberg and others are not necessarily driven by personal malevolence, as odious as they may be.

Instead, their virtual reality world is shaped entirely by capitalism's competition for profit.

Asking Zuckerberg to argue for genuine scrutiny is like asking an oil baron to call for a fossil fuel ban.

Any attempt to challenge this "new world" would mean a direct confrontation with the capitalist forces building it.

Socialist Worker UK

FRONTIER VIOLENCE IN AUSTRALIA INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE AND SETTLER-COLONIALISM

Paddy Gibson spoke to **Stephen Gapps** about his research on Indigenous resistance and his new book *Uprising* at this year's Keep Left event

Paddy: Stephen is one of many historians who are studying the brutal process of genocidal violence that accompanied colonisation. We know from recent research that in Queensland alone we can now account for more than 60,000 Aboriginal people killed in frontier violence.

Australian capitalism was built on the violence that was unleashed on Aboriginal people.

The frontier was a pastoral, capitalist enterprise. The model for taking most of the continent was killing any Aboriginal people who resisted the flooding of their lands with stock to establish massive pastoral capitalist empires.

The rulers of Australia and the pastoral capitalists overseeing this knew what they were doing.

In 1849 the *Sydney Morning* quoted colonial politicians in NSW who said that “the Blacks interfere with the profits of grazing and this is a sufficient reason why they should be shot down like kangaroos, or be dosed with arsenic like native dogs”.

It's very often believed that this violence was inflicted on a passive Indigenous population. Nothing could be further from the truth. This was counter-insurgency warfare meted out against people that were resisting with everything that they had.

It is the scale, the coordination of Aboriginal people in that process of resistance, and the sophistication of that resistance that shines through in Stephen's work.

Stephen has written three books. *The Sydney Wars* covers the wars on the Sydney basin, *Gudjarra*, the Wiradjuri war of resistance in the 1820s as the colonists established themselves beyond the Blue Mountains in Bathurst and surrounds.

The final book, *Uprising*, looks at a huge area of the colonial frontier stretching from northern Victoria all the way through to southern

Queensland, where there was fierce military confrontation through 1838 to 1844.

Can you discuss the militarised nature of the initial colonisation in Sydney and how Aboriginal resistance made this necessary?

Stephen: The early colony in Sydney was a military-led process. So the first building in Sydney was a redoubt, or fort. The first building in Parramatta was a redoubt.

In most country towns between Sydney and Melbourne along the old Hume Highway, the first buildings were military outposts, which were then transformed into police stations. That whole landscape of NSW is underpinned by military origins.

There's been hundreds of books written on early colonial Sydney and most of them have avoided the resistance warfare.

Up until 1789 initial curiosity and friendly relationships were developing but those quickly turned into conflict as it was obvious that the colonists were going to stay.

The military was very over-stretched initially. The British military forces in Australia were always thin on the ground. Back in Britain they had local militias. So they replicated that in the colony as needed.

The Parramatta militia and volunteers were set up in 1804, in response to the Castle Hill convict rebellion. There were others set up in 1816, in response to the conflict in the south of Sydney that ends in massacre.

This changes once pastoralism explodes across the Blue Mountains so that squatters and stockmen are informal militias.

A lot of the violence is disconnected from the state. It happens where a squatter teams up with another squatter, grabs a few stockmen around different stations with muskets and horses.

.....
‘I came across references calling it a general uprising right along the frontier almost from Melbourne to Brisbane’
.....

The only way they can get to Aboriginal warriors, who know the terrain, is to look for fire smoke at night, wait a few hundred metres away until dawn, and attack. The state turns a blind eye to it, because by the 1830s, wool is critical to the expansion of the colony.

In 1838, there is finally a trial and seven men are hanged for killing Aboriginal people. But it continues on afterwards, in silence.

Paddy: The coordination involved in Aboriginal resistance is one of the defining aspects of your research. You confront the myth that resistance was simply opportunistic or haphazard, rather than planned.

One of the most memorable examples for me was in your book about the First Wiradjuri War when you talk about the time in 1822 when a decision was obviously taken to wage war against the whites in the area.

At that moment, every single Wiradjuri person who'd been cooperating with the pastoral industry, working on a station or acting as a guide, left. Could talk about the scale of the coordination that you just discovered?

