



# Vanguard

For an Independent and Socialist Australia

May Day Special Edition

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Vanguard expresses the viewpoint of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist - Leninist)

## The Red Banner of Socialism

*May Day Statement issued by the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)*

The first day of May each year is celebrated by working people all over the world. On May Day the many and wide-ranging struggles and demands of the workers are brought together in proud recognition of class solidarity and the ultimate power of the united working class.

In Australia more and more working people are pushed into insecure work, growing debt and grinding poverty, while the divide between the wealthy few and the struggling millions increases every year. Many working families live on the edge, juggling rent or mortgage repayments, basic food and groceries, transport costs, school costs, credit card debt, and healthcare needs. The homeless, the disabled, the aged, are all tossed aside by the capitalist system which only values 'productive' workers, and then, at the lowest possible wage.

Over 2 million workers who are trade union members participate in struggle big and small to defend working conditions and to keep their heads above water, despite the decisive official trade union leadership channelling workers' struggles to the bosses' courts or down the parliamentary road. Experience shows that working people must rely on our own collective struggle and power to defend our livelihoods and rights.

This year, immediate concerns of working people in Australia are the spiralling cost of living and inadequate government responses to the crisis of disastrous climate warming and the continuing Covid pandemic.

In the background is the growing threat of Australia being dragged into a war between US imperialism and Chinese imperialism. Is there a way out?

The red banner of socialism always flies high on May Day symbolising the hopes of the working people for better, more secure and enriching lives based on the collective needs of the people rather than individual wealth and power.

**The vision of socialism is not just**



**a dream or an intellectual exercise; it exists and continues as the only practical alternative to the system of imperialism/capitalism that is crushing and oppressing working people in Australia and across the world.**

Socialism is not a few new policies patched onto the existing capitalist system. Fundamental revolutionary change is required – a completely new and different system. A socialist system embraces anti-imperialist independence with the assets of the big foreign multinationals taken over by the Australian people. A socialist system will:

- eradicate the remnants of colonialism, pay reparations and empower the First People to take collective control of their own affairs and communities through just treaties and land rights.
- involve public ownership and control of the key sectors of the economy – finance, manufacturing, mining, energy/fossil fuels, military-industrial, construction, infrastructures, environmental management, big agriculture, communications, vital common resources such as water and power, and public services, such as education, health and housing. The state would own these key resources, and they would be managed by a combination of state and local democratic worker control.
- plan and develop production

and distribution according to the needs of the society and the environment, because the driving force and motivation would be people's welfare and environmental sustainability, not profit. Renewable energy must replace fossil fuels, and sooner rather than later. The dangers in uranium mining and the problem of nuclear waste make nuclear energy unviable.

- create new political structures and institutions which would be thoroughly and genuinely democratic. Representatives would be elected without the manipulation of money or the capitalist media, and people could recall and replace their representatives whenever they saw fit.
- have workplaces and communities managed by directly-elected representatives and bodies of the people.
- set about creating and supporting new socially-positive cultures to develop and support people's health and welfare, and to defend the socialist revolution. The seeds of the new socialist culture are already developing in the collective struggles to combat capitalism's failures. The new socialist society will allow these shoots to flourish and expand in new ways to serve and inspire people.
- enforce the rights of women and

work vigorously to eradicate gender inequality, sexism and violence against women. Socialism creates conditions for the abolition of sexist and racist culture and behaviour

- uphold an independent foreign policy and oppose imperialist wars by big powers.
- Socialist society would be internationalist – it would respect the rights and welfare of other peoples and countries, and act to promote a peaceful, environmentally-sustainable world, free of imperialist war, bullying and exploitation.

In spite of the difficulties, in spite of the anti-worker threats, the propaganda and corporate media lies, and the disappointments of the parliamentary system, workers inevitably come together to struggle in their workplaces and communities. Class struggle never disappears, neither does the alternative system of socialism.

**Workers of the World, Unite!**

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## Time's up for climate vandals!

By *Bill F.*

**This summer, the suffering and damage from extreme storms and floods in Queensland and NSW have brought home the critical effects of climate warming in Australia, and this will not be forgotten in an election year.**

In February, a comprehensive report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) showed that the climate crisis is more acute than ever and that many governments are failing to reduce carbon emissions.

With increasing heat and rising sea levels, Australia is particularly vulnerable, and has been labelled by UN Secretary General Guterres as a “holdout” for refusing to strengthen emission targets by 2030.

Since the COP26, the Morrison government is more determined to prop up the fossil fuel industry. While the government pretends to be reducing greenhouse gas emissions and building a transition to renewable sources, facts show the opposite.

Research by the Australian Conservation Foundation, based on data from the Clean Energy Regulator, has revealed that many fossil fuel companies are exceeding their estimated emission levels several times over.

The research particularly highlighted Chevron's Gorgon offshore gas project in Western Australia.

In February the Morrison government granted \$19.4 million to Empire Energy for exploratory drilling in the Beetaloo Basin in the Northern Territory. By coincidence, Empire Energy boss Paul Espie is a Liberal Party donor.

According to Environment