

Solidarity

Issue No. 208 / June 2026

\$3/\$5

DON'T BLAME MIGRANTS FOR LABOR'S FAILURES



NO TO ONE NATION NO TO RACISM

PALESTINE

Repression and the
Royal Commission

AI

Capitalism, jobs and
the AI arms race

CUBA

US imperialism and
Trump's threats

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
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Melbourne

Meeting 6.30pm every Thursday
Kathleen Syme library and community
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Things they say

He'll do whatever I want him to do. He's a very good man. He will do whatever I want him to do. He's a great guy.

Donald Trump when asked whether Netanyahu will object to US continuing the ceasefire with Iran

I call the shots. I call all the shots. He [Netanyahu] doesn't call the shots.

Trump after Netanyahu defied him by bombing Beirut

They would like to control it, nobody's going to control it. It's international waters, and Oman will behave just like everybody else, or we'll have to blow them up. They understand that. They'll be fine.

Donald Trump when asked about Oman's role in controlling the Strait of Hormuz

It is real that people are frustrated. They don't think that the economy is working for them, and they don't want to work for the economy.

Anthony Albanese has worked out why people are turning to One Nation

I'm just so over rich people who've made money complaining about tax rates. I call complete bullshit that founders or employees are saying they are going to move overseas because of tax.

Daniel Petre, co-founder of venture capital firm Airtree Ventures, on the response to the Labor's tax increases in the budget

There is zero possibility of this coming unstuck.

Kevin Rudd, outgoing Australian ambassador to the US, talking about AUKUS. Famous last words?

CONTENTS

ISSUE 208 JUNE 2026



No to One Nation's racism

5 Labor's failure on cost of living feeds rage

7 One Nation surge result of mainstream's failures and racism



14 Capitalism and the AI arms race



16 Trump, US imperialism and Cuba

Palestine

6 Royal Commission farce targets Palestine protests

8 Sydney Uni backs down on threats over Palestine poster

9 Flotilla activist Zack Schofield speaks out

20 Protesters to converge on Pine Gap



Unions

10 Administration in chaos but attacks on CFMEU keep coming

11 Victorian teachers campaign for a No vote on pay deal



International

12 Japan steps up military spending to back US

13 Trump still desperate for a deal with Iran

Features

18 Women workers' strikes during the Second World War

Private jet flights for the rich surge

THE TASTE for private jet flights among the rich is soaring, plane share company Airly has told the *Financial Review*. The trend began during the pandemic, the company's Skye Pritchard explained and, "Once you get a taste for it, it'd be pretty hard to go back."

The number of private flights nationwide this year is well above that of 2019 and also up on last year.

One client, Tyler, said he buys a block of ten flights each month and uses them to help run his business, as well as for holidays. The paper found him at Essendon Airport in Melbourne, about to jet off with his girlfriend and their two dogs to Noosa for the weekend.

Umar Flynn, a 41-year-old accountant, lives on the Gold Coast and uses private jets to move between Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney for work, as well as to holidays in the Whitsundays.

"I spend about \$100,000 a year and that would probably only cost me \$15,000 if I flew commercial," he said.

Police violence and cover-ups exposed

FOUR CORNERS has exposed an ongoing culture of violent police abuse and cover up in NSW.

Complaints about police assaults and excessive force have jumped nearly 70 per cent in the past decade to 5248 in a year. Yet few officers suffer serious consequences, either cleared by internal investigations or allowed to move to work at another station.

In one shocking case, police arrested Brad Kellson in Blacktown, apparently thinking he had pushed a woman despite lacking any evidence. He was then bashed at the police station, fracturing multiple ribs and having to spend four days in intensive care.

The cops then cooked up a story to charge Brad with assault—only to be caught out by a magistrate when the case went to court because they had simply copied each others' statements on the incident, even reproducing the same spelling mistake. Yet an investigation cleared the officers involved of misconduct.

Climate fail for Safeguard Mechanism's first two years



THE LABOR government's flagship climate policy, the Safeguard Mechanism, has failed to deliver real cuts to emissions in its first two years.

In its second year of operation, overall emissions fell just 0.4 per cent once the impact of facilities entering and exiting the scheme is removed, analysis by Naru Research's Tim Baxter shows.

Worse, much of that was due to what the Australia Institute's Ketan Joshi calls "crisis events"—a fire that shut the Grosvenor coal mine for a year, nickel operations suspended due to global prices and a gas plant that was shut for maintenance.

The scheme is supposed to reduce emissions at the country's 200 biggest industrial polluters, including coal mines and manufacturers, which together account for 30 per cent of Australia's emissions. But in the 2024-25 year, nearly two-thirds of facilities in the scheme failed to cut their emissions as required. Instead they were allowed to simply buy offsets to make up the difference.

Woodside's North West Shelf gas operations used offsets to meet 100 per cent of its emissions requirements. In total companies bought offsets to avoid cutting 10.1 million tonnes of emissions.

The government estimates offsets will be the main way companies meet their emissions obligations until 2035. And most of these are dodgy offsets that face big questions about whether they actually reduce emissions.

The problems with the scheme are only going to get worse, with about 50 new coal and gas projects planned that will push up emissions over the next decade.

Explosives for Israel's bombs made here

TWO AUSTRALIAN factories are producing explosive material for Israeli bombs, according to an investigation by *The Shot*. The munitions factories in Mulwala in NSW and Benalla in Victoria are run by arms company Thales.

A source in the weapons industry told *The Shot*, "The Australian government knows where the munitions end up. They end up in Israel."

Raw explosive material from the plants is shipped either to Singapore, where it is bought on behalf of the Israeli government, or to the US for assembly into bombs that are sent there. The last few years have seen a big expansion in production at the factories, the report said.

Allowing this is another example of the Australian government's complicity in the Gaza genocide.

Perks of public service bosses' and VCs' pay

IN JULY 2025, total pay for Public Service (PS) Secretaries, the top job in each public service department, ranged from \$828,550 for the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs to \$1,035,690 for the Secretary of Prime Minister & Cabinet, with other secretaries paid between \$880,340 and \$983,910.

The top-level chiefs also get allowances that are "over and above" what the average public servants get. They include accommodation support, reunion travel, settling-in allowance, settling-out allowance, loss of office, salary maintenance, telephone costs and both airlines' lounge membership.

In 2025, Senator Jacqui Lambie introduced legislation to cap their pay, as well as that of university vice-chancellors (VCs), at \$430,000. Labor and the Coalition voted down Lambie's bill.

This means that Australian university Vice-Chancellors remain some of the highest paid in the world. Former Labor MP Bill Shorten pockets \$860,000 a year in his new role as VC of the University of Canberra, more than double his base salary as a Cabinet minister of \$403,063.

It's still less than his predecessor, Professor Paddy Nixon, whose package in 2023 was \$1.8 million.

The Queensland University of Technology's VC, Margaret Sheil, was paid \$1.2 million in 2023.

The University of Sydney's VC, Mark Scott, is on \$1.2 million.

Disgraced Australian National University VC Genevieve Bell's salary was \$1.1 million before she was forced to resign.

She also had an undeclared part-time vice-presidency position with Intel Corp that continued for 10 months after she became VC.

Billionaire wealth up again

THE 200 richest Australians collectively hold \$707 billion, according to the 2026 *Financial Review* Rich List, with 31 per cent of this controlled by the country's ten richest families. Gina Rinehart remains the country richest person with \$39 billion. Billionaire wealth continues to explode, with the collective riches of those on the list growing by 350 per cent from just under \$200 billion in the last decade.

EDITORIAL

Labor's budget failure on cost of living feeds workers' rage

LABOR'S BUDGET has been met with outrage from the top end of town.

Predictably, the rich are up in arms about the modest increase in tax they will have to pay due to changes to capital gains tax (the tax on profits from investments) and changes to family trusts.

Tech startups are complaining they will pay too much tax if their company makes millions and they decide to sell. Wealthy investors and the Liberal Party have tried to fan fears that small businesses will be hit as well.

But it's not sympathy for aspiring tech billionaires or the rich that means the budget has been badly received. Labor's budget has done nothing to provide the urgent cost-of-living relief that's needed.

Inflation is heading back up to 5 per cent pushing up prices; interest rate increases are squeezing anyone with a home loan.

Anthony Albanese says his housing measures were a hard decision that will "make a difference". They won't.

Rents are increasing. Since the beginning of the pandemic, national rental prices are up 55 per cent compared to wage growth of 25 per cent.

Labor is unwilling to upset the establishment and is determined to keep the rich on side. So it will allow investors to continue to negatively gear any property they already held before the budget.

The changes will do nothing to make housing more affordable and bring prices down. Sydney is now the second most expensive city for housing in the world, with Melbourne ninth worst.

Labor's failures are feeding support for One Nation. Opinion polls are now showing One Nation overtaking Labor as the most popular party. Its racist policies are being fuelled by Labor and the Liberals.

One Nation's racism scapegoats migrants for the housing crisis by banning non-residents from owning homes. But Labor has already caved into racism by banning non-residents from buying existing properties.