Stephen: Straight after they leave the settlements, [Aboriginal warrior] Windradyne leads a series of attacks. There's attacks all around the central west, from Oberon to Blayney to Mudgee. That ends only after martial law and Windradyne coming to Parramatta to sue for peace.

When I looked at the Bathurst War, the First Wiradjuri War, I found there was a second Wiradjuri War down near the Murrumbidgee River. That was just one of a series of conflicts between [the area] around Melbourne, where the Kulin nation are, right up to the Darling Downs near Toowoomba.

I came across references by contemporaries calling it a general

uprising right along the frontier almost from Melbourne to Brisbane.

How coordinated was it between Wiradjuri, Gomeroi, Jagera in Queensland? We don't know. It seemed like they were all coordinating, but European observers didn't know.

Military historians have claimed Aboriginal groups couldn't communicate across hundreds of kilometres. But we now know there were communication networks between different nations.

We know trade networks extended right across Australia.

Stories of resistance would have been relayed over those distances while those events were going on. We know of a few examples where Aboriginal people in Queensland were performing stories about a victory that they had over whites in a battle.

The stories of the destruction of land, the incursions of sheep and cattle, the terrible effects on Aboriginal women, the loss of food supplies must have been told and alliances formed.

I've come across several examples of groups putting aside traditional enmity and uniting to fight the colonisers.

Paddy: I think another important feature of your work is the way you demonstrate the commercial interests that lay behind pastoral expansion, and how these influenced colonial governance.

In *Gudyarra* you talk about a decisive moment in the war with the Wiradjuri in 1824, when the stockholders of NSW convened in Sydney and petitioned the Governor for decisive action after two years of warfare.

Can you discuss some of the developments in pastoral capitalism. What was going on with the regulation of land and the development of the pastoral economy?

Stephen: In the mid-1830s, you had settled districts outlined. Beyond that, you had to have a licence to travel. But there were so many cattle and sheep that squatters went beyond the settled districts to find good grazing grass. They were continually moving on to find new grasslands and waterways.

To do that, you need a serious amount of money. By 1836, wool hit the highest price ever because of various factors around the world. Wool is the perfect commodity for Australia [to export], where it can take six months to get it to England.

You could make a ton of money



Above: Stephen Gapps and Paddy Gibson at Solidarity's Keep Left 2025 event

within a year or two. That drove a huge immigration push for people with money to come out to the colonies to make fortunes.

The authorities needed to control it somehow, so they start to issue pasturing licences. Then these licensees become leaseholders of a few thousand acres with the view that hopefully in a few years time, they'd get freehold title to the property—all driven by the relatively cheap investment in wool.

Paddy: It's striking that many of the Aboriginal combatants in the resistance were people who had extensive experience in colonial society, who'd worked on stations and grown up with whites their whole lives.

The Sydney Wars were still raging in the 1810s, decades after colonisation began, the Wiradjuri, the Ambëyan, the Gomeroi, were all still fighting 20 years after initial engagement with the colonists. What impact did that have on the conflict?

Stephen: Previous historians tend to say Aboriginal people are only using traditional warfare tactics against firearms and horses.

In fact, Aboriginal people had highly adaptive societies. They took on new technologies really quickly. This happens with colonial resistance warfare as well. One example around Sydney is that glass is being used to make spearheads very quickly.

Firearms are taken up in the 1830s extensively by Aboriginal people. Often they were first given to them to go hunting and bring back lyrebird feathers to sell in London.

This was occurring particularly in Melbourne.

They changed their tactics as well. At the battle of Meewah, One Tree Hill in Brisbane, drays were going with wool from the Darling Downs into Brisbane and being shipped out down one windy road. Multuggerah's warriors build a palisade and then pushed logs across the road to stop the drays. The drays were fenced in and they speared them all.

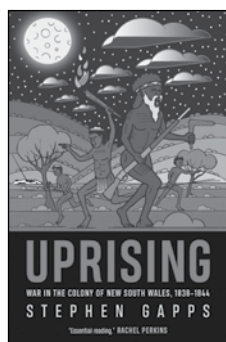
So they're using techniques that they used to build houses and to corral animals as a military tactic.

Paddy: There were also some examples of cooperation of non-Indigenous people in the Aboriginal resistance. This was a real source of anxiety for the colonial authorities. Can you speak about some examples?

Stephen: This was seen as a real threat because, in the colonial authorities' minds, white people working with Aboriginal warriors would teach them how to do things.

In the 1790s escaped convicts go and fight with Pemulwuy's warriors. The response is immediate. There were Irish convicts who had been involved in other rebellions. [The thought is that] if they team up with these warriors the authorities would be in serious trouble. This happens again and again.

There's a huge fear of bushrangers teaming up with warriors. They institute the Vagrancy Act in 1836 to say you can't live in Aboriginal lands outside the settled districts. But there's many examples of ex-convicts who go and live with Aboriginal people and resurface later on.



Uprising: War in the colony of New South Wales, 1838-1844, by Stephen Gapps, NewSouth Publishing, \$36.99

RECOGNISING PALESTINE WON'T STOP ISRAELI TERROR



By James Supple

ISRAEL'S STARVATION of Gaza has reached a new horrific stage.

Israeli government agency Cogat completely controls aid shipments into Gaza. Its own data shows that between March and June, it allowed in less than a quarter of the minimum amount needed to feed Gaza's population.

The starvation has been a deliberate, genocidal policy. Alongside this Israel has killed almost 1500 Palestinians waiting for aid at the death trap distribution sites run by the "Gaza Humanitarian Foundation" since the end of May. And it continues to bomb Gaza, often killing 100 people in a day.

The level of outrage and demands for action globally have become impossible to ignore.

In response the UK, France and Canada have all announced plans to recognise a Palestinian state in September at a meeting of the UN General Assembly.

These are among the complicit Western governments that continue to arm Israel. Instead of imposing the sanctions that could force Israel to end its genocide, they see recognising a Palestinian state as an easier gesture.

Anthony Albanese, however, will not even do this. He says he supports the idea but won't act until conditions are met and the announcement is able to work as "a positive step towards the realisation of the two-state goal". This is despite it being Labor party policy since 2018.

Recognising a Palestinian state is, however, part of the push for a two

Above: Global support for Palestine has grown enormously Photo: Mohammed Abubakr/ Pexels

state solution. For decades Western leaders have presented this as the way to deliver peace. Anthony Albanese is still arguing this.

But it has always been a fraud. The promise of a Palestinian state has been used to demand concession after concession from the Palestinians while Israel has continued their dispossession.

This continues to be true. French President Emmanuel Macron says for a Palestinian state to happen Hamas must disarm to create a demilitarised state without armed forces. Israel, however, is not expected to disarm.

Labor MP Ed Husic, who is calling for immediate recognition, describes it as "the fastest way to delegitimise and see the end of Hamas".

This is because they prefer to see control of the Palestinian Territories in the hands of the Palestinian Authority (PA), which collaborates with Israel to repress any resistance to the Israeli occupation in the West Bank.

As a result it has little credibility left among Palestinians. Just 19 per cent of Palestinians in the West Bank approve of the PA's performance, according to a May poll for the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research.

Israeli apartheid state

Israel runs an apartheid regime in the West Bank where Palestinians live under military occupation and are denied basic legal rights, as it continues to drive them from their homes and to steal more land.

Since the genocide in Gaza began in October 2023, violent Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians have escalated,

vandalising and setting fire to businesses, homes and fields. Almost 1000 Palestinians have been murdered in near daily attacks.

There are 750,000 Israelis living in settlements all across the supposed area of a Palestinian state in the West Bank that Israel is continuing to expand.

This means a Palestinian state would not deliver peace but only continued Israeli domination and oppression.

It would do nothing to challenge Israel's position as a watchdog state for Western imperialist interests in the Middle East, armed to the teeth by the US and its allies like Australia.

Israel will continue its murderous campaign against the Palestinians.

The possibility of any Palestinian state alongside Israel is virtually zero.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is stridently opposed to it. Israel's parliament, the Knesset, overwhelmingly voted a year ago to oppose any Palestinian state, declaring it "an existential danger". All the major parties supported this and there were only a handful of votes against.

And a Palestinian state is also no longer an aim of US policy, its Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee said in June.

Support for a separate Palestinian state is one sign of Israel's growing pariah status globally. But justice for Palestine requires an end to the West's arming of Israel and serious sanctions.

It means an end to the apartheid state of Israel. It is a single democratic secular state from the river to the sea, with equal rights for all, that holds the hope to free Palestine.

Recognising a Palestinian state is part of the push for a two state solution

Solidarity