

Solidarity

Issue No. 211 / September 2026

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Labor's racism fuels One Nation UNITE TO FIGHT THE RIGHT

UNIONS

Lessons from the
Victorian teachers' strikes

PALESTINE

Israel steps up ethnic
cleansing in West Bank

ONE NATION

Pauline Hanson's
history of racism

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

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

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@soli_aus
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Things they say

And after we have finished defeating Iran—which is being very badly defeated—pretty soon I will be declaring the Hormuz strait, a territory of the United States.

US President Donald Trump pretending the US has control of the Strait of Hormuz

For you to play a tiny little bit more for your gasoline just remember you are doing it so a very evil country cannot have a [nuclear weapon]

Trump failing to convince US workers to support his failing war on Iran

That sucker is open

Trump talking about the Strait of Hormuz on 27 August. On 31 August Brent crude rose again over \$90 a barrel

On the spot deportation for anyone who can't prove they are in the US legally

Far right activist Milo Yiannopoulos, who has now been deported for overstaying his visa in the US

The truth is that the economists' lovely offset scheme is a sham Labor is using to make us think it cares about climate change when it doesn't.

Ross Gittins, Nine newspapers' economics editor

I haven't made up my mind, but there are a number of people in society in very prominent positions in the arts, sports, science, business, politics, who are homosexual. And I don't think we can afford to ban them. So it's difficult.

One Nation Senator Malcolm Roberts saying he hasn't made up his mind about whether gay people should have equal rights

I've been living in Japan for the last 25 years, so actually I've probably been living in Japan longer than Sydney

One Nation's new NSW leader Mike Newman explains how he has his finger on the pulse of issues in the Hunter Valley where he's running for a seat

CONTENTS

ISSUE 211 SEPTEMBER 2026



Labor, racism and One Nation

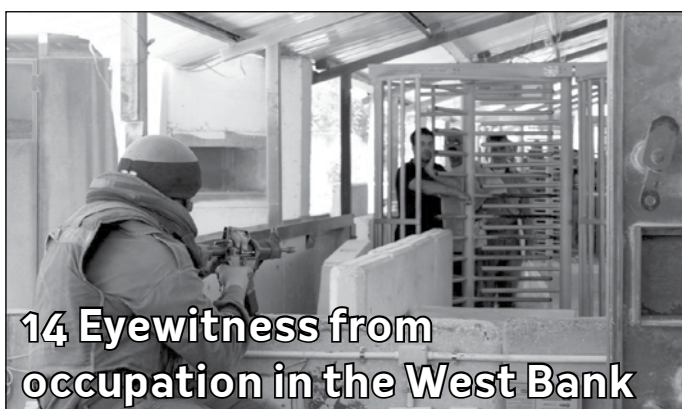
5 Labor's anti-immigration measures boost One Nation

7 New refugee crisis on Naoero

18 Pauline Hanson's racist history



12 Lessons from Victorian teachers' rank-and-file revolt



14 Eyewitness from occupation in the West Bank

Australia

6 Labor backs mining and tech profits over climate targets

8 ACTU shuffles deck chairs but nothing's changed

9 Victorian Labor targets RAFFWU

20 AUKUS deal expands US bases for war on China



International

10 Germany rearms with massive military budget and cuts to services

11 Wins for the left inside Democratic Party

17 Trump mired in Iran standoff



INSIDE THE \$Y\$TEM

School sexual assaults expose a sexist system

A SUCCESSION of alleged sexual assaults by private schoolboys in Sydney has raised renewed shock about the scale of sexism among boys.

Three students from elite Scots College, one 13-year-old and two 14-year-olds, were arrested in August for raping a 13-year-old girl in an alleyway. In a separate incident two students from St Gregory's College in south-west Sydney and a third from nearby Elderslie High allegedly gang raped a 17-year-old girl the same month.

Chanel Contos' Teach Us Consent campaign in 2021 exposed the scale of sexual abuse among school-aged kids and saw revised consent education introduced in schools three years ago.

NSW Education Minister Prue Car has blamed misogyny on social media, saying schools "do everything possible inside the school gate".

She said, "Too many of our young boys, when they walk outside of school and get onto their phones, are actually subject to some pretty horrific, hateful stuff online."

However, it's not only the manosphere and social media that are to blame. We live in a society that is saturated in sexism.

Five Sydney Swans players are also facing sexual assault allegations after one of them hired topless waitresses to join a late-night party following a game in Melbourne. This has once again exposed the sexist culture that exists in men's sports.

Swans CEO Matthew Pavlich responded by saying he was "shocked and disappointed" that the players "found themselves in this situation", as if they stumbled into it without



Wealthy Scots College in Sydney Photo: JCA Architects

bearing any responsibility.

Others, such as former player and Channel Seven commentator Kane Cornes, suggested the main tragedy was that it had ruined the Swans' season.

Louise Clegg, conservative lawyer and wife of Angus Taylor, similarly wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the rape by Scots College boys was the "foreseeable consequence" of parents permitting "teenagers to drink themselves senseless on weekends at unsupervised parties".

These elite private schools, especially male-only schools like Scots College that have repeatedly found themselves at the centre of sexist scandals, are merely the most extreme symbol of the sexist rot across the whole system.

Sexism is structured into the family relationships that we are brought up in, with women still bearing the main responsibility for bringing up children and caring roles, while men are expected to provide for the family and remain tough.

This is also reflected in the workforce, with women concentrated in care industries like teaching, nursing and childcare. And sexist stereotypes abound in entertainment, the film and music industries.

No amount of consent education or controls on social media are going to counter the sexism that pervades our society. We must fight sexism wherever it exists, and the capitalist system that perpetuates it.

Ex-government officials dominate lobbying

FORMER GOVERNMENT officials make up 64 per cent of Canberra's registered lobbyists, a report by the Australian Democracy Network found.

The bulk of them were former ministerial advisers but they also include 22 former federal government ministers such as Chris Pyne, Julie Bishop, Robert Hill, Gary Gray, Joel Fitzgibbon, Lindsay Tanner and Stephen Conroy.

This "revolving door" allows companies to use the political contacts and insider experience of former government officials to buy access and shape government policy.

Meltdown on US aircraft carrier

SAILORS ABOARD aircraft carrier the *USS Abraham Lincoln* tried to jump overboard and commit suicide in the face of deteriorating conditions off the coast of Iran.

A Democratic member of congress, Mike Levin, described "mouldy showers, broken toilets, laundry down for weeks, long stretches with no hot water, a meal that came down to half a cup of rice and two tortillas" under the strain of its long mission.

Its more than 5000 troops spent over eight months at sea during an extended deployment, until the Navy was forced to remove it from the combat zone.

One spouse said her husband had texted her saying "he hopes he doesn't wake up tomorrow".

Aircraft carriers are one of the US's key weapons for projecting military force. The breakdown on the carrier shows how US imperialism is overstretched—and the failure of Trump's onslaught on Iran.

Construction bosses caught using bikies

THE TAKEOVER of the CFMEU was justified by claims it was infiltrated by bikies and organised crime. But the Queensland inquiry into the union has found it was construction bosses hiring bikies to threaten CFMEU delegates.

Building company BMD was one of the main contractors on the \$353 million Centenary Bridge upgrade in Brisbane. It hired a security company run by Gary Samuel following CFMEU stopwork action that disrupted the project. In June 2024 Samuel picked up three Comancheros motorcycle gang members from the airport and drove them near the construction site.

CCTV footage showed one of the gang members, Bemir Saracevic, threatening a CFMEU delegate at the site and telling him he would "f---ing burn your house down" and "kill your kids".

Video footage also showed two BMD general managers leaving a nearby restaurant minutes before the Comancheros members and Samuel left the same restaurant.

One of the BMD managers was also stopped by police a year later and found in the company of a suspected Comancheros member.

Victoria's Indigenous Voice ignored

VICTORIA'S INDIGENOUS Voice has made its first statement on government policy—and been completely ignored.

It called for the scrapping of the Victorian Labor government's Corrections Amendment Bill, which allows authorities to deny prisoners one hour outdoors daily.

The new law, which passed parliament at the end of August, breaches the UN's Nelson Mandela rules, which set minimum standards for prisoners including one hour a day outside, weather permitting.

Gellung Warl, Victoria's First People's Assembly, was set up as part of the state government's treaty process. Its co-chairs said the bill was "inconsistent with the spirit and intent of Statewide Treaty" and would have a "disproportionate impact" on Indigenous people, given their appalling rates of imprisonment.

EDITORIAL

Labor's anti-immigration measures boost One Nation—we need to fight back

ONE NATION'S win in the Secret Harbour by-election in Perth saw it take a safe Labor seat with a swing of 18.7 per cent. This shows how much of a threat Hanson really is.

There is no room for complacency about One Nation's surge. The far right is on the rise globally, with the rise of Donald Trump and racist parties across Europe. Labor's failures are opening the door to the far right here.

The high school student protests against One Nation show the kind of response needed. Thousands walked out of school to rage against Pauline Hanson's racism and transphobia, defying a right-wing media campaign against them.

But we will need a much wider campaign against racism and the far right to turn things around.

Victoria's state election in November looks set to see the state Labor government booted out of office. As pollster Kos Samarras put it, "Unless something changes, a swag of Melbourne seats with the same profile as Secret Harbour will go the same way."

It is likely that the Victorian Liberals will form government in coalition with One Nation. Such a reactionary government would be a boost for One Nation and see a series of attacks on workers, migrant communities, trans rights and climate policies.

Anthony Albanese denounced Hanson as "dangerous, divisive and downright dishonest" following the result in WA. But Labor's own attacks on immigration have been feeding her racist lies.

Instead of rejecting the efforts to scapegoat immigration for the housing crisis Labor has given them oxygen through conceding that immigration is too high.

For months Albanese has been saying that Labor was "getting the numbers down". But it's now proposing more cuts to restrict migration.

Immigration Minister Tony Burke has delayed their announcement, but Labor has already flagged cutting work rights for asylum seekers whose claims are being processed, restricting family visas and sending out more immigration officers to ramp up deportations.

This is the kind of mainstream racism that legitimises Pauline Hanson.

Opposition to immigration is the key issue driving One Nation. More One Nation supporters cited immigration



as the country's biggest problem than any other issue, in recent polling for the Nine Papers.

"Migration is the real thing motivating One Nation supporters", pollster John Utting concluded.

But immigration is not to blame for the surge in prices of housing and rents. It is the rampant property speculation by rich investors over recent decades that is the main reason for the affordability crisis.

House prices are currently falling, down around 5 per cent in the last three months in Melbourne and Sydney. But it's not because of reduced migration. Rising interest rates and the modest change to capital gains tax are discouraging investors.

The number of new properties built has actually outpaced population growth for the past 20 years.

Israel's outrages

Albanese has also fed racism through his support for Israel and efforts to demonise protests for Palestine.

So his response to the Israel Defence Forces's decision not to open a criminal investigation into the killing of Australian aid worker Zomi Frankcom and her colleagues in Gaza stinks of hypocrisy.

Albanese branded the decision "an outrage". But his government continues to help arm Israel's genocide, through allowing the export of F-35 fighter jet parts, explosive material and military-grade steel. And it continues to provide Israel and the

Above: High school students protest against Pauline Hanson in Melbourne Photo: Matt Hrkac

US intelligence for missile targeting from the Pine Gap spy base. IDF members were given visas to run in the Sydney marathon.

We need to keep fighting for sanctions on Israel to stop the flow of arms, and to cut Australia's ties with the US. Everyone should join the day of action on 20 September that will link opposition to AUKUS with Israel's genocide.

Building resistance from below is also crucial to reversing the rise of One Nation. The misery of falling wages and rising rents is fuelling their support.

Alongside anti-racism rallies and organising, a more serious union fight for wage rises would help turn the tide. Workers have lost 5 per cent in real wages since 2021.

Victorian teachers and school staff have shown the kind of rank-and-file organising that can push our unions to fight. They showed how strikes can win gains for workers on pay and conditions—and how to fight Labor governments that deliver austerity and real wage cuts.

Following the teachers' strikes, HSU health workers, medical scientists, pharmacists and audiologists won a 28 per cent pay increase over the next three and half years.

In Victoria council workers and doctors have taken strike action, as well as university staff at Melbourne Uni and Sydney Uni.

This is the kind of struggle that can pose a real alternative to Labor's failures around the cost of living crisis and the racist scapegoating of One Nation.

Opposition to immigration is the key issue driving One Nation

Labor burns its climate targets for big tech and mining profits

By Paddy Gibson

THE DEATH toll from catastrophic flash floods and landslides in Nepal and Tibet reached 950 as *Solidarity* went to press, with more than 4000 people still missing.

The disaster was triggered by the collapse of glacial ice and rock in the Himalayas.

One quarter of the world's population relies on water that comes from Himalayan glaciers, which could shrink by 80 per cent by the end of the century if carbon emissions continue.

Australia is the second largest fossil fuel exporter in the world, the source of almost 5 per cent of global emissions.

But the Albanese government continues to approve major gas and coal export projects and only has emissions reduction targets for domestic industry.

Even these pathetic targets are failing badly and set to be blown out of the water by the AI boom.

US tech companies are lining up to invest hundreds of billions of dollars rolling out energy-guzzling AI data centres across Australia.

The US ruling class sees AI as crucial for maintaining economic and military advantages over China.

Our rulers agree, with Deputy PM Richard Marles visiting the US in August for an AUKUS summit and meetings with tech executives about making Australia a "second home" for AI infrastructure. Marles said AI would soon be driving F-35 fighter jets and submarines insisting, "we're with the United States on this".

Plans in NSW alone would see data centres draw 13GW of power—more than the state's current average daily energy use.

Despite Albanese's claims that new data centres will be powered with renewables, he knows this is not possible in the timeframe available to cash in on the boom.

He is certainly hoping data centres might help turn around collapsing renewable energy investment, but Albanese will not stop state governments approving huge new gas-fired power stations to run data centres.

Market failure—and fraud

Since Albanese took office, Australia's domestic emissions have essentially flatlined, decreasing just 1.8 per cent since 2022.



Above: Protest against a data centre in Ireland
Photo: Climate Camp Ireland

.....
Investment in new renewable power generation infrastructure is at a ten-year low

Labor's flagship policy, the "Safeguard Mechanism", places emissions reduction requirements on the heaviest polluting companies. But these obligations can be met entirely through purchasing carbon credits.

This "offset" system relies on the fraudulent claim that vegetation growth can compensate for the burning of fossil fuels.

The lack of pressure for any real action saw Rio Tinto and BHP recently walking away from a combined \$12 billion worth of investment in decarbonisation.

Renewable energy has increased under Labor, from 33 per cent of the national grid in 2022 to 42 per cent today. But this has primarily come from uptake of rooftop solar. Investment in new renewable power generation infrastructure is at a ten-year low.

Climate Minister Chris Bowen has conceded that Labor's target of 82 per cent renewable energy by 2030 looks unlikely.

At the centre of his failing strategy is the Capacity Investment Scheme (CIS), where the Commonwealth underwrites renewable energy generation through paying companies directly to guarantee a minimum price for the power they generate.

But only 14 of the 89 major projects given CIS contracts have gone ahead.

A major part of the problem is the energy transmission system. New transmission infrastructure required to bring power from renewable projects to the grid is well behind schedule.

Uncertainty about when they might be able to connect and sell their power means investors simply aren't putting up the cash to build projects.

Labor is scrambling for solutions, hoping data centres could be a silver bullet. Albanese and Bowen have floated yet another market scheme, where data centre developers purchase certificates for the supply of future renewable generation to "offset" the use of fossil fuels.

Labor applied a similar strategy in August to placate Rio Tinto executives threatening to shut down the aluminium smelter at Tomago, which uses 11 per cent of NSW's electricity.

Rio had come to the end of a 20-year power deal signed with the state government prior to power privatisation. It claimed energy prices were now too high to make the business viable.

So Albanese and Minns put up a combined \$2.5 billion over ten years to fund long-term purchasing agreements with renewable energy developers, again hoping to stimulate new investment.

Power from these projects will be on-sold to Rio for a fraction of the market rate.

Rather than hand huge subsidies to private energy companies and resource giants, the whole electricity system needs to be taken into public hands, along with essential infrastructure like the Tomago smelter.

This is the only way to drive the urgent transition needed to move away from fossil fuels and stop catastrophic climate change.

Labor's detention policy brings new refugee crisis on Naoero

By Luke Ottavi and Ian Rintoul

FOR MONTHS Labor has been legitimising One Nation's racism, making concession after concession to its anti-migration agenda.

Instead of a relentless campaign against One Nation, Labor has been ploughing the political ground in which One Nation's sows its toxic seed.

In early August, Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke booked a National Press Club address to outline how Labor was going to impose immigration cuts but cancelled at the last minute after flak from employer groups and dissent erupted in Labor's cabinet over the details.

Later that month, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told the News-corp Dubbo Bush Summit about Labor's plan to tackle One Nation's rise: "There is a current spike in the support for One Nation ... but we've responded. We started lowering the numbers [of migrants] well before [One Nation's surging popularity] occurred because we recognised that we want to get [migration] right to assist the Australian economy."

Then Burke's office confirmed that Labor was planning to slash the refugee intake from 20,000 to 13,750 a year.

Refugee support organisations had been warned weeks earlier that the cuts were on the cards.

It was a step too far. As anger erupted in Labor's backbench and across the refugee sector, Albanese intervened to over-rule Burke.

But the incident only made it even more obvious that Labor is dancing to One Nation's tune.

New crisis on Naoero

The 24 August was the 25th anniversary of the Tampa incident when then Prime Minister John Howard used the Australian military to prevent the Norwegian ship *MV Tampa* landing 433 mostly Afghan asylum-seekers on Christmas Island.

It marked the beginning of the now infamous "Australian solution", using offshore detention to refuse to process or settle refugees in Australia.

Howard launched "Fortress Australia" with his famous election line, "We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come."



Above: Protest calling for the end of detention on Nauru back in 2014

While there have been twists and turns over the years, the Albanese government is totally committed to offshore detention.

Albanese transferred the remaining refugees on Naoero to Australia in June 2023. But Labor remained committed to offshore detention and since sent all new asylum-seeker boat arrivals to the South Pacific island.

Now there are more than 100 asylum-seekers on Naoero. After the High Court struck down indefinite immigration detention on the mainland, Albanese is using Trump-like laws to deport refugees from Australia to indefinite detention there.

But 25 years after Tampa, Naoero is engulfed by yet another humanitarian crisis. On 24 August, scores of asylum-seekers waited over ten hours outside the Eigu supermarket for rice that had been unavailable for weeks.

The shortage of rice (and flour) was just the tip of the iceberg of what Bangladeshi asylum-seekers called weaponised starvation in their hand-written letter to Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke.

The allowance paid to asylum-seekers is too little for them to afford to buy food even when it is available. Most asylum-seekers are subsisting on one meal a day. The situation is made worse by the frequent electricity blackouts that spoil any food stored in the fridge.

The hostility of dei-Naoero (local inhabitants of Naoero) towards asylum-seekers continues to plague the island, and asylum-seekers face a regime of harassment and frequent assaults and robberies exacerbated by the complete indifference of the police, who are often related to the perpetrators.

Their appeal to the Minister refers to "the total lack of security and sub-human conditions that we are forced to endure". They write, "We are trapped in a system that is causing us severe physical and psychological destruction."

Asylum-seekers are not allowed to work. And Muslim asylum-seekers cannot openly practise their religion.

Over the last two years, only a handful of asylum-seekers have been found to be refugees. Now the Naoero authorities are ramping up the threats to forcibly deport asylum-seekers to their home country. Some Bangladeshis have been told that unless they return home, their allowance will be cut.

In the aftermath of Labor losing the seat of Secret Harbour to One Nation in West Australia Albanese proclaimed, "We simply must defeat them [One Nation]. We owe it to history."

Tragically Labor shows no sign at all of learning from history. One Nation won't be defeated by outdoing their racism.

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Scores of asylum-seekers waited over ten hours for rice that had been unavailable for weeks

ACTU shuffles the deck chairs: McManus out, Donnelly in, but nothing's changed

By Ian Rintoul and Judy McVey

MELISSA DONNELLY has been declared the new secretary of the ACTU. She will be taking over a much-diminished union movement from Sally McManus who is stepping down on 31 August.

When Sally McManus became ACTU secretary in 2017, she famously defended the CFMEU's willingness to take unlawful strike action to defend the safety and conditions of members, declaring that when a law is unjust, "I don't think there's a problem with breaking it."

McManus never lived up to the promise and later infamously provided willing support to the Albanese government's takeover of the CFMEU.

So did Donnelly, a member of Labor's left faction. As secretary of the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU), she was part of the Labor Party's National Executive that twice approved placing the CFMEU under Administration.

Donnelly, as a 44-year-old mother, has been hailed as a new face representing the more typical member of Australia's majority-female union movement. But Donnelly has never been a public servant. Donnelly began working for the CPSU as a lawyer, then joined the CPSU executive in 2015!

Donnelly told *The Mandarin*, "I am eager to get to work delivering real outcomes for working people and advancing the interests of workers across the country."

But the outcomes in the CPSU under her leadership tell a different story. In 2024, the CPSU accepted an 11.2 per cent pay increase over three years, including a 0.92 per cent sign-on bonus, well short of the claim of 20 per cent.

One CPSU delegate told *Solidarity*, "In real terms, our pay declined by about 10 per cent over the period of her [Donnelly's] leadership. At best Melissa Donnelly could be described as providing uninspiring leadership with no real gains to pay."

"I think Melissa's biggest weakness is that she failed to stop the decline in union density. It is true that when she left the CPSU the membership numbers were slightly higher than when she started. But this was



Above: Melissa Donnelly with outgoing ACTU Secretary Sally McManus Photo: CPSU

mostly driven by a large increase in the total number of APS staff. In contrast, density plummeted from over 30 per cent to just over 20 per cent by the time Donnelly left."

Lobbying Labor

Not surprisingly, both Albanese and Labor's Minister for the Public Service, Katy Gallagher, have welcomed Donnelly's appointment to the ACTU. Gallagher highlighted "their close working relationship in efforts to strengthen the public service".

The ACTU has focused on lobbying Labor to get legislated pay rises such as those for aged care and early childhood educators, but real wages keep falling. The OECD reports that average real wages in Australia have fallen by 5 per cent since 2021, meaning many are even further behind. (In Britain they have increased by 8.8 per cent!)

Donnelly's former union, the CPSU, has just started agency bargaining for their new enterprise agreement. The claim is for a pay rise matching cost of living or 5 per cent per year (whichever is greater), for three years.

Chris Warren, CPSU delegate, former governing councillor and spokesperson for the Members United reform group ticket in the upcoming CPSU elections, told *Solidarity*, "The ACTU needs leaders who have won inflation-adjusted wage gains and have built real union density. During

her tenure as CPSU National Secretary, Melissa simply has not done that. She had a chance to do it now, in the upcoming APS bargain, but she is taking the next step in her career instead.

"Obviously members will be feeling let down, but there are opportunities for the rank-and-file to organise around the current bargaining claims."

Unjust laws do need to be broken. The enterprise bargaining laws that limit strikes to protected bargaining periods are shackling workers' ability to fight back.

Recent changes to the Fair Work Act, like the intractable bargaining clause, have further strengthened the bosses' hand in industrial disputes.

Before the recent Labor Party national conference, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union released a policy paper demanding that the federal government remove all legal restrictions on the right to strike, and legal hurdles like notice periods before stopping work.

It was a breath of fresh air, but it did not make it to the floor of the Labor conference.

Not only has the ACTU not fought to break the unjust laws against unions, it has also facilitated the bosses' and government's attack on the CFMEU, the most prominent militant union known for breaking them. Don't expect anything more from Donnelly. Any real change will have to be fought from below.

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"In real terms, our pay declined by about 10 per cent over the period of Donnelly's leadership"—CPSU delegate

Tell Victorian Labor—hands off RAFFWU

By David Glanz

NEW VICTORIAN Premier Ben Carroll is rewarding the conservative union that has backed his career by moving to shut down its more militant rival.

Carroll is in the Labor Right faction, dominated by the SDA shop-workers' union.

Just weeks into his new role, he has introduced legislation that could wipe out the Retail and Fast Food Workers Union (RAFFWU), which has been a thorn in the side of the SDA.

It seems clear that this is the SDA's reward for backing Carroll's overthrow of the former Premier, Jacinta Allan.

The new law would bar a group with an "industrial relations purpose" from becoming or staying an incorporated association, which gives RAFFWU officials some legal protection. It would probably spell the end for RAFFWU, which has operated since 2016. It's a kick in the teeth for young retail workers who have tried to build active unionism.

Disgracefully, the Victorian Trades Hall Council responded to the legislation with a one-word statement, "Good".

Red unions

Carroll launched the Bill saying, "These new laws will stop workers being scammed out of real union protection and stop hate groups from hiding behind community group status."

Labor claims that its main reason for the Bill is to block far right groups from incorporating and to prevent the mis-named Red unions.

But the current law already allows for groups to be barred if they are illegal or against the public interest—like Nazis.

And the Red unions—set up primarily during the pandemic in revolt against vaccine mandates—are industrially irrelevant, with a combined national membership of just 26,000 across five sectors.

The Red teachers' union claims a national membership of just 3243. By contrast, the Australian Education Union in Victoria recruited some 15,000 new members during its recent EBA campaign for a total of more than 50,000.

As *Solidarity* went to press, Labor's Bill had progressed to the upper house, which next sits on 8 Sep-



Above: RAFFWU members campaigning for an agreement at Apple Stores Photo: RAFFWU

tember. It may face defeat there, with the Greens opposing it from the left in defence of RAFFWU and the Liberals committing to voting it down in support of the scab Red unions.

But regardless of the vote, it is another example of the pro-business outlook of the Carroll government along with its announcement of a royal commission into the most militant union in the state, the construction workers' CFMEU.

Short cuts

The Fair Work Act prevents RAFFWU from registering as a union as only one union is allowed per sector and the SDA "owns" retail.

RAFFWU members have organised some successful industrial campaigns, like at the Better Read Than Dead bookshop in Sydney and the Readings bookshops in Melbourne.

But RAFFWU's main activity has been supporting legal action that has won gains and exposed shocking agreements negotiated by the SDA with employers like Woolworths and Coles. A recent win in a court case brought by a member over underpayment at Domino's could see thousands getting backpay.

While Carroll's legislation must be opposed, there are limits to the RAFFWU model. An earlier attempt at a militant breakaway, the Shearers and Rural Workers Union, formed in Victoria in 1994 as an alternative to the do-nothing Australian Workers Union, sank without a trace.

By contrast, rank-and-file organising in the existing unions can make a difference.

Nurses in Victoria revolted against

a sub-standard EBA and forced their union to fight for a much improved deal. Teachers in Victoria organised successfully this year against Labor's inadequate offer, in defiance of officials who wanted to wrap up the campaign.

It was rank-and-file organising that led to the second statewide strike and the threat of a third, forcing the government to concede improvements on pay and on conditions for educational support staff.

Rank and File Action won the leadership of the university workers' union, the NTEU, at the University of Sydney and led unprecedented strike action in 2023 that won sick pay for casuals.

Rank-and-file reform tickets have kicked out lacklustre leaders in the public service unions in Victoria and South Australia and now among allied health workers in Victoria. A militant ticket came close to taking the national leadership of the United Workers Union.

In 1988, a left reform ticket won control of the Federated Clerks Union (now ASU Private), beating an entrenched bureaucracy run by Groupers (fiercely anti-Communist ALP members) with similar politics to the SDA today.

Militants can't dodge their conservative leaderships—that simply abandons the mass of members to their do-nothing officials. RAFFWU has made small gains in retail but systematic organising among the SDA rank and file is needed to tackle the union's conservative leadership.

It's not glamorous work but building rank-and-file networks that pressure the officials and organise independently to fight is key to rebuilding militant unionism.

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It is another example of the pro-business outlook of the Carroll government

Germany hikes military spending and slashes services

By Ruby Wawn

THE GERMAN government—a coalition of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD)—is massively increasing military spending, with 140 billion euros allocated in the 2027 federal budget. This represents a 180 per cent increase in spending since 2021.

At the same time, the budget will see huge cuts to social services, with 34 billion euros slashed from health, 7 billion from education and 5 billion from transport.

To fund their militarisation, the government is also taking on massive debt, with unlimited debt for military spending approved by the previous parliament in its final days of government. “We can’t defend ourselves against Putin with a balanced budget,” said SPD finance minister Lars Klingbeil.

Alongside this, the government has pushed through a “summer of reforms” it claims will “revive the stagnating economy and keep Germany competitive in a changing world”.

The reforms include cuts to health services, raising the retirement age, privatising pensions, tightening sick leave regulations, extending the eight-hour working day and giving bosses greater power to hire insecure workers.

After suspending conscription in 2011, Germany now plans to build “the strongest conventional military force in Europe” through recruiting an additional 80,000 active-duty troops and tripling their reserves to 200,000 by 2035.

In November last year, the parliament voted to introduce voluntary conscription. All men aged 18 must complete a form indicating their willingness to serve in the army and provide information about their health and education. But after sending out 300,000 invitations, only 530 people have signed up.

In an effort to boost recruitment, soldiers are being sent into schools, bus stops are plastered with ads for a new YouTube series called “Generation Military Service”, and young people are reportedly receiving leaflets to join the army with their takeaway food.

Unwilling to serve

Germany was not allowed to re-establish an army after the Second World War until 1955. After the Berlin Wall



Bus stops in Germany are plastered with ads for a new YouTube series, ‘Generation military service’

Thousands of young people are taking to the streets against increasing militarisation and plans for conscription

fell in 1989, military spending fell to little more than 1 per cent of GDP.

Conservative MP and chair of the defence committee, Thomas Roewekamp, has said, “If Germany cannot reach its targets through the voluntary system, we will have to return to conscription.”

He is right to hold “serious doubts that we can”. Conscription is extremely unpopular with young Germans, with 99.82 per cent of 18-year-old men reporting they are unwilling to serve in the army.

And in the first six months of 2026, almost 6000 young men applied for exemption from military service on moral or religious grounds, more than double the number of applications in 2025.

Instead, thousands of young people are taking to the streets against the state’s increasing militarisation, donning keffiyehs and carrying signs saying, “We are not cannon fodder” and “Send Friedrich Merz to the front line”.

Schulstreik Gegen Wehrpflicht (School Strike Against Conscription) has been organising school strikes against conscription since December. This year, more than 50,000 protesters have taken to the streets in further strikes, on 5 March and 8 May, with the next action planned for 25 September.

Up to 10,000 protested in Berlin in March, including some parents and teachers from the German Education Union (GEW). One teacher said, “The government is spending billions more

on weapons at the same time they are cutting education. This means that we are unable to serve our students, and then they are sent to the military to shoot at other people.”

A student protester told British *Socialist Worker*, “Schools, culture, sport and youth clubs are being shut down, because they say there’s no money. But they always find money for war.”

In 2025, global military spending was \$US2.88 trillion, equating to \$US350 for every person on the planet—the largest level of military spending in history. This number will only continue to grow after NATO leaders reaffirmed their commitment to spending 5 per cent of GDP on defence by 2035.

The surge in military spending in Germany, and across the world, is a result of inter-imperialist competition as Western nations scramble to secure access to resources and global markets in a growing rivalry with China and Russia.

Across Europe, ruling class fears of Russian imperialism after the invasion of Ukraine are fuelling militarisation, with Germany warning that Russia could be ready to attack a NATO country by 2029.

Around the world, we must follow the lead of the student strikers and resist the drive to militarisation and war. In Australia, this means fighting to end the AUKUS deal and opposing Australian imperialism in the Pacific.

Victories for the left in US Democrats show mood for change

By Mark Gillespie

THE DEEPENING economic, social and political crisis in the United States, combined with the polarisation produced by Donald Trump's rule, is fuelling a revival of the Democrats.

Growing numbers are no longer satisfied with simply removing Trump and replacing him with a slightly more liberal version of corporate and imperialist rule.

Increasingly, Democratic Party establishment candidates are being challenged by those with more radical policies.

In early August, Abdul El-Sayed won the bitterly contested Democratic Senate primary in Michigan. Although he does not identify as a socialist, his platform included demands associated with the left: abolishing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), extending Medicare to all, pausing the expansion of AI data centres, raising wages, taxing billionaires and cutting US military assistance to Israel.

He faced enormous opposition from Democratic Party-aligned forces, wealthy donors and the pro-Israel lobby. His moderate opponent, Haley Stevens, spent roughly \$70 million during the campaign, outspending El-Sayed by more than 12 to one. Yet El-Sayed won.

Just two weeks later, Angie Nixon, a union organiser, outspoken critic of Israel's war in Gaza and member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), won the Democratic Senate primary in Florida.

The DSA describes itself as a political and activist organisation committed to a society in which working people democratically control the economy and society. But it is not an independent electoral party. Most of its candidates run in Democratic primaries.

The organisation has grown from about 6000 members in 2015 to more than 120,000 today. Among its most prominent elected figures are New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani and House of Representatives members Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib and Greg Casar.

Other left candidates are also making gains. Katie Wilson, who describes herself as a "democratic socialist" and was endorsed by the University of Washington's Young DSA chapter, was elected mayor of Seattle in June. In Washington DC, self-



Above: Abdul El-Sayed won the Democratic Senate primary in Michigan
Photo: Abdul El-Sayed

described democratic socialist Janeese Lewis George won the Democratic mayoral primary with DSA backing and is heavily favoured in November.

Positive opinion of socialism

In the primary cycle leading up to November's midterm elections, the DSA has endorsed 174 candidates. Sixty-four have won, 57 have lost and 53 contests remain undecided. Polling shows that 39 per cent of Americans have a positive opinion of socialism; among young people, the figure rises to more than half.

The electoral success of DSA and other progressive candidates has provoked a backlash from the right and panic within the Democratic establishment. Republicans are using the DSA's growth to whip up a red-scare campaign against the Democrats. House Speaker Mike Johnson declared that "the barbarians are inside the gate", while Trump claimed "communists" wanted to blow up Mount Rushmore.

But the Democrats are a thoroughly capitalist party. Even before the election, El-Sayed removed some YouTube videos in which he had urged government officials to consider defunding the police.

Ocasio-Cortez previously lost the DSA's national endorsement over her support for "defensive" weapons for Israel, although she has since changed her position and rejoined the organisation. Mamdani has also distanced himself from his previous support to "defund the police".

This backsliding by left Democrats has opened an important debate on the

US left about the relationship between electoral politics and mass movements.

If socialists want to pose a serious alternative to Trump and the right, building mass movements must be at the centre of their politics. Time and again, movements have been channelled into support for the Democrats and demobilised.

Michigan provides an important example. The state became the site of a sustained grassroots campaign against ICE and its proposed 500-bed detention centre near Detroit Metropolitan Airport. Weekly protests, economic boycotts and local government legal action eventually forced ICE to abandon the plans.

El-Sayed made "Abolish ICE" central to his campaign and repeatedly highlighted the fact that his opponent had voted to fund the agency in Congress. But it was the movement that had already mobilised thousands of people to drive ICE out of Minneapolis.

It was this experience of collective struggle—people organising, protesting and winning—that inspired similar action across the United States.

It will not be Democratic victories that provide the radical alternative to Trump that is needed. That approach has failed US workers miserably.

If the left is to challenge both Trump and the Democratic establishment, it needs to offer a clear fighting alternative independent of the Democrats, and build mass movements to fight for Palestine, oppose ICE and the system of rule by the billionaires.

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Backsliding by left Democrats has opened an important debate about electoral politics

VICTORIAN TEACHERS— LESSONS FROM A UNION RANK-AND-FILE REVOLT

Lucy Honan spoke to *Solidarity* about the lessons from Victorian teachers and school staff's bargaining campaign and the role of rank-and-file organising in it

AFTER A campaign driven by unrelenting rank-and-file organising, Victorian teachers and school staff voted to accept a new offer from the government in August.

Fight the Crisis was crucial to pushing the campaign forward.

Lucy Honan, an activist with the group, told *Solidarity*, “We broke out of the normal polite EBA exchange and pushed for demands that were serious about trying to deal with the crisis in schools.

“It was significant that the rank-and-file organised a fight for them, independent of the union leadership, and also against the leadership when we needed to.

“Fight the Crisis came together out of fighting for our union to support Palestine and defend staff who stood up for Palestine. That process saw members coming up against a refusal to act from our union leadership. There were about 15 of us who drew the lesson that we have to do this ourselves.

“We started developing basic union practices like writing a motion, taking it to your sub-branch (the union meeting at your school), regional union meetings and so on.

“Our union elections came up in 2024 and it was clear to us that we couldn’t just run on Palestine, we needed to talk about the crisis in our schools.

“We’re facing burnout rates of new teachers within the first three years faster than emergency nurses. It’s normal to collapse primary classes so that you’ve got 50 kids in a room and one teacher.

“School refusal rates, with kids just not coping with school, and cuts to year 11 and 12 subjects, mean that Virtual School Victoria is now the biggest school in the state with about 7000 kids.

“In the previous EBA we got less

than 2 per cent per year pay rise and people were burning with anger and wanting to fight. So we ran on a ticket called Fight the Crisis and our headline demand was ‘strike to fight the crisis’. People wanted to strike simply because they hate this government so much.

“The way AEU council is organised geographically meant although we got 38 per cent in the presidential election, we only got seven out of 120 seats on council. But it gave us confidence that we had hit a nerve and that members wanted to strike.”

When the union started discussing its log of claims for bargaining, Fight the Crisis came up with its own demands. “We started sending that to people and building our networks. And we had a strike pledge saying I’m willing to strike for these demands. So we were raising that we would have to fight from the beginning.

“The union leadership got the message. The day our EBA expired they began the process to vote to strike. People knew that we had pushed them into this.

“In March we went out on strike and it was an extraordinary day, with 30,000 people on the streets.” This was the union’s first strike in 13 years.

That strike “grew the union by 15,000 members, from 35,000 to more than 50,000”.

“At the beginning of the dispute, it appeared that the union leadership wanted to lead a fight. But I think they underestimated the extent of the crisis in schools and how much people want to fight for change.

“That became clear after that first strike. They tried to sell us an in-principle agreement, telling members that this was the best that we could get.

“There were regional briefings which the officials would front, and they would just get humiliated at

.....
People wanted to strike simply because they hate this government so much
—————

every single one. Fight the Crisis members argued that the agreement was not good enough, and Socialists in Schools opposed it as well.”

The deal was voted down by 58 per cent of union members, in a rare defeat for a union-backed deal.

“After the membership voted against the agreement, the union leadership refused to call another strike,” Lucy explained.

“But as soon as it became clear that we were going to push from the bottom up and call a strike regardless, they scrambled to put themselves at the head of it.

“That contradictory position meant that when the next offers came through, they didn’t want to endorse them because that would be risking their leadership again. They also couldn’t argue against them. So they just did what the department wanted them to do, which was essentially run a bosses’ ballot for them every time a new offer was put.

“Instead of the usual practice where sub-branches meet and hold a collective discussion about it, they just put it to a text message ballot.”

Fight the Crisis organised within the union both to campaign to vote no to the proposed agreements and to push for further strike action.

After the officials refused to call a second strike day for instance, “We held a strike committee and agreed to send out a resolution for a 4 August strike to all our contacts,” Lucy said. “We got everybody within Fight the Crisis to see if they could get it up in their sub-branch.

“Within the last week of school 20 sub-branches committed to the strike action. We put out Instagram reels appealing to people to call the strike from the bottom up. In the school holidays, we mailed schools that we didn’t have direct contact with, inviting people to pass the motion. We

followed up with emails, we cold-called schools and asked to speak to the union rep.

“We rocked up at parking lots at schools to see what teachers at different schools were saying and reach out to people. We made a map of all the schools that had called the strike and put that online. It was a building and campaigning process from the bottom up.”

After this, the union backflipped and agreed to call a second strike day on 23 July.

Rank-and-file organisation

“Fight the Crisis combines people who are frustrated with the union leadership and want to see them replaced, and also people who see that no matter what happens, the power to make change is with the rank-and-file, never with the union officials.

“Socialists see trade union officials as mediators between the employers and the working class. They sit at the negotiating table and deal with the bosses all the time. Unlike rank-and-file workers they do not have to live the reality of the workplace.”

This means union officials face conservatising pressures to compromise instead of leading a serious fight.

“As Solidarity members within Fight the Crisis, we led the strategy to push the rank-and-file to take independent action into the campaign. We showed how organising at a rank-and-file level independently of the union officials can push the officials into taking more serious strike action and win gains.

“Without Solidarity members in the heart of this campaign, there would not have been any further strikes; local or statewide.

“The first in-principle agreement that the union put to us included a small pay rise over four years that would have kept us behind inflation counting from 2020,” Lucy said.

“After we rejected that and pushed for a second strike, we won an offer to halve meeting times. That’s an hour extra preparation time that every teacher won. We increased the pay offer so that at least some people have the chance of being above inflation during this agreement.

“We won wage rises for education support staff to be included as part of their base salary rather than add-on allowances. It showed that it was a lie that the previous offer was the best that we were going to get. It showed that strikes win.



Victorian teachers and school staff on their second state-wide strike on 23 July Photo: Matt Hrkac

“It fell short of our main demands. But the fact that there were open arguments about the way forward that were debated out at every level of the union was really significant. Some sub-branches were willing to call local forms of stop work action and protest independently, taking matters into their own hands.”

Teachers and education support staff also had to confront the anti-strike laws that restrict industrial action. But as Lucy explained, “We shouldn’t accept that because there are anti-strike laws, there’s nothing we can do. We were told we had to wrap up the campaign because of the intractable bargaining laws. That had a very intimidating impact.

“The union leadership was fear-mongering about this. When it came to us calling a strike ourselves, the union had already given notice to the department that we would be stopping work throughout term three to give comment to the media and the public.

“So we had total legal cover to stop work on 4 August but we were told that if we did that, we would be risking personal fines of \$20,000.

“The union said to us, it’s only meant for short periods of time. So we said, here’s a stop work only three hours long. The Department of Education would contact principals about these stop work actions, threatening that they were illegal. Some sub-branch reps contacted the union to get reassurance that this wasn’t the case. The union deceived them and worded [their response] to suggest that we

were risking breaking the law.

“Three sub-branches held independent stop work actions and members from five sub-branches organised before and after-work public actions.

“Even though they were smaller, these actions were politically powerful; they brought home the specific impact of the crisis to local community members, and they showed members that we always had the power to organise our own fight; we didn’t have to wait passively to be told when and how.”

The fightback against a Labor government showed that there is an alternative to both accepting its failures and the racism of One Nation.

“The far right are having a feast on the crisis that Labor has created,” Lucy said.

“What our campaign did was to offer hope not just to teachers and education support staff but also all working class people that we can fight Labor governments without giving in to One Nation.

“Doctors, healthcare workers and council workers in Victoria have all been out on strike in recent months. Workers are furious with the state government, because in every one of those areas there is a crisis that Labor has inflamed through its neoliberal policies and its wage suppression.

“Working class people fighting is exactly the antidote that we need to One Nation and the right. They have absolutely no solutions, but if we organise and fight we can win change ourselves.”

ANNEXATION, ECONOMIC STRANGULATION AND A SLOW NAKBA 'EVERY TIME I RETURN, THE WEST BANK IS SMALLER'

A Palestinian just returned from the West Bank explains how Israel is speeding up its efforts to expel the population and steal the land

I HAVE been going back and forth from Palestine for some time now. Maybe that is why I notice things differently.

When you live somewhere every day, deterioration happens around you gradually. New gates appear. Another road becomes impossible to use. A settlement expands over another hill. A journey that used to take 20 minutes takes four hours. Another family leaves a village.

But when you leave for several months and come back, you see the difference all at once. And every time I return to the West Bank, it feels smaller.

The space in which Palestinians can actually live is shrinking at an extraordinary speed. I have never seen the deterioration happen as fast as I saw it this time.

What is happening in the West Bank cannot be understood as a collection of separate problems. The checkpoint, the settlement, the empty petrol station, the unpaid salary, the demolished house, the missing medicine, lack of water, IOF soldiers driving around the city and the settler carrying a rifle are different parts of the same system.

And the objective of that system is to make Palestinian life smaller, poorer, more fragmented and eventually impossible, while taking more of the land.

As of December 2025, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) counted 925 physical obstacles restricting the movement of 3.4 million Palestinians across the West Bank, 43 per cent more than the average of the previous 20 years.

Eighty-nine checkpoints are staffed around the clock, alongside 218 partial checkpoints and 232 road

gates, of which 159 are frequently closed.

But the number matters less than the change in kind. Twenty years ago, checkpoints and gates made up around 15 per cent of the obstacles in the West Bank, while improvised piles of earth and rubble made up nearly three-quarters. Today checkpoints and gates account for almost 60 per cent of them.

A pile of earth blocking a road is crude. A steel gate that can be opened at nine, closed at quarter past, reopened at noon and closed again without explanation is something more sophisticated.

It makes uncertainty itself the instrument of control. Every journey becomes a gamble. You do not know whether you will reach the university or get to work. Whether an ambulance will pass.

In late July a woman from Qaryut, pregnant and haemorrhaging, was being driven to hospital in Nablus. Her ambulance was stopped at the Awarta checkpoint. According to the crew, soldiers closed the gate, detained them, and ordered them to switch off the engine, which shut down the medical equipment inside the vehicle. They were held for more than half an hour.

The mother survived. Her unborn child did not.

Even money has become trapped

During this trip another crisis appeared in an almost absurd form. The West Bank started running out of fuel partly because Palestinian banks had too much money.

Physical shekels have been piling up inside Palestinian banks because Israel limits how much cash those banks may send back into the Israeli

The objective is to make Palestinian life poorer, more fragmented and eventually impossible, while taking more of the land

system. The Associated Press reported in July that the ceiling is about 18 billion shekels a year, against an estimated 30 billion flowing in. So the vaults fill.

Banks start refusing large deposits. Businesses that take cash cannot bank it.

A petrol station can have money in its till and be unable to move it into the banking system to pay its supplier. Then the petrol station runs dry.

Mohammad Manasra, deputy governor of the Palestinian Monetary Authority, called it economic warfare.

And a larger danger is still approaching. Israel Discount Bank has notified Palestinian banks that it will end correspondent banking services, with Bank Hapoalim expected to follow.

Roughly 90 per cent of Palestinian exports are routed through Israel, and the overwhelming majority of imports arrive through Israeli-controlled channels. These relationships are how Palestinians pay for fuel, food, electricity, water and medicine.

Remove them and the economy cannot function.

Israeli banks provide these services under an indemnity letter from the Israeli Finance Ministry that shields them from liability under Israel's counter-terrorism financing law. Since taking office, Bezalel Smotrich has progressively shortened that indemnity from an annual instrument to renewals lasting as little as a fortnight. Under pressure from Washington he eventually extended it through the end of 2026.

Smotrich did not have to abolish the protection. He only had to make it unreliable enough that commercial institutions concluded the risk was no longer worth carrying.

But what kind of economy has to

negotiate through foreign mediators for permission to bank its own cash?

The Palestinian economy was built under Oslo into structural dependency: Israel collects the customs and GST, Palestinians use the Israeli currency, imports arrive through Israeli-controlled channels, movement depends on Israeli permits, work depends on Israeli labour markets.

Then each dependency can be squeezed separately. That is what economic domination looks like under colonialism.

The workers who are no longer allowed to work

Israel froze the permits of about 115,000 Palestinian workers after 7 October 2023.

By the first quarter of 2026, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, just 48,000 were still working there.

Israel did not simply lose that labour. It replaced it. In 2025 alone Israel issued almost 61,000 new work permits to foreign migrant workers, bringing the total foreign workforce to more than 227,000.

The consequences are severe. Unemployment in the West Bank stood at 29.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2026. Among young graduates aged 19 to 29 it reaches 41.3 per cent and among young women graduates, 49.2 per cent. Around 90 per cent of Palestinian workers have no social protection of any kind.

Some men still try to reach work by climbing the apartheid wall. The Palestinian Workers Union counts 44 workers who have died attempting that crossing since October 2023.



Above: Two Palestinian women at a checkpoint in Hebron in the West Bank Photo: Ronan Shenhav/Flickr

Poverty is becoming another weapon of displacement

The Palestinian Authority has meanwhile spent more than a year unable to pay full salaries. Israel's Finance Ministry has transferred none of the Palestinian revenues it collects in customs and GST that make up roughly two-thirds of the Authority's income. Public sector employees have been living on half or 60 per cent of their wages since late 2025.

The health system is suffocating in step with the budget. More than a third of essential medicines are out of stock and over 11,000 operations have been postponed since January. The Ministry of Health says more than 4000 cancer patients and thou-

sands of dialysis patients are at risk for want of chemotherapy drugs and dialysis filters. Three-quarters of its 590 service branches now open one or two days a week.

Follow each of those threads backwards and they arrive at the same place: an economy stripped of political sovereignty and even of the limited financial mechanisms that allowed it to function.

At my own home we are used to water arriving only on certain days of the week. This time we went a full week without any.

Palestinians in the West Bank receive around 70 litres of water per person per day; Israeli settlers receive more than 300.

Israel's West Bank land grab is accelerating

WHILE PALESTINIAN life is being economically strangled, the physical seizure of the West Bank is accelerating.

One of the most alarming developments happened almost quietly. Major General Avi Bluth, head of Israel's Central Command, issued 15 seizure orders covering land inside Area A, between the planned settlements of Noa and Emek Dotan south of Jenin. The seizure provides ground for a road connecting the two.

Area A is supposedly the part of the West Bank under full Palestinian civil and security control.

Israel has of course invaded Area A countless times. But this is different. According to the Israeli settle-

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Since 2022 this government has approved 103 new settlements. Before 2022 there were 127 in total

ment-monitoring group Kerem Navot, it appears to be the first time military seizure orders have been used inside Area A to connect settlements, rather than being justified however cynically by military necessity.

That distinction carries legal weight. Under the law of occupation, private property may be requisitioned only for imperative military needs, never for the benefit of the occupier's own civilian population. Here the stated purpose is a settler road.

Oslo's geography is simply being discarded.

The fiction was always that Areas A, B and C were temporary, a stage on the way to sovereignty. Instead Area C has been colonised steadily,

Israeli forces move through A and B at will, and now even land under full Palestinian authority is treated as available ground for settlement.

Noa and Emek Dotan are themselves new. They were among 34 settlements approved by Israel's security cabinet on 1 April 2026, while attention was on the war with Iran.

Peace Now describes it as the largest number of settlements ever approved at one time by any Israeli government: 20 entirely new settlements, nine outposts retroactively legalised, and five expansions or split-offs.

Since 2022 this government has approved 103 new settlements. Before 2022 there were 127 in total.

Around Jerusalem the map is being

FEATURES

closed: 2300 units approved at Gilo in late July on land partly confiscated under the Absentees' Property Law, the 3412-unit E1 project moving into construction between Ma'ale Adumim and the city, another 627 units tendered at Kochav Ya'akov on 6 August.

But the most effective instrument has not been the housing tender. It has been the outpost, and above all the so-called agricultural farm.

A caravan appears.

Then sheep.

Then armed settlers.

Then a road.

And then Palestinians discover that land their families have used for generations has become dangerous to reach.

Peace Now recorded 86 new outposts in 2025, 60 of them agricultural farms, one or two a week. They fully displaced 15 Palestinian communities in a single year and partially displaced seven more. Amnesty counted 363 outposts across the West Bank by the end of April 2026, of which 212 had been created since 2023.

The settlement does not need to cover every dunam.

It only needs to make Palestinians afraid to enter it.

That is how territory is emptied.

Amnesty documented 117 predominantly Bedouin and herding communities that experienced full or partial displacement between January 2023 and April 2026, with at least 5910 Palestinians forced from their homes. It calls what is taking place a state-led campaign of ethnic cleansing.

Israeli military vehicles now drive through places where, when I was younger, their presence would have been remarkable.

Sometimes they come for arrests. Sometimes they simply drive through. Slowly. Visibly. In the middle of the day.

It reads as a message. Get used to us. We are going to be here.

There is no real line between the settler and the soldier

For years international reporting described "settler violence" as though settlers were an extremist fringe occasionally escaping the control of an otherwise neutral state.

That distinction has become impossible to defend.

Settlers attack villages while soldiers stand nearby. Settlers establish outposts that the state later connects to roads, electricity and water. Ministers encourage them. The army protects them. State institutions legalise what



was supposedly illegal. Armed settlers increasingly function as an auxiliary force of colonisation.

The scale is on the record. OCHA counted more than 1000 settler attacks causing casualties or property damage by 11 June 2026—six a day, the highest rate ever recorded.

The trend is unambiguous: 1291 attacks in 2023, 1449 in 2024, 1835 in 2025, and about 190 a month in 2026, across more than 230 communities.

We saw where this leads in Tal, near Nablus, on 24 July. Between ten past six and quarter to seven in the morning, some 40 to 50 settlers including children came into the village from the east, threw stones at houses and tried to force their way in.

Four Palestinians from the same family were killed: Farouk, Ibrahim, Jawad and Imran Ramadan. Three more were critically wounded. A settler and an Israeli security officer were also killed after a young man from the village seized a weapon from one of the attackers.

And then came what Palestinians already understand very well.

The village that was attacked became the security problem.

Settler reprisal raids swept the surrounding villages. The Israeli government announced a major counter-terrorism operation. Officials called publicly for the destruction of Palestinian homes and villages.

The victim was converted into the threat.

Human Rights Watch, which reconstructed the morning in Tal hour by hour, warned that the escalation of settler violence combined with state support and impunity now threatens mass atrocities across the West Bank.

Above: One of the billboards set up by Israeli settlers in the West Bank declaring "There is no future in Palestine"

By 19 July, 68 Palestinians had been killed in the West Bank in 2026, at least 13 of them by settlers. Ten more were killed in the five days that followed.

This is why I do not think we should keep speaking about settler violence and Israeli military violence as two separate phenomena.

They are two arms of one colonial system.

'There is no future in Palestine'

Perhaps nothing captures this moment more clearly than the billboards.

Across parts of the West Bank, settlers have put up signs in Arabic telling Palestinians that there is no future in Palestine. The message is printed beside an image of Palestinians standing in the ruins of Gaza.

You do not need political analysis to understand the threat.

Look what happened there.

Leave before it happens here.

The campaign is run by a settler group that openly promotes Jewish settlement of the whole West Bank, and the boards have gone up over months along public roads without any intervention from Israeli security forces.

Soldiers have handed out leaflets at checkpoints warning that resistance will be answered with live fire and demolition.

Transfer is no longer whispered at the margins of Israeli politics. It is argued by ministers, financed by settler organisations, and advertised on the roadside.

The propaganda and the policy are saying the same thing in two registers.

One says: there is no future for you here.

The other is working to make that true.

In Gaza the mechanism has been destruction and blockade. In the West Bank it is annexation, fragmentation and economic strangulation.

Occupation is a political system that attempts to determine every material condition of your life. Where you live. Whether you build. Which road you take. When you travel. Whether water reaches your house. Whether your salary comes. Whether your money works.

And ultimately, whether staying on your land remains possible at all.

What frightened me most on this visit was not a single dramatic incident. It was the direction. And the speed.

Six months was enough to see the difference.

Trump mired in Iran standoff as regime refuses to bend

By James Supple

AS WE went to press the US was launching another wave of military strikes on Iran, with Iran retaliating by targeting US bases in the region. This comes after Trump called off a plans for a major military attack in early August, claiming another deal was imminent. But again nothing resulted.

Now the US says it is launching a campaign of “maximum economic pressure” aimed at cutting Iran off from its remaining trading partners. Major military action seemed to be off the table, although the US has continued to launch more limited strikes.

One reason is the strain on the US military. It has burned through nearly 80 per cent of its missile interceptors for the THAAD system during the war, and half of its Patriot interceptors, CNN reported.

The navy was also forced to recall the aircraft carrier the *USS Abraham Lincoln* following suicide attempts on board.

This has meant moving another aircraft carrier from the Pacific, diminishing the US presence there.

The *Washington Post* reported in late August that the heads of the army, navy and air force as well as the four-star commanders who oversee US operations in Europe, Asia and Latin America had all warned Secretary of War Pete Hegseth that prolonging major military operations against Iran was unsustainable and threatened the US’s ability to operate elsewhere.

But Iran still retains the capacity to fire missiles at US bases and target ships in the Strait of Hormuz with cheap drones. It has humbled the US through closing the Strait and wreaking havoc with global oil supplies.

The US still hopes to put an end to this through finding ways to get ships through the Strait. So far it has been unable to significantly lift shipping traffic.

The US military claims to have cleared mines from the area as part of this effort. The latest round of strikes began when it bombed Iranian rocket launchers that it said were attempting to disperse more mines in the area.

After six months, Trump has failed to achieve any of his objectives in the war.

His hopes for a deal that would offer a way out have run up against



Above: Donald Trump continues to zig zag on Iran
Photo: White House/
Abe McNatt

Iranian intransigence.

Iran insists on terms including an end to the regional war, including in Lebanon, a lifting of the blockade of its ports, compensation and sanctions relief, the head of its national security council, Mohsen Rezaei, says.

It has refused to accept terms for an end to the war that would allow Trump to claim victory.

Economic pain

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent says new sanctions would mean an “economic onslaught” and “D-Day” that would force Iran to give in.

But so far other countries have mostly ignored the US’s threats.

The US has also moved slowly in imposing any sanctions on third countries—with two branches of Egypt’s Banque Misr in the United Arab Emirates the only targets hit so far as we went to press.

The biggest problem for the US is that completely isolating Iran would mean dealing with China.

China, which buys 90 per cent of Iran’s oil, immediately warned it would retaliate against any measures that targeted Chinese companies.

And its control of the bulk of the world’s rare earth metals makes it hard for the US to push it around. Last year it forced the US to retreat on trade sanctions against it after briefly cut them off.

The US has imposed sweeping sanctions on Iran for decades and

has now added its own blockade on Iranian shipping exiting the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran has suffered massive damage to its infrastructure, and President Masoud Pezeshkian admits that foreign trade has shrunk by nearly 35 per cent since the start of the war.

Annual inflation hit 66 per cent in July and unemployment and the cost of living have surged.

But there is no sign this will force the regime to capitulate.

Midterms

The war is now more unpopular than ever in the US, with 63 per cent opposing it in an Ipsos poll in late August.

It is driving down Trump’s support as he faces midterm elections in November that could see the Republicans lose control of Congress.

The midterms may also be influencing the Iranian regime’s decision to prolong the war.

According to political analyst Trita Parsi, “Iranian officials say, both publicly and privately, that they expect the US and Israel to resume the war after the midterms regardless of the impact of the D-Day sanctions. Regional diplomats have largely reached the same conclusion.”

The US failure has shown again the limits of its power. And with Trump’s reckless war still driving up the cost of living, it also threatens to sink his presidency.

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After six months, Trump has failed to achieve any of his objectives in the war

PAULINE HANSON'S RACIST HISTORY

Finnian Colwell looks at how racism and scapegoating has been the defining feature of Pauline Hanson's career—and why countering it is crucial to pushing her back

THE DRAMATIC rise of One Nation in the polls means that organising against her racist and far-right politics is urgent. Some argue that we should criticise Hanson by focusing only on her anti-worker policies. There is an argument that it's not strategic to label her a racist, or even that this feeds her support.

But racism has always been central to her political project. To stem her support, we have to campaign against her racism and expose it as a false explanation for economic and social crises, which does real harm to immigrants, refugees and Indigenous people.

Hanson's rise in the 1990s

Pauline Hanson first drew national attention in 1996 as a Liberal candidate when her Labor opponents noticed a letter she wrote to a newspaper. She accused the government of showering Indigenous people “with money, facilities and opportunities that only these people can obtain”.

It was a racist inversion of the fact that Indigenous people are structurally disadvantaged. Infant mortality rates then were three times higher than the national average, school completion rates less than half.

The Liberal party disendorsed her as a candidate at the last minute. But she was still listed on the ballot paper as the Liberal candidate and won the seat of Oxley as part of a landslide against Labor.

In her maiden speech to parliament, she infamously spoke of Indigenous people being a privileged class and of the danger of Australia “being swamped by Asians”.

She suggested Asians had failed to assimilate and multiculturalism should be abolished. The open racism of Hanson's speech drew shock and unleashed a political earthquake. By October 1996 18 per cent of Australians said they would vote for a political party led by Hanson.

Liberal and Labor failed to challenge Hanson's racism. In response to her speech, Liberal Prime Minister John Howard said he was proud that “people can now talk about certain things without living in fear of being branded as a bigot or as a racist”. This helped legitimise her racism.

Labor leader Kim Beazley said Hanson's maiden speech was “extraordinary and disappointing” but fell short of calling it or Howard's response racist.

Howard supported aspects of Hanson's agenda and thought he could undercut her through appealing to her supporters.

He cut immigration by 20 per cent, and slashed Abstudy by \$38 million. He cut funding to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, then later abolished it.

Howard refused to apologise to the Stolen Generations and railed against what he called the “black armband view of history”, saying Australia should not be “too apologetic” about the country's history of dispossession and genocide.

But this only fuelled Pauline Hanson's support and emboldened racists even further.

Complaints of racism to the Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner doubled in the year following Hanson's maiden speech. There was an increase in violent racist attacks, like a bashing of an Asian father and son in Canberra's city centre.

Her racism appealed to many people still bitter at the impact of the neoliberal economic policies imposed through 13 years of Labor government that ended in 1996.

Labor had privatised state assets, run down welfare and even defended a recession as one “we had to have,” while cutting the corporate tax rate.

Hanson's seat of Oxley covered Ipswich, a previously rock-solid Labor area. Labor's neoliberalism had decimated Ipswich's local railway

.....
Howard supported aspects of Hanson's agenda and thought he could appeal to her supporters
.....

workshops, where there were 700 jobs cut in the early 1990s.

There was a serious danger of racism spreading within the working class. The idea that migrants were to blame for job cuts and unemployment would undermine the possibility of working class solidarity and resistance against the bosses and governments really responsible.

When pollsters pushed Hanson voters to describe why they supported her, they more often cited her policies on immigration or Indigenous people than other issues.

Broad anti-racist mobilisations changed the political calculus and dimmed Hanson's appeal. In November 1996 in Brisbane, 4000 joined a “Unite against Racism” rally, followed by 30,000 in Melbourne.

Wherever Hanson spoke, hundreds protested. Protests plagued One Nation meetings. High school students came out in their thousands.

The news coverage shifted to questioning Hanson's racism, and the rallies emboldened more timid politicians, community leaders and union leaders to criticise her racism.

Even Howard felt the pressure and later suggested Hanson was on some issues “bigoted”.

The movement forced the Liberals, who up until the 1998 Queensland state election preferred One Nation over Labor, to put them last.

As a result, Hanson lost her seat in the 1998 federal election. One Nation still won 9 per cent of the senate vote and one senator but in the years following this the party collapsed.

Racist scapegoating remained part of Howard's political agenda. In 1999 he adopted Hanson's temporary protection visa policy for refugees, holding the threat of deportation over them through denying them permanent visas.

The 2001 Tampa affair saw him beat up a racist scare against refugee boat arrivals and ensure One Nation

voters backed the Liberals.

Hanson's return

In the decades following 9/11, mainstream political parties and the media promoted anti-Muslim racism, blaming “Islamic terrorism” and treating Muslim communities in the West as suspect. Howard accused the Muslim community in Australia of failing to “integrate” and talked up the supposed threat from Muslim “extremism”. Police using anti-terrorism legislation carried out publicised mass raids on Muslim communities.

Liberal Prime Minister Tony Abbott in 2014 said that Australians faced threats from “murderous hordes” of a “death cult” in ISIS.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton championed a discriminatory refugee policy. From 2015, the government favoured Christians from Syria and Iraq over Muslims.

Blaming Islam for terrorism was racist and was used to justify the US wars on the Middle East, in which Australia participated.

Hanson rode back into parliament in 2016 on the back of the racist climate the major parties had created. In her first senate speech she complained that Australia was being “swamped by Muslims”. She wore a burqa into parliament in a racist attempt to link religious attire to a terrorist threat.

One Nation's surge today

Racism remains central to her appeal. This year, she has repeated her burqa stunt, called for an Australian “monoculture”, said there are “no good Muslims”, expressed nostalgia for White Australia and once again suggested Indigenous people are getting too much welfare.

But the most important issue has been One Nation's opposition to immigration. Here too the major parties have led the way, giving Hanson undeserved legitimacy.

Both Labor and Liberal have blamed immigration for the housing crisis. In the lead up to last year's election then Liberal leader Dutton pledged to slash migration, claiming this would free up homes and “get young Australians into housing”.

Labor has followed, saying it is getting immigration levels down and restricting the arrival of international students. It has already strengthened deportation laws and increased international student visa fees.

Israel's genocide in Gaza has produced another surge in anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian racism, again promoted by the Labor government



Above: Protesting Pauline Hanson's racism in the late 1990s

and the media. The Islamophobia Register has recorded a 619 per cent increase in reported incidents from October 2023 to February 2026, and an additional 740 per cent increase since the Bondi terror attack.

Albanese has contributed by making the racist accusation that pro-Palestine protesters are “bringing foreign conflicts home”, threatening social cohesion. But it is the government's own support for Israel and Australia's export of parts for the fighter jets bombing Gaza that have made the genocide a local issue.

Albanese has failed to label Hanson a racist, accusing her instead of fuelling “division”.

Focusing on austerity not enough

Hanson and the far right internationally feed off the dissatisfaction created by austerity and anti-worker governments.

Racism provides a false explanation for economic problems. It encourages the idea that immigrants steal houses or jobs, Muslims make the community unsafe or Indigenous people waste government money. Racism also provides a false solution: that stopping immigration or defunding Indigenous welfare will make others better off.

A poll for the Nine Papers in August found the top reason voters supported One Nation voters is immigration.

So long as Hanson's supporters think the *main* problem is immigration, and see this as responsible for

the cost of living and austerity, pointing out that Hanson supports anti-worker policies is not enough.

Her racist solutions seem like solutions until we convince people that migrants aren't to blame for the housing crisis. We need to point out that scapegoating migrants does not address the real problem: investors hoarding properties to avoid tax, and the government spending money on nuclear submarines rather than public housing.

We need to challenge the racist arguments and convince more people to oppose austerity and anti-worker policies, from Hanson or others.

By not challenging Hanson's racism, we also let Labor and Liberal leaders off the hook. They have continually stirred up racism themselves and their response to the rise of One Nation has been to adopt some of her policies in an effort to win over her racist supporters.

But this has legitimised her and means her views are treated as much less shocking now that they are shared by mainstream politicians. And it has allowed Hanson to win greater support through claiming the major parties are copying her policies.

Challenging Hanson's racism goes hand-in-hand with building broad anti-racist demonstrations. The recent high-school walkouts, where thousands protested Hanson, shows the kind of mobilisations needed to drive Hanson out of parliament and put the racist, anti-immigrant Labor leadership on the back foot.

AUKUS DEAL EXPANDS US BASES FOR WAR ON CHINA

Solidarity spoke to **Dr Albert Palazzo**, Adjunct Professor UNSW Canberra and author of *The Big Fix: Rebuilding Australia's National Security* about the AUKUS deal and the expansion of US bases across this continent

There's been a lot of discussion that Australia may never get the Virginia class nuclear submarines promised under the AUKUS deal. What does the US get out of the deal?

AUKUS is a very one-sided deal. The benefits are almost all to the US. They get billions of dollars to support their nuclear submarine building industry. Somewhere between \$6 and \$9 billion will be transferred to the US and also to the UK.

Then the US get bases. The government won't call them American bases, but they are a foreign base in all but name, such as the submarine base at Stirling [in WA].

The reason it's useful to the Americans is that it gives them a naval base on the Indian Ocean. They don't currently have one able to operate submarines, to repair submarines and which has facilities for housing military personnel and their families. We're building housing for 2000 American citizens they'll be putting there.

It's a very geographically convenient location if you want to sever China's sea lanes of communication across the Indian Ocean and also to get into the South China Sea.

Tindal [airforce base] is going to host B-52 bombers and we're building [new facilities there] for the Americans to use at our expense. They also get access to Amberley [airforce base], from which they've launched an offensive bombing run against Yemen. So we're having a large and growing presence of American military personnel and American weapons systems.

Why are the Americans doing this? The answer is because the US is intent on maintaining its primacy in the Indo-Pacific.

Australia has now become a launching pad for the US to project military force against China. It's basi-



Above: Virginia-class nuclear submarine USS Minnesota visiting HMAS Stirling naval base in 2025 Photo: James Caliva/U.S. Navy

cally assuring that Australia will be involved in a war between the US and China if one was to happen.

Without Australia, if there's a war, US operations will be from China's east out of Guam, out of Japan, even as far away as Pearl Harbor. But with Tindal and Stirling, the US will be able to operate against China from the south.

How does this shape the role of the Australian military?

The Australian Defence Force is not designed to defend Australia.

It's designed to be a supplement to the US military. Our air force will basically be a wing of the US Air Force. Our navy will join an American task force. And our army is very comfortable working under the command of an American general. It's driving what Richard Marles, the Minister for Defence, called not just US interoperability, he called it interchangeability.

A lot of the justification given for AUKUS is that it's necessary because China poses a threat to Australia. What do you think of that?

I don't see China as a threat to Aus-

tralia. The Chinese have never said anything about attacking Australia. Invading Australia's a ridiculous suggestion. But Australia has a long history of fearing invasion from peoples to the north of us. This goes back really to the founding of the country.

What China wants to do is become a great power. Great powers do whatever they feel like.

The US is a great power, and it recently started a war with Iran. Could anybody stop that? No, because as a great power, they do whatever they feel like. The rules don't apply to great powers.

So we will have a China that is more assertive and will want to make the rules to its own benefit, as the US did. But those issues do not have a military solution. It's laughable to think that Australia can militarily intimidate China.

China is a nuclear-armed power. You cannot rattle a sabre at a nuclear-armed power. You cannot go to war with a nuclear-armed power. And yet people today talk about war with China and neglect to mention that there are enough nuclear weapons here to exterminate life on this planet.



Dr Albert Palazzo