Under Angus Taylor the Liberals are trying to out-do One Nation, calling for a ban on all welfare payments, including access to the NDIS, for any non-citizen.

This would exclude about 1.2 million permanent residents, some who have lived here for decades.

It's not migrants or non-residents



buying up multiple properties, it's wealthy domestic investors.

For decades they have been allowed to rake in wealth through governments subsidising their property investments via negative gearing and capital gains tax handouts. But Labor won't tax the rich to get these billions back.

To effectively fight One Nation's racism, we have to fight the racism of Labor and the Liberals.

And we have to fight the cost-of-living crisis by fighting Labor's cuts.

Labor's budget also failed to extend the funding for pay rises for childcare workers, who face pay cuts of up to 15 per cent when it runs out in November.

Childcare workers are set to walk out of work on 15 July to oppose Labor's wage cut. Every union should support their action.

With inflation running at 5 per cent, the Fair Work Commission's minimum wage 4.75 per cent increase is another real wage cut.

Rank-and-file teachers in Victoria are pushing to vote No to a wage-cutting deal that would see them fall further behind, having suffered below-inflation pay rises since 2020.

Nurses in SA are staging rolling strikes for higher pay. Teachers in the ACT are striking on 11 June. This is how we can fight the cost of living crisis.

Welfare not warfare

Labor is pouring billions into military spending. That money could be used to fund wages rises, housing, NDIS

Above: Investors have been outbidding home owners at auctions for years due to government tax concessions
Photo: Wikimedia Commons

and welfare. Laughably, Defence Minister Richard Marles has tried to pretend that buying second-hand nuclear submarines from the US is a cost saving. But the \$368 billion price tag hasn't changed!

The AUKUS deal should be scrapped. But Labor is tied to US imperialism.

It said an Australian spy plane, military personnel and air defence missiles sent to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in March would simply help defend it against Iranian missiles and drones.

But the UAE launched its own major attack on Iran in April, the *Wall Street Journal* has revealed. Albanese claims Australia is not involved in offensive action against Iran. But if Australia is gathering surveillance for the UAE, it is very likely that it has been used to attack Iran.

Albanese is complicit in Israel and the US's wars in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran.

The convergence on Pine Gap in July is a chance to target the joint military base that links Australia with US imperialism and the genocide in Gaza, and demand that Australia cuts ties with Israel.

Labor is running the capitalist system that is feeding militarism, racism and the rise of One Nation. The struggles over the next period will be crucial.

We need more socialists to help build the fights for real wage increases, to oppose Labor's racism and militarism—and to fight against the whole system of war and profit.

.....
Labor's changes will do nothing to make housing more affordable and bring prices down

Biased Royal Commission farce targets support for Palestine

By David Glanz

THE ROYAL Commission on Anti-semitism and Social Cohesion is turning into a show trial with the Palestine solidarity movement in the dock.

Called in the wake of the tragic, antisemitic attack on a Jewish event on Bondi beach last December, the commission was given the brief to investigate “the nature and prevalence of antisemitism in institutions and society, and (examine) its key drivers in Australia”.

But the approach has been biased from the start, with the commission accepting the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which categorises challenges to Israeli apartheid and genocide as racist.

As a result, witnesses have been free to argue that to attack Israel is to attack all Jews, with little or no pushback from the lawyers assisting the commission.

No one was called to make the argument that the rapid rise of the pro-Palestine movement has been a result of revulsion against a genocide, not hatred of Jews.

As the progressive Jewish Council of Australia states, “Definitions of antisemitism that conflate anti-Zionism with antisemitism are harmful and counterproductive.

“This conflation diverts institutional attention from real antisemitism, including the threat of the far right, while legitimising the silencing of Palestinians and their advocates.”

Frequent focus

The first block of hearings in Sydney heard from many Australian Jews—but not those Jews who stand with Palestine and against Zionism.

The Melbourne-based, anti-Zionist Loud Jew Collective was barred from participation. Dozens of anti-Zionist Jews made submissions but none was called to provide evidence.

Despite the frequent focus on the Palestine solidarity movement, there was also no space made to hear from the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN).

Instead the commission heard from Jewish witnesses who made clear their support for Israel while heaping slurs on Palestine activists, often voicing irrational fears that went without challenge.

One witness said he worried he might be killed at Mardi Gras earlier this year given pro-Palestine protests



Above: The Royal Commission has refused to hear from Anti-Zionist Jews and those critical of Israel, like the Loud Jew Collective in Melbourne
Photo: Loud Jew Collective

by Pride in Protest and the Greens—two organisations deeply committed to opposing racism.

A woman talked about going to see the Opera House lit up in Israeli colours and then having a “dark and ominous sort of feeling”. She added that she feared pro-Palestine protesters because they were “very loud and boisterous”.

Another witness said, “When these slogans are said, whether it’s ‘Free Palestine’, whether it’s ‘Globalise the intifada’, ‘From the River to the Sea’, we don’t see political statements. We see blatant antisemitic statements.”

As University of Sydney academic Nick Riemer put it, “Witness after witness identified calls for a free Palestine, the Palestinian flag, posters, badges, the keffiyeh, protests and their ‘regalia’, Palestine campaign information booths or cake stalls, or Arabic words on T-shirts, as antisemitic.”

Vile emails

The tragedy is that wrongly blaming the Palestine movement for antisemitism trivialises the very real hate that many Jews face.

Take for example, the vile emails reported by the Melbourne Holocaust Museum. Messages included “Hitler was right, and millions of people would be living in peace if it wasn’t for your stupid STUPID ... religion” and “You are rodents. Enjoy your last days”.

The Albanese government is happy to focus on antisemitism, pouring resources into the royal commission and Jewish community safety programs, as this can be used to attack

the Palestine movement.

But the focus on smearing supporters of Palestine has helped fuel Islamophobia, encouraging the idea that Arabic slogans are suspicious and that Muslims are hateful and violent.

APAN issued a report on anti-Palestinian racism in April that noted, “Between 30 November 2025 and 28 February 2026, 264 incidents were reported.” There has been no call by the ALP for an urgent investigation into these hate crimes.

Labor’s strategy is no way to fight racism. We need to oppose antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism against migrants and Indigenous people all together.

The Labor government’s commitment to Israel as the watchdog of Western imperialist interests in the Middle East means that it accepts the Zionist position by default.

There is a real danger that the royal commission will recommend further attacks on the Palestine movement, that has already been hammered by repressive laws in Queensland and NSW.

Jillian Segal, the passionately pro-Israeli activist chosen by Albanese as his Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism, is already advocating a crackdown on Palestine solidarity in publicly-funded organisations such as theatres, universities and museums.

Supporters of Palestinian liberation need to build resistance to the wave of official repression. Recent victories, like defying the ban on marches in Sydney and defeating the University of Sydney’s threat to discipline student activists, show it can be done.

Witnesses have been free to argue that to attack Israel is to attack all Jews, with little or no pushback from the commission

One Nation surge result of the system's racism and failures

By Sophie Cotton

ONE NATION is now polling at more than 25 per cent, having won 22 per cent in the South Australia election and 39 per cent in the Farrer by-election, which delivered One Nation its first ever federal lower house victory.

These results cannot be put down to the ideological export of Trumpism, nor the leadership of Hanson's chief-of-staff James Ashby. One Nation's rise is evidence of a sick system, beset by economic malaise and resurgent racism.

Hanson openly champions the interests of small business and has a staunch record of opposing working class demands (see box). But her support base is wider.

Hanson is winning over a section of working class voters. Pollster Kos Samaras points to key factors linked to One Nation support: work in blue-collar industries, TAFE qualifications, being over the age of 55 and living in regional or some outer-suburban belts.

How is an anti-working class party winning such a base of support?

The crisis of the Liberal-National Coalition following last year's election defeat has created an opening on the right. Particularly in the regions, former Coalition voters are flocking to One Nation. The Liberals have legitimated this by preferencing and supporting One Nation.

But just as important are Labor's failures.

There are two principal factors leading to Hanson's rise.

The first is the economic misery doled out by the system. Decades of stagnant wage growth have been followed by a collapse in real wages since the COVID pandemic. High inflation is hitting workers the hardest, while home ownership has been driven out of reach for most workers.

Labor's role is summarised by their budget, tinkering with tax handouts to the wealthy but doing nothing about the cost-of-living crisis other than a promise for a \$250 payment in the second half of 2028. Of course, workers are rejecting Labor's stale promises.

The second factor is the way immigrants have been scapegoated for economic concerns over housing. One Nation is a racist party that has demanded cuts to immigration for decades.

Labor and the Coalition have fuelled this through matching each



Above: One Nation supporters at a March for Australia rally in Sydney last year Photo: Richard Milnes/Alamy Live News

other with a racist race to the bottom on refugee policy and immigration. As Malcolm Turnbull said earlier this year, "If you follow [Hanson] down that rabbit hole, as they have done, and if you try to outdo Pauline Hanson... [voters] will find her more attractive."

Anthony Albanese and NSW Premier Chris Minns have also paved Hanson's road with their attacks on the Palestine movement, which have encouraged resurgent Islamophobia.

Building an alternative

These gains for Hanson have quickened every anti-racist's pulse. But her rise is not as inexorable as the fawning coverage by the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sky News* suggests.

Just a year ago, voters rejected Dutton's Trump-style campaign in the 2025 election.

One Nation party membership has reportedly now surpassed that of Labor and the Liberals, with more than 60,000 members. But there are 1.6 million trade union members in Australia.

If these workers could be won to a strategy of fighting Labor, rather than the present union officials' focus on

applauding Labor's mediocre offerings, Hanson would be less of a threat.

Hope and confidence, living struggles for better wages, public housing and secure jobs, are what can stem the rise of the right. Every working class struggle is a blow to the politics of hopelessness that Hanson champions. But it's not enough to simply point out that One Nation continually attacks workers and sides with the Liberal Party. The racism and reactionary ideas that they promote also need to be challenged.

Social movements also have a critical role to play. Struggles against sexism and homophobia can undercut her reactionary politics on abortion rights and trans rights.

But most important is the struggles against imperialism and racism. The movement for Palestine needs to take on the Islamophobia and anti-migrant racism used against it.

And every racist lie that migrants are to blame for housing or inflation needs to be challenged.

The only real antidote to Hanson and Albanese is a fighting socialist movement that builds working class struggle where it is strongest.

.....
Decades of stagnant wage growth have been followed by a collapse in real wages since the COVID pandemic

Pauline Hanson: friend to billionaires

- Supports Trump's devastating and inflationary war in Iran
- Funded by Australia's richest person Gina Rinehart
- In 2017, voted to strip workers of penalty rates
- In 2019, voted for tax cuts for the rich
- In 2020, voted against the Robodebt royal commission
- In 2020, voted to increase university fees
- In 2024, voted against criminalising wage theft and banning industrial manslaughter

Sydney Uni forced to drop threats over Palestine poster

AFTER WIDESPREAD outrage, the University of Sydney has backed down on its threat to discipline two students over a poster for a Palestine protest used on campus.

This is a victory for the Palestine movement and all those speaking out against Israel’s genocide.

On 5 May university management sent the students a disciplinary letter about a Students Against War poster advertising a protest opposing exchange partnerships with Israeli universities.

Outrageously, this claimed it was “potentially antisemitic” to condemn apartheid, to call for the boycott of Israeli universities, and to display the “Handala” cartoon—a drawing of 10-year-old Palestinian refugee.

The students were subject to an investigation, with the potential for serious disciplinary action.

Over 800 supporters signed an open letter in two weeks, including President of the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network Nasser Mashni, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Chris Hedges, Senator Fatima Payman, Greens MP for Newtown Jenny Leong, and several other politicians, union representatives and university staff. The Sydney Uni SRC and activist collectives also made a statement of support.

Around 50 students, staff and supporters rallied on campus against the repression in the second last week of classes, proudly displaying the Handala symbol outside the F23 Administration Building.

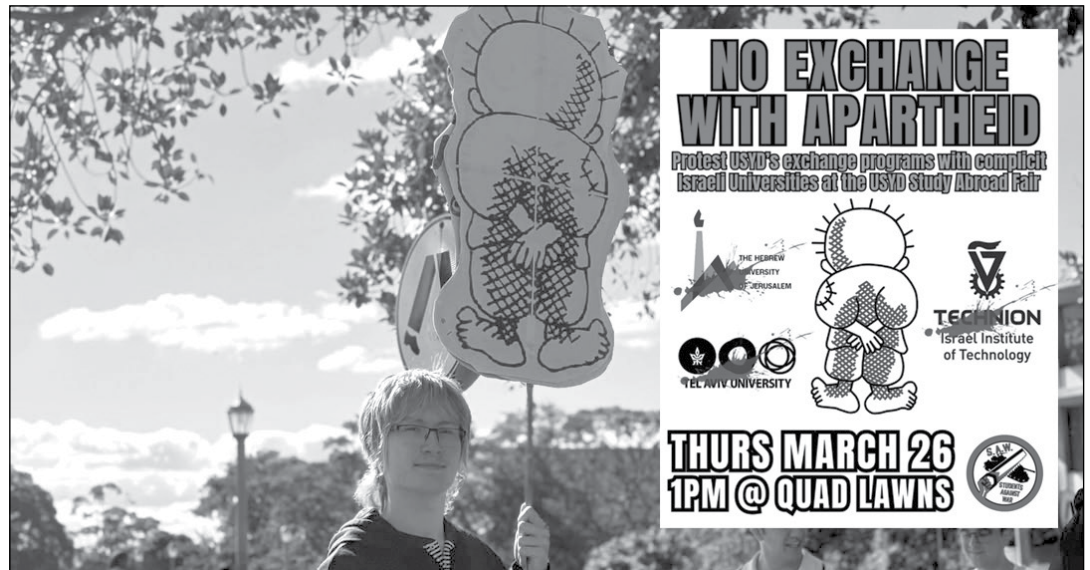
The Sydney Uni branch of the NTEU also passed a motion calling for management to drop the investigation.

In late May the university sent the students a letter which conceded that the call for a boycott of Israeli universities was “part of a lawful BDS style political protest” and said “criticism of or protest against these institutions is not, in itself, antisemitic or a policy breach.”

“It is extraordinary that the University decision says this is ‘consistent with the university’s prior position’”, Jeanette, an activist with Students Against War, said.

“This is an admission that the two students were subjected to a threatening, stressful and onerous disciplinary process based on USyd’s ‘concern’ which directly contradicted the university’s own ‘position’.”

“This is a clear abuse of the university’s disciplinary process that discour-



The Handala cartoon that Sydney Uni claimed could be antisemitic, alongside the poster that triggered its investigation Photo: Solidarity students Sydney Uni

ages legitimate criticism of Israel and has a chilling effect on free speech. At minimum the University must now issue a public apology and drop any similar disciplinary cases against pro-Palestine students and staff.”

The university was also forced to say the Handala’s “meaning is contested and context dependent” and that “its use here does not breach university policy”.

“The University’s retreat is a win for the Palestine movement and shows the ongoing, shameful attempt to exploit the Bondi attack to silence criticism of Israel can be pushed back,” Jeanette said.

“Sydney Uni has taken their cue from Albanese, Minns, and Segal and have dangerously attempted to conflate opposition to Israel with antisemitism.”



.....
The students were subject to an investigation, with the potential for serious disciplinary action

Vivid drops Airbnb as sponsor in BDS win

VIVID SYDNEY has quietly dropped Airbnb as a sponsor for 2026, following a campaign during last year’s festival against the company, which operates in Israel’s illegal settlements in the West Bank.

This comes despite successive sponsorship agreements in 2024 and 2025.

Last year, 24 artists and writers withdrew from Vivid in protest, creating chaos for the festival, following protests organised by Stop the War on Palestine. In addition 36 artists signed an open letter opposing Airbnb’s involvement in Vivid, alongside a petition supported by 1400 members of the general public.

Airbnb is named on the official Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions list as a pressure target, and is also on the OHCHR (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) database of companies linked to illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

The campaign has made it impossible for Airbnb to use Vivid to art-wash its reputation and put the NSW government on notice about collaborating with companies that aid Israel’s genocide.

This victory shows how we can break ties between our governments and institutions and Israel, and help undermine Israel’s occupation.

Gaza flotilla activist: 'The flotilla has shown we can take action into our own hands'

Solidarity spoke to Zack Schofield, who has just returned after being captured by Israel on the Global Sumud Flotilla

THE GLOBAL Summit Flotilla's aim of getting food through the illegal Israeli naval blockade of Gaza is a material contribution to the lives of Palestinians in Gaza.

Israel completely controls what goods get into the Gaza Strip. Since 2007 they've completely decimated the standards of living of people in the territory.

The attempt to directly contest Israeli occupation is valuable because resistance to the genocide is required to show the world what a reasonable response is. Our governments continue to support and fund the genocide. Australia considers Israel an ally. We still give them weapons parts. So it's up to civilians to do what is right.

I was intercepted west of Crete for the first time, over 1000 kilometres away from territorial waters that Israel has any claim to.

The violence that we experienced there was shocking but it was nothing compared to the violence during the second interception and during Israeli custody.

Interception

I was on a boat called the *Marilyn*. We were one of the first to get intercepted that second time around. We were treated with less brutality than people who were intercepted later. I was threatened with a stun gun by a commando that boarded our boat. We had weapons pointed at us and one of the commanders shot a security camera that was mounted just above our heads.

There were two prison boats. People who were intercepted later, particularly those loaded onto the other prison boat, they were shot at point blank range with beanbag rounds.

I remember the shells that were ejected because I picked up one of them on the prison boat, an LAPD Super-Sock round from a 12-gauge shotgun. People were zapped with stun guns in the face or the neck, they were beaten in a processing tent by a number of armed guards.

Juliet Lamont recounts being forced to lie flat on the ground, face down with her hands zip-tied



Above: Flotilla participants from Australia on their way home left to right Isla Lamont, Neve O'Connor, Juliet Lamont, Surya McEwen, Anny Mokotow, Sam Woripa Watson, Zack Schofield Photo: Global Sumud Flotilla Australia

behind her back as they washed the floor with seawater, a crude form of waterboarding. People recount being shot at completely randomly during the course of the days they were on there, having flash bangs thrown into crowds randomly.

There are stories of sexual assault and rape that come mostly from that boat. Isla Lamont recounts being injected with an unknown substance.

Israeli prison

Once we got onto shore, the treatment became more systematically violent and designed to humiliate us, being forced to sit in stress positions for extended periods while [Israeli government Minister] Ben-Gvir took a tour of the facilities.

People were moved around the site with their heads always held down, with pressure points being applied, with our hands zip-tied behind our backs and being moved around by raising our arms to the point of dislocation.

[Australian activists] Surya McEwen, Sam Watson and Juliet Lamont all had to attend hospital for broken bones. Neve O'Connor experienced a very serious concussion, as did Surya.

Ben-Gvir is a perfect representative of Israeli policy, the glee that he finds in brutality and the humiliation of people he considers Israel's enemies cuts through the claims that Israel tries so hard to hang on to that they are a moral society.

But I think that politicians like Ben Gvir show the world the attitude of the people that are in control of the state of Israel. This is a problem for Israel's hasbara [propaganda] operation and it's why he was so swiftly condemned by Netanyahu and other members of the government.

The footage that he put out barely touches on the violence that we received and certainly is far less severe than the violence from Israel's genocide over the last three years.

I think public opinion is shifting. I have no love for the *New York Times*, but it's important that it has felt it necessary to publish an exposé, based on the work and testimonies from Palestinians, showing that there's evidence of systematic rape and sexual abuse in Israeli prisons and that they're willing to publish it and then face the lawsuits that Netanyahu said that he's going to bring.

I think the best thing that the flotilla has done is to demonstrate to people around the world that we can take action into our own hands. The question that it does pose to all of us, I think, is what are you going to do?

It doesn't have to be getting on a boat in the Mediterranean.

It means thinking about what can be done at home as well. I went on the flotilla because I was inspired by the actions of people in the previous flotilla. And I really hope that what we've done will inspire further action in the future.

.....
People who were intercepted later were shot at point blank range with beanbag rounds

Admin in chaos but attacks on CFMEU keep coming

By Tom Orsag
retired CFMEU member

THE ATTACKS by the Administration of the CFMEU haven't stopped since Mark Irving stepped down as Administrator in late April.

Admin is handing over civil construction work, now done by CFMEU members, to the right-wing do-nothing Australian Workers Union.

This will cause the loss of an estimated 5000 jobs for CFMEU members and further weaken the union.

A demarcation list of jobs handed over by Admin is circulating among CFMEU militants.

Irving's resignation has created a new mood of anger among CFMEU members, particularly in Victoria.

The Administration has become a shambles, with a total of eight well-known resignations, including Irving, former Victorian branch executive officer (EO) Zach Smith, and three other branch EOs over 20 months.

Now the new Administrator, Michael Crosby, has sacked construction co-ordinator Nigel Davies. Davies has broken no law and faces no charges. So much for Admin being about rooting out criminality. *The Age* reported, "The move signals the start of a potentially vastly more aggressive phase of union reform."

Labor is learning that the gene pool of "cleanskin" union officials who are willing to get their hands dirty in the panel-beating of the CFMEU is very small.

Accountability

Victorian members passed two motions demanding transparency and accountability from Admin at what is known as the union "branch meeting" in late April.

Under a democratically elected union leadership the branch meeting acts as a report back to rank-and-file members.

Under Admin, the meeting spreads Admin's disinformation, with a thin veneer of "old CFMEU faces" working for Admin willing to mask the huge number of staff appointed who are non-construction unionists and ACTU trainers.

One is Michael Crosby, 74, formerly the NSW CFMEU EO, who was appointed Administrator on 22 May. He has been a union official since the age of 25. He told the media, in his arrogant style, "Construction is



Above: CFMEU members at last year's May Day rally in Sydney Photo: Solidarity

not that hard to understand ... I have spent a long time reforming unions."

The Victorian branch is now being run by Matt McGowan, formerly of the university workers' union NTEU, whose leaked text message to staff said he had allowed the previous Victorian EOs to "retain their titles".

His wife, Luz Lukin, has been working for Admin since October 2024 as a CFMEU rep on Incolink.

When pressed by members, these "retained" joint Victorian EOs, Lisa Zanatta and Nigel Davies, confirmed that McGowan had stripped them of their delegation authority, which means they can't approve spending or play a role in hiring.

This should dispel the argument from some CFMEU members that the "old CFMEU faces" working for Admin can "limit the damage". This is the same bad argument which Zach Smith put to members before his demise.

At the NTEU during COVID, McGowan tried to sell his members a "Jobs Protection Framework" which was a pay cut "to save jobs". The rank-and-file revolted over that rotten idea.

In February, McGowan was named by Irving as his "Assistant Administrator" with no start date or salary revealed. McGowan's leaked text revealed he has been working for Admin for at least eight months.

Shed up

One Victorian CFMEU delegate got a motion passed on a city site to "shed up" in protest at Admin—stop work and go into the lunch sheds—if Mc-

Gowan or Crosby visited sites.

For his trouble, the delegate has been hounded by the media and threatened with being made a "removed person" under the laws of Administration, which would ban him from holding any office in the union.

In early May, about 1000 construction workers in NSW on at least five Lendlease sites stopped work over the sacking of a long-standing delegate.

They hadn't been re-hired on another company site as per the EBA and the failure of the company to carry out a site safety audit after safety breaches, including an electrocution of a worker.

This is a way to show the builders that the CFMEU is alive and kicking.

A fight is needed because Jon Davies, chief executive of the Australian Constructors Association, said builders don't think Admin is doing enough for them. They want more laws from state governments to neuter the CFMEU.

He said they want laws to "ensure long term change. We need to see better workplace health and safety regulations, a requirement for a fit and proper test for health and safety delegates (HSR)".

HSRs come under state government OHS Acts, making them harder for builders and Admin to remove.

Davies also wants a new version of John Howard's ABCC. "At a Commonwealth level as well, I think we need to see a new construction code."

The fight continues against Admin and the builders who stand to profit.

.....
Irving's resignation has created a new mood of anger among CFMEU members, particularly in Victoria

Victorian teachers: vote No and continue the fight

By a Victorian AEU member

AS SOLIDARITY goes to press, Victorian teachers are fighting for an historic No vote to a union-recommended proposed agreement.

Australian Education Union (AEU) leaders have been confronted with vocal members arguing that the deal does not go far enough on pay and key conditions to make the profession sustainable.

The proposed agreement would result in pay rises of between 28 per cent and 32 per cent over four years. Given that our pay rises since 2020 have been lower than inflation, our pay would still have less purchasing power than it did in 2020. Wages went backwards by 11 per cent in real terms during the last agreement.

In addition, there are only minor improvements to conditions, including four more student-free days each year.

Education Support (ES) staff, crucially, are being offered a lower pay rise and their pay increase is being delivered partly through a 4 per cent annual allowance instead of an increase to their pay rate.

The AEU leadership admits that this arrangement could be removed by the Department of Education in the next agreement.

Vague position descriptions for ES are still resulting in ES staff being underclassified and underpaid for the work they do.

The AEU leadership is arguing that maintaining a reduction in face-to-face teaching won in the last agreement is a victory.

They rightly say that our fantastic strike on 24 March is what resulted in an improved offer. But at regional briefings they have also declared, without evidence, that more industrial action would lead to a drop in public support for teachers and school staff. This argument is having an influence in some workplaces, depleting the confidence of members.

Instead of building on the momentum and enthusiasm generated by the strike in March to escalate our campaign, the AEU leadership instead planned only a series of local rolling half-day strikes in different regions. These were then suspended before they even began on the basis of progress in negotiations.

Rank-and-file group Fight The Crisis has generated a detailed finan-



Above: Teachers in Victoria on strike on 24 March Photo: Solidarity

cial breakdown along with graphs that demonstrate how our real pay will still be less than it was in 2020, even after the planned pay rises.

No campaign

Dissenting Branch Councillors have been visiting sub-branches by invitation, providing an in-person briefing on the problems with the agreement that the AEU leadership are not presenting. Fight The Crisis is also doing its best to contact other workplaces to listen to members' concerns and gauge support for a No vote.

More than 300 AEU members have signed a public pledge to vote No. Fight The Crisis has compiled a map showing that there are members planning to vote No all around Victoria. Our consistent experience is that when a workplace hears and has a chance to discuss the No case, they are persuaded to vote the agreement down.

The No vote campaign has been getting media attention. Lucy Honan, a dissenting Branch Councillor and Fight The Crisis member, was interviewed sympathetically by Channel 7, sending a strong message that we want equality of pay rises for teachers and support staff and a clear pathway for conditions that stop the burnout of school staff.

An article from teacher Jessica

McGinnis in *The Age* explaining why she is voting no drew strong support on social media.

The *Herald Sun* has also approached Fight The Crisis for an opinion piece from a tired and angry teacher who is also a parent about why they are voting No, which will hopefully be published in the next week.

Two other unions with members covered by this agreement, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) and the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) also believe school staff deserve better and have either rejected the offer or made counteroffers.

The "business as usual" approach by AEU leadership is an inadequate response to the crisis in education in Victoria.

The 24 March strike and 40,000-strong protest of strikers and parent supporters on the day showed the impact we can have when members band together to take strong action.

The mainstream media interest in the No vote campaign shows that the public is actually on our side.

AEU members must spread the case for the No vote and prepare for further action. The vote will be finalised on 18 June.



Follow Fight the Crisis on Instagram at the QR code or visit their website at fightthecrisis.wordpress.com

Protests as Japan boosts military to back the US against China

By Caitlin Boyce

JAPAN IS witnessing its largest wave of anti-war protests in decades as the government pushes up military spending in an effort to back US threats against China.

Tens of thousands have demonstrated to defend the post-war “pacifist” constitution against proposed changes.

On 3 May, Constitution Memorial Day, more than 50,000 people rallied in Tokyo, with other protests held nationwide. These followed protests in April which drew more than 30,000 outside the national parliament.

Large protests are relatively rare in Japan. The scale of the recent demonstrations is therefore significant, showing the deeply-held anti-war sentiment.

Pacifism

New Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi won a landslide victory in the February general election. Since then, her conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has moved to expand defence spending, relax restrictions on weapons exports and deepen military ties with the US and its allies.

Military spending has been rising for the last decade and jumped by almost 10 per cent last year, with further increases planned.

Takaichi also wants to push ahead with constitutional reform to end the restrictions on Japan’s military under Article 9 of the constitution. Opposition to this has been the central reason for the protests.

Japan’s constitution renounces war and prohibits Japan from maintaining armed forces capable of waging it. Enacted in 1947 during the post-Second World War US occupation, Article 9 was conceived as a response to the devastation of Japan’s wartime expansion and defeat.

It has been widely regarded as a foundational commitment to peace, shaping Japan’s self-image as a nation that turned decisively away from militarism. However, in practice it has been increasing subverted over time. Japan has built up a substantial military since the 1950s by labelling them Self-Defence Forces, and in 2004 sent troops to support the US in Iraq, saying they would be limited to non-combat roles.

In 2015 it passed legislation allowing “collective self-defence”, allowing Japanese forces to join wars in



Above: An anti-war protest outside the Japanese parliament in April Photo: We want our future Japan

defence of its allies.

As the pro-US imperialist magazine *Foreign Affairs* put it, “Stigma around defence production has been eclipsed by concern over Chinese aggression and fear that the rules-based order is showing cracks.”

Many demonstrators argue that rewriting Article 9 would end what remains of Japan’s pacifist framework and allow a further expansion of the government’s militarist agenda.

The LDP’s success also takes place against a backdrop of rising nationalist and anti-immigration sentiment. Support has grown for “Japan-first” policies, pushing anti-immigration politics into the mainstream.

Despite all this, formal constitutional change remains unlikely in the near term. Revising Article 9 would require a two-thirds majority in both houses of parliament and a national referendum.

The government has justified its khaki agenda by pointing to rising tensions with China, North Korea’s nuclear missile program and broader geopolitical instability. Its Defence Minister declared bluntly at the recent Shangri-La Defence Summit in Singapore that, “China’s external approach and military activities are matters of serious concern for Japan and the international community.”

Japan is a key US ally that the US wants to draw further into its plans to contain China. A recent fact sheet published by the White House encouraged Japan to “rapidly strengthen its own defence capabilities, increase its defence budget, and continue partnering with US forces in Japan and the region”.

This militarisation reflects within a wider trend towards arms buildup across the Indo-Pacific. Japan’s rearmament is part of intensifying imperialist competition centred on containing China’s rise.

Australian ties

Australia has become a key partner in Japan’s evolving militarisation. Defence Minister Richard Marles has said Japan is more closely aligned on defence policy with Australia than any other partner.

One indication is Federal Labor’s decision to buy an initial three Japanese-built Mogami-class frigates. This multi-billion-dollar deal is the largest Japanese military export deal in post-war history.

Australia’s deepening defence partnership with Japan is part of efforts to strengthen military ties and capabilities among US allies in the region against China. Takaichi has also signed a new defence pact with Indonesia and deepened military ties with the Philippines and Vietnam.

The Japanese government has pledged to work to increase military co-operation across the region and “to ensure each country has the capability it needs” through establishing a weapons industry to help arm US allies.

But Japan’s protest movement represents a hopeful and significant counter current.

We need to build a similar movement here to oppose increased defence spending, scrap the AUKUS pact and end Australia’s growing role in US war plans against China.

.....
Military spending jumped by almost 10 per cent last year, with further increases planned

Trump tries to rein in Israel in search of deal with Iran

By James Supple

DONALD TRUMP lashed at out Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a call in early June, calling him “fucking crazy” and telling him “everybody hates Israel”.

This came after Iran broke off negotiations with the US in response to Israel ramping up its war in Lebanon.

A week later Netanyahu defied Trump by bombing Beirut. Iran responded by firing missiles at Israel, before Trump again intervened following an Israeli strike on Iran to stop further attacks.

For months Trump has been promising a deal with Iran was imminent. He raised expectations by skipping his son Donald Junior’s wedding in the Bahamas, saying he needed to stay in Washington because of “a thing called Iran”. But nothing resulted.

Instead there have been renewed exchanges of missiles, with the US bombing military sites near the Strait of Hormuz and Iranian ships. Iran has attacked US bases across the region including in Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan.

There were hints that an interim deal to extend the ceasefire and provide time for fuller negotiations was imminent, where Iran would reopen the Strait of Hormuz and give undertakings about its nuclear program in exchange for some kind of sanctions relief. Then it evaporated.

Trump needs a deal that will see Iran re-open the Strait of Hormuz. About 14 per cent of global oil supplies have been blocked by its closure.

The economic impact of this has been less apocalyptic so far than predicted. Global oil prices are up, but nowhere near the figure of \$US150 a barrel some feared.

The oil market has temporarily adjusted, with stockpiles of oil run down, China cutting back on oil imports and producers like the US and Canada significantly increasing exports. But a crunch will come at some point in the next few months if the Strait is not reopened.

The current price hikes are already adding to anger about the cost of living. Prices at the petrol pump in the US may not be as high as in 2022 following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, but are up 40 per cent since the war began.

This has seen Trump’s support



Above: Trump discussing the war with generals and Secretary of War Pete Hegseth Photo: White House photo/Daniel Torok

crash to its lowest ever level, with just 38 per cent approving his performance.

Concessions

Yet Trump seems to be unwilling to swallow the need for concessions to Iran. Although he blusters about the war being a massive success, the reality is the US has failed to force Iran into submission.

None of the aims Trump set himself in the war have been achieved and Iran now has a stronger position in negotiations than before it started. Its ability to close the Strait of Hormuz gives it a powerful economic weapon—and the US is unable to reopen it by force.

Trump’s last hope is that his own blockade of Iranian oil exports will force the Iranian government to fold. In the two months since it started, Iran has lost about \$6 billion.

So there is now a contest over which side can bear the economic damage resulting from the closure of the Strait for the longest.

Israel’s wars

Israel’s aggressive militarism means it opposes any deal that gives ground to the Iranian government and would prefer to resume bombing.

Its war in Lebanon has also undermined Trump’s negotiations. The initial ceasefire deal in April was supposed to include a halt to fighting in Lebanon as well.

Instead Israel has expanded its

invasion, occupying one fifth of the country and forcing 1.4 million people, a quarter of the population, to flee their homes.

It bombed three hospitals in a week in southern Lebanon just before we went to press.

Israel is continuing the killing in Gaza too, murdering another 119 people in May. Netanyahu says he has told the military to seize 70 per cent of Gaza, pushing further beyond the 52 per cent of the territory it was supposed to control under the ceasefire.

This means forcing the population into an ever smaller area in unlivable conditions.

His Defence Minister Israel Katz has also confirmed Israel’s aim to ethnically cleanse Palestinians from Gaza eventually through “voluntary migration”.

But the US is still calling the shots. Israel halted its bombing of Iran when the US insisted it was time for negotiations. And Trump also wants a ceasefire in Lebanon too.

Yet in typically erratic style his administration drew up a one-sided ceasefire plan between Israel and the collaborationist Lebanese government declaring that Hezbollah had to agree to Israel’s demands to retreat beyond the Litani River.

Hezbollah was excluded from negotiations and refused to accept this.

This kind of double-dealing will only fuel Iran’s distrust of the US—and the reluctance to compromise on any deal.

.....
Trump needs a deal that will see Iran re-open the Strait of Hormuz

TECH OLIGARCHS, CAPITALISM AND THE AI ARMS RACE

Erima Dall looks at the impact of AI, including in the workplace, and the consequences of its use in the service of profit

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) has grown exponentially since ChatGPT was launched by OpenAI at the end of 2022.

Already AI has been incorporated into search engines, the public service, the military, surveillance, banking and scientific research.

Governments are positioning themselves to capitalise on the promise of the next big productivity leap. Donald Trump put tech CEOs in the front row of his inauguration last year and even appointed Elon Musk to lead the newly created Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

In Australia, the Labor government has declared the country “open for business” with AI. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Anthropic’s CEO Dario Amadei in April.

But AI is anything but popular. A clip of students booing AI at the University of Central Florida graduation ceremony went viral.

The idea that AI will lead to a world freed from the drudgery of repetitive, poorly paid labour is a naïve fantasy, perpetuated for profit. Just as microwaves did not liberate us from sexism, there is nothing inevitable about this technology leading to shorter working weeks or fewer mundane tasks.

In fact, the history of capitalism shows the opposite.

But succumbing to the idea that AI will lead to dystopia is also a mistake. The image of a world taken over by robots where human labour is no longer required has no basis in science or history and serves only to make us passive in the face of change.

Both the utopian and dystopian visions of AI underplay our hands as agents in our own future and bolster

the myth that AI is all-powerful. The beneficiaries of this myth are the big tech corporations.

Capitalists want to use AI for their own interests. But workers can resist this.

Threat

AI poses many threats. Most obviously, as a jobs killer. White-collar jobs such as paralegals, coders and data analysis are most at risk.

Already, Atlassian has cut 1600 jobs, Amazon laid off 14,000 people and Meta is planning to reduce its workforce by 20 per cent, all citing a pivot to AI.

But with AI increasingly integrated into robotics technology and motor vehicles, blue-collar work and jobs like food delivery are also in the firing line.

The deskilling of creative work such as graphic design and video editing also puts many jobs at risk. Entire AI-generated bands have appeared on Spotify.

AI will also increase workplace surveillance, with tools like facial recognition and moment-by-moment location monitoring of workers.

The explosion of AI-generated sexual content including “deep fake” images and voice imitation is alarming.

In the military sphere, the Iran War has been referred to as the first “AI war”. In the first 24 hours of the US attack on Iran, 1000 targets were auto-generated by Palantir and Anthropic.

And AI is posing existential questions about our humanity, relationships and mental health. An alarming number of people are in, or have had, romantic relationships with an AI bot. The calls for government regulation of AI are rising.

Both the utopian and dystopian visions of AI bolster the myth that AI is all-powerful

But governments will not want to place too many limits on AI, more concerned with the potential profits companies and wealthy investors claim are possible for those that lead the race.

The extraordinary growth of AI is fuelling a surge in investment in data centres. The six biggest firms pouring money into AI are projected to spend \$750 billion this year alone—more than the GDP of Ireland.

AI investments accounted for 60 per cent of all venture capital investment in 2025 and 80 per cent of growth in the stock market in 2025.

All this could be a bubble waiting to burst if these investments do not generate their expected profits.

It’s been estimated that up to \$2 trillion in revenue will be needed to cover the investment to pay for all these data centres—yet most AI firms have yet to make a profit. The hype around AI is based on projected potential, not current reality.

The drive to develop artificial general intelligence (AGI) is the promise of creating a “do everything” machine that exceeds the intelligence of humans.

But a survey of experts in the field showed a majority think this is still a very long way off and many think it can never be achieved.

AI is essentially a very advanced probabilities machine, with large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT being likened to predictive text on steroids.

Cory Doctorow, author of *Enshitification*, says it is more accurate to compare AI to plug-ins. It can certainly do exciting things but it is not as novel as we are led to believe.

It is entirely possible that the anarchic rush to invest in AI infrastructure will create a glut—where more is built

than is needed. This is how a boom turns into a bust.

Contest

AI does not just exist in the cloud. Data centres—huge complexes that generate the computing power needed to run AI—pose an extraordinary threat to our water resources and will intensify energy consumption.

In Memphis, the community of Boxtown is fighting against Elon Musk’s super computer “Colossus” powered by 35 gas-powered turbines that are poisoning the air and creating respiratory problems in a predominately Black community.

In Australia, 200 residents of Moss Vale held a protest against a new gas-fired power station to service data centres in NSW, where 15 new data centres have been fast-tracked, worth \$52 billion.

Behind AI also sits an army of poorly paid content moderation workers who must sift through traumatising content and categorise it for user safety.

It is not true that AI simply “learns” through interaction—it is also taught by millions of workers called data labellers, for example in how to identify objects or write in different styles.

Data labellers in India, Venezuela and Kenya are paid less than \$3.50 per hour—in an industry worth \$300 billion. The World Bank estimates there are between 150 and 430 million data labourers.

This is a new source of immense potential power, which is slowly being organised. In February 2025, Kenyan workers formed the Data Labellers Association to “empower the invisible architects of AI”, including advocating for workplace mental health support.

Workplace transformation

AI is part of a broader trend of automation.

Productivity increases from automation have never been shared equally or put back into the social good.

Bosses don’t say, “That’s great, we made 100 extra cars this week—why don’t you all take Friday off!” They work us all just as hard and get Friday’s cars as free profit, or sack people to reduce their wages bill.

Under capitalism, technological development seems to have a life of its own.

We are “slaves to the machine” even though the machines were de-



Above: Anthony Albanese visits a Microsoft office in Sydney to promote the use of AI Photo: Anthony Albanese

signed and built by people.

Marx called this alienation. We feel alienated and powerless in the face of technology because there is no democratic control over it. It is in the hands of a tiny rich minority, driven by profit.

There are plenty of useful things AI can do, like assist in early cancer or dementia detection, track the path of cyclones, find people trapped under rubble using sound mapping and revive dead or endangered languages.

One Te Reo Māori radio station in New Zealand is working with local elders to integrate AI language learning tools into their programming.

Many of these specialised uses of AI don’t require enormous data centres but can be trained off smaller mobile devices like specialised laptops. But this is not where most funding is going.

Battleground

AI is a new battleground for unions and workers. The Screen Writers of America went on a 148-day strike in 2023 and secured a contract that established controls against the misuse of artificial intelligence in Hollywood, including that AI cannot be a “writer” and writers cannot be forced to use it.

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) is fighting AI-driven automation at DP World ports, and is developing broader demands for controls around AI in workplaces

such as granting unions a “digital right of entry”, banning the collection of workers’ biometric data and ensuring technologies will not be used for surveillance and time management.

Historically unions have fought for shorter working weeks, no increase in work intensity and no reduction in jobs to counter the impacts of automation. Productivity gains should be shared and benefit working people.

The Victorian Trades Hall Council and the ACTU have also released reports on AI and workers’ rights. But defending our rights will require more—strong fighting unions and workers taking industrial action at the point of implementation.

Leaps in technology should be a benefit to society. Ultimately AI won’t be used for good under capitalism but it’s not the technology that is inherently bad. We need to fight for control over it.

We need to take control off those who want to use AI to kill more people in Palestine, Iran and Lebanon so we can decide whether we want AI, what kind of sustainable energy sources can fuel it and how the labour force behind it is treated and compensated.

Ultimately this means we need to uproot the system that puts profit over people and treats technology as something to be imposed on us to make profit for corporations, rather than something which we created, and which is an extension of our own creativity, intelligence and human potential.

WOMEN'S WARTIME STRIKES TO WIN EQUAL PAY

Joy Qiao explains how women challenged sexism and fought to demand equal pay after joining the workforce in large numbers during the Second World War

TOO FEW people know how women workers in Australian munitions industries during the Second World War launched a heroic strike wave which saw them win 90 per cent of the male pay rate.

Their victory came against the odds of a deeply sexist society and union bureaucracy and nationalist pressure to sacrifice for the war effort.

We're told about how women "stepped up" during the war—but they didn't just quietly accept their role. Instead, they organised and challenged decades of gender division and built a confidence to demand equal wages.

Their militancy didn't just win immediate gains, it also showed something much bigger: that confidence is built through struggle and that workers—even in the middle of a war—have real power.

Living wage

To understand why this was so significant, it's important to look at how work was organised before the war. The 1907 Harvester agreement established the concept of a "living wage", enough for a male worker and his wife and family to live on. This enshrined the idea that the real place for women was in the home.

In reality, families could not survive on the so-called "living wage". So in the first half of the 20th century there was a slow but steady increase in women working. As early as 1927, about half of all factory workers in Australia were female.

Yet labour was still strictly divided along gender lines. Men were seen as the "real workers", skilled and paid a wage that was supposed to support a family.

Women's work was labelled "unskilled" even when it clearly wasn't. Moreover, they were paid often just a fraction of the male wage and seen

as temporary workers or secondary earners.

This wasn't just a cultural attitude. The wage structure itself enforced inequality. The idea of the "living wage" meant that men's wages were prioritised, while women's labour was systematically undervalued. This division kept wages down overall.

So before the war, the idea of women working in heavy industry, especially weapon production, was almost unthinkable. But then the war began in 1939 and suddenly, everything shifted.

With so many men sent off to fight, there was a massive labour shortage and the need to ramp up production of military goods.

The RAAF was the first to introduce women, to fill an acute shortage of telegraph operators. Then factories began to take women workers. They did jobs like filling bombs and shells, assembling aircrafts and parts for navy vessels, metal work and building gun components.

The mainstream narrative about women and "suitable" labour changed overnight. Now, women were told it was their patriotic duty to work. Posters, propaganda, and public messaging reinforced this idea.

Women were urged to take a "victory job". Newsreels shown in cinemas showed cheerful "girls" enjoying the freedom of life in the Women's Land Army or "doing their bit" in the factories.

Popular women's magazines like the *Australian Women's Weekly* printed features promoting women's war work. These articles supported the new, expanded roles for women but also reassured their readers of the enduring femininity of such women workers.

One propaganda poster said, "What does it matter if the furniture

.....
Women were being told that they were essential for the war effort but were still treated as inferior workers

does get a bit dusty? Or the floors a bit dull? Come on housewives, take a victory job. You'll find it no harder than your house job. Easier perhaps. In fact, many war production factories, with their spic and span canteens, bright music and carefully planned rest breaks are more fun to work in than any house."

Some women were effectively industrial conscripts. The government established a Manpower Directorate in early 1942. In January 1943 its powers were extended to women. All childless women aged between 18 and 45 were required to register. Women who refused appointments were threatened with imprisonment.

Sexist resistance

There was still sexist resistance to women's role in the war. Unions feared competition for men's jobs from low-paid female workers, employers in "male" industries doubted that women could perform heavy tasks or tasks requiring high levels of skill, while bosses in "female" industries feared competition for workers and the resulting pressure on wages.

On the one hand women were being told that they were essential for the war effort but on the other were still being treated as inferior workers. The ruling class needed women's labour to sustain the war effort. But they also wanted to preserve the existing social order. So the shift in ideology was very controlled.

Women were encouraged to work but only for the duration of the war, and without fundamentally challenging the idea that men's work was more valuable. This meant that they were still paid only 60 to 75 per cent of the male wage.

In addition, the conditions they were working under were brutal. Elly Blackshaw, who worked at

the Maribyrnong explosives factory in Melbourne as a “filler”, said, “The temperature in the factory was maintained at a steady (32C) to keep the powder dry, so we sweltered in summer. The powder I held in my hands was enough to blow up a ship. Almost every day someone was hurt, some were blown to pieces, building and all.”

Women were producing something essential as part of a collective labour process. They could see how important their work was and that began to change how they saw themselves. This growing confidence led to a wave of militant strikes.

The Small Arms Ammunition Factory in Footscray, Melbourne, was a pre-war employer of women so the pay was lower than in other munitions factories where the Women’s Employment Board (WEB) had set the rate.

Several thousand male and female workers held a stopwork meeting in early 1943, demanding the 90 per cent rate for females. More than 2000 women from other government factories joined them on strike.

These strikes were without success. But they did succeed at Simmonds Aerocessories in South Melbourne. Here Simmonds refused to pay the rate awarded by the WEB. So 132 women sheet metal workers struck for over four months. The case went as far as the High Court before the company capitulated and paid the 90 per cent rate.

When Amalgamated Wireless Australia in Ashfield, Sydney, refused to pay a pay rise granted by the WEB, 150 women in the aircraft assembly section joined the Amalgamated Engineers Union (AEU).

When the Board decided that only 75 per cent of them were entitled to the WEB rate, a three-week strike followed.

Labour historian Daphne Gollan wrote that, “In NSW, during the 20 months ending August 1944, there were 1432 industrial disputes involving 588,951 workers and resulting in a loss of one and a half million man-days—or as was more frequently the case, woman days.”

When a Sydney company, Richard Hughes, refused to pay the WEB rate, the case dragged through the courts for over six months. By June 1944 it had become obvious to the workers that they were getting nowhere. A strike and lockout led quickly to a settlement and back pay.

Unpatriotic

Employers were particularly ob-



Above: Women working in a factory in South Australia during the Second World War

essed about keeping down women’s wages. This was despite the government agreeing to foot the bill for all manufacturing costs during the war, including any wage rises. They wanted to remind women that their work was a temporary evil for the war.

Striking during wartime wasn’t a small thing. Strikes could be framed as unpatriotic, or even as undermining the war effort. But despite this, women still took action.

When women metalworkers at the Richard Hughes factory in Sydney went on strike to get the award wage of 90 per cent of the male rate, the Communist union secretary urged them to return to work by invoking “the boys in the trenches”. The women angrily retorted, “We know all about our boys in the trenches ... they’re our husbands and sons.” They won an award payment.

In some instances, men supported women’s demands. They recognised that wage inequality weakened the entire working class.

But where unions would not lead action, women were prepared to act themselves. Young women workers at the Berlei factory in Sydney used the technique of the classroom, passing notes from machine to machine to elect representatives and agree to a stopwork.

This militancy had a broader context. By the later years of the war, there was increasing unrest across

different sectors. One example is the Balmain Docks dispute 1945, which shows how workers more generally were becoming more willing to take action.

Taking action

There are two lessons from all this. The first is that gender divisions weren’t natural, they were enforced. And when those divisions were challenged, workers became stronger.

Secondly, there is self-activity. Change didn’t come from above. It came from women organising themselves—taking action and forcing change. These women didn’t enter the factories as confident militants. Their confidence developed through struggle.

Unfortunately, the lessons of their strikes were not generalised in a broader and more conscious effort to destroy sex roles and pay inequality. Many of the gains were lost when the war ended. So the struggle continues.

Today’s situation is obviously different but there are still some useful parallels. Australia is building an arms industry in preparation for war with China. Weapons have to be built by workers in factories.

So the same question still is, who really has the power? The story of women in munitions shows that even in a highly controlled wartime system, workers were able to organise to resist.

TRUMP, US IMPERIALISM AND THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

Mark Gillespie explains why Donald Trump wants regime change in Cuba and why we should oppose the US's plans, without pretending Cuba was ever socialist

RAÚL CASTRO, the 94-year-old former Cuban president, has been indicted by the US government for murder and conspiracy relating to the 1996 shooting down of two aircraft operated by Brothers to the Rescue.

The move increases pressure on an already besieged Cuban government.

Alongside his brother Fidel Castro, Raul was a leader of the 1959 revolution that overthrew a US-backed dictatorship and remains a symbol of Cuban sovereignty.

Trump has called Cuba a “failed nation” and has openly stated his desire for regime change. It will not be lost on Cuba’s leaders that Trump used a federal indictment as justification for the removal of Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela’s president and a close ally of Cuba.

A near-total oil embargo was imposed by the US on Cuba following Maduro’s removal. Only one shipment of oil has reached the island since January, contributing to what the UN has described as a “humanitarian crisis”.

The healthcare system is under severe strain, fuel shortages have disrupted transport and agriculture, schools have closed to conserve energy and many people are relying on wood fires to cook.

The US has also increased military pressure through intelligence-gathering flights around the island. The indictment and oil embargo come on top of more than 60 years of sanctions and hostility directed at Cuba.

Castro’s indictment relates to the 1996 destruction of two Brothers to the Rescue aircraft.

Although it presented itself as a humanitarian organisation assisting Cuban refugees, the group repeatedly violated Cuban airspace and was founded by José Basulto, a former CIA operative and Cuban exile who has boasted about his involvement in efforts at sabotage and armed attacks against the Cuban government.

After repeated warnings to both

the organisation and the US government, Cuban fighter aircraft shot down two of its planes.

This was a justifiable act of self-defence against US imperialism, which has sought to overthrow the Cuban government since the 1959 revolution.

US imperialism and Cuba

For over 200 years the US has considered Latin America its backyard, claiming the right to intervene whenever it wants. It has intervened hundreds of times through CIA operations, blockades, annexations, coups and military invasions.

Its aim, as expressed in the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, was to keep rival powers out of the Western Hemisphere and ensure regional governments aligned with its interests.

The US always saw Cuba, strategically situated between the Gulf of Mexico (renamed the Gulf of America by Trump) and the Caribbean Sea as central to its interests and on a couple of occasions during the 19th century tried to buy it from the declining Spanish empire.

The US invaded Cuba in 1898 during its War of Independence against Spain, claiming to support Cuban liberation. However, after Spain’s defeat, the US refused to withdraw until Cuba accepted the Platt Amendment.

This gave Washington extensive influence over Cuban affairs, restricted Cuba’s ability to conduct an independent foreign policy, granted the US the right to intervene militarily and secured land for US military bases. The naval base at Guantánamo Bay remains in US hands today.

Cuba went from direct rule by Spain to indirect rule by the US. US troops were back again in 1906 to quell political unrest and again in 1917, this time to protect American-owned sugar plantations.

The former US ambassador to

Trump now sees the opportunity to bring down this symbol of defiance

Cuba, Earl Smith, outlined the extent of US control, “Until Castro, the US was so overwhelmingly influential in Cuba that the American ambassador was the second most important man ... sometimes even more important than the [Cuban] president.”

By the 1950s US corporations dominated much of the Cuban economy, controlling major interests in sugar, utilities, mining and tourism.

Cuba was highly unstable during this period, vacillating between corrupt presidential elections highly influenced by foreign interests and bouts of authoritarian rule.

In 1952 Fulgencio Batista seized power in a military coup, suspended constitutional rights and ruled through repression. Batista made a deal with US gangster Meyer Lansky, allowing the American mafia to operate a gambling, vice and hospitality empire in Havana in return for kickbacks and bribes.

While rich elites in Havana enjoyed luxury cars and glamorous casinos, rural Cubans lived in deep poverty. Most rural homes had dirt floors, no running water and no electricity, while medical care and schools were completely unavailable to the poor.

But it wasn’t just workers and peasants who opposed Batista. Students, intellectuals and other middle layers seeking democracy and a genuinely independent capitalist state were also alienated.

By 1958 even Washington had concluded Batista could no longer maintain stability. However, attempts to find a moderate alternative came too late.

Batista’s soldiers fled rather than fight Fidel Castro’s small guerrilla army, which took power with massive popular support from wide sections of society.

Initially, the US recognised the new Cuban government, hoping it would moderate its nationalist program. However, Castro’s reforms,

particularly the Agrarian Reform Law, threatened the interests of Cuban landowners and US corporations operating in Cuba.

Tensions escalated when Cuba nationalised US-owned oil refineries that refused to process Russian crude oil. The US responded by cancelling Cuba's preferential sugar quota, prompting further nationalisations of US-owned property and investments on the island.

The US then sponsored the Bay of Pigs Invasion in 1961, carried out by Cuban exiles.

Mass mobilisation under Castro's leadership helped defeat the invasion, strengthening the revolution domestically and transforming Cuba into an international symbol of anti-imperialist resistance. The failed invasion accelerated Cuba's alliance with Russia.

Cuba's open defiance and its alignment with Russia made it a strategic challenge to US interests and every US administration since has sought to reverse this. They want to see Cuba returned to the US neo-colonial state that existed before the 1959 revolution.

Trump, driven by US global competition with China, now sees the opportunity to bring down this symbol of defiance and do what no other US President has been able to achieve.

Cuba today faces its deepest crisis in decades. Following the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in the early 1990s, the country lost most of its trading partners and Russian subsidies. GDP contracted dramatically and living standards fell sharply.

Beginning in the 2000s, trade with Venezuela became a crucial lifeline. Venezuela supplied Cuba with oil, food and other resources in exchange for Cuban doctors, teachers and technical personnel to help with Venezuela's social programs. Trump's removal of Maduro has effectively severed this relationship and intensified Cuba's economic difficulties.

Socialists must oppose US imperialism and defend Cuba against attempts at recolonisation. A victory for the US would not make the world safer or more democratic. It will only encourage the US to bully other countries and will demoralise those who want to resist Trump's reactionary agenda, both at home and abroad.

Cuba and socialism

While acknowledging Cuba's revolution did bring in genuine social reform for workers and much of Cuba's problems today stem from the heavy US sanctions, socialists need to be careful



Above: Fidel Castro and his guerrilla fighters in the Sierra Maestra mountains in Cuba before taking power Photo: Wikimedia Commons

not to fall into the trap of seeing Cuba as some sort of socialist utopia.

The revolution in Cuba was not a socialist revolution. Fidel Castro and many of his core followers were originally members of the reformist and left-wing populist Ortodoxo Party and looked to José Martí (Cuba's George Washington), not Marx, as their "inspirer". Even five months after the revolution Castro was insisting, "Our revolution is not red but olive green."

The working class also did not play a leading role in the revolution. While there were strikes supporting Castro's guerrillas and the guerrillas enjoyed enormous popular support, there were no institutions of mass democracy, equivalent to the Russian Soviets of 1917, that gave workers control of the revolution.

Decision-making remained concentrated in the rebel army command, Castro's inner circle and later the top-down Cuban Communist Party. Cuba's workers learned that the revolution was officially socialist only when Fidel Castro publicly declared it in 1961.

This was not the "self-emancipation of the working class" central to Marxism.

Castro did align Cuba with the so-called "socialist" bloc and followed their economic model. The whole economy was nationalised under one-party rule. But the "socialist" bloc was socialist in name only.

The genuine workers' revolution in Russia in 1917 was long defeated. The revolutionary wave that followed the Russian revolution failed to break through and Russia's workers were isolated and exhausted. Stalin, supported by a bureaucratic layer,

destroyed the last bastions of workers' democracy and turned Russia into a bureaucratic state capitalist state that competed with the West.

Cuba, too, became state capitalist, dominated by its own bureaucratic ruling class that suppressed independent trade unions and banned unauthorised strikes, while living a life of relative privilege.

Following the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, this bureaucratic elite began opening up the economy to market forces and foreign investment, particularly in the tourist sector, creating even starker class divisions. The government is investing vastly more in business services, real estate and hotel construction than in agriculture, education, and health combined.

This class tension exploded into widespread protests in July 2021 that spread to over 50 cities. Cuba's workers have two layers of oppression, US imperialism and their own ruling class.

Cuba's fate remains unclear. The Cuban government, led by President Miguel Díaz-Canel, is prepared to negotiate and make further concessions. But sacrificing Raul Castro, who he described as a "hero", is too much.

The US will be looking for an alternative within the government like they did in Venezuela, but like in Iran, that might prove to be difficult.

Riots linked to extensive blackouts are a sign of desperation. If the Cuban regime implodes amid unrest due to the oil shortage, there would be nothing progressive about its fall.

In this crisis socialists must oppose US imperialism and demand "hands off Cuba". At the same time we need to avoid being apologists for the weak and besieged Cuban ruling class.

CONVERGING TO EXPOSE PINE GAP'S ROLE IN ISRAEL'S GENOCIDE

By Luke Ottavi

ACTIVISTS FROM across the continent will converge on the Pine Gap spy base in Central Australia in July for three days of protest and discussion.

Pine Gap is the largest and most important US spy base in Australia and its most important surveillance base outside the US.

Pine Gap controls US spy satellites that monitor one third of the globe including the Middle East, China, North Korea and parts of Russia. It collects and analyses weapons signals, radar signals, communications transmissions including phone, radio, internet and military, and microwave transmissions. The data identifies targets for drone and missile strikes.

Former Pine Gap employee David Rosenberg told *Declassified Australia*, "Pine Gap is monitoring the Gaza Strip and surrounding areas with all its resources and gathering intelligence assessed to be useful to Israel." Pine Gap helps Israel commit genocide in Gaza and helps the US and Israel wage war on Lebanon and Iran.

Anthony Albanese likes to claim that his government is "not involved" in the US and Israeli war on Iran or in Gaza.

But Pine Gap's role makes the Australian government deeply complicit in aiding Israel's military operations. It must be shut down.

Hilary and Violet, two organisers from Mparntwe for Falastin in Alice Springs, 18 kilometres from Pine Gap, spoke to a forum in Sydney about the plans for the protest convergence.

Hilary explained that the convergence aims to highlight local Indigenous opposition to the base and the injustice where "Pine Gap has a lease in perpetuity, whereas a lot of the traditional owners of Pine Gap live in insecure housing in one of the town camps in abject poverty".

"We know that Pine Gap is clearly complicit in the horrors of this unchecked genocide in Palestine, and further across West Asia and globally as well. So what we're wanting to do



Above: Activists protesting at the entrance to the Pine Gap spy base Photo: Mparntwe for Falastin

with this convergence is bring together these intersecting struggles and people involved in these struggles."

The convergence also marks 60 years since Australia signed the Pine Gap treaty with the US in 1966.

"The first two days are going to be a series of plenaries and workshops and discussions," Violet explained. "And then the third day we're doing public protests.

"The first day will be talking about colonialism and imperialism, here and abroad. The second day we'll be focusing on Pine Gap, AUKUS and how we're going to break Australia's US alliance.

"Part of that discussion will be about Pine Gap and its role here. But we'll also widen it out to Australia's connection to the US alliance and the overall US military footprint in Australia, in the Asia Pacific region, and globally."

US bases

There is a wider expansion of US bases going on across Australia. "In terms of the Northern Territory, there's been the expansion of the Tindal airbase near Katherine to allow for nuclear-capable B52 bombers to operate out of there and the expansion of jet fuel silos in Darwin for those B52s in the

case of war", Violet explained.

"The war here that the US is preparing for and pre-positioning for is the potential war with China.

"There's also the possibility of the Chandler nuclear waste dump being built in the central desert region, which would potentially store nuclear waste from AUKUS submarines.

"We also want to platform some local stories and issues: the struggles for land rights, the history of Town Camps and the Intervention and the struggle for housing here, as well as the struggle against incarceration of First Nations people in the NT."

The NT has the second highest rate of imprisonment in the world compared with other countries, with more than 1 per cent of the population incarcerated. More than 80 per cent of prisoners are Indigenous.

"Those rates have skyrocketed since August 2024 with the election of the CLP [Country Liberal Party]. And there have been some really serious changes to the laws around locking people up, denying bail, reducing the age of criminal responsibility back down to 10 years old," Violet said.

"We want to network among people from all around the continent about how we're going to break Australia's ties to the US alliance."

Join the bus or donate to help Sydney activists get to Pine Gap at linktr.ee/stopwaronpalestine

Melbourne forum
Why we need to close US spy base Pine Gap
Saturday 21 June
Details at instagram.com/studentsagainstawar_unimelb/

Solidarity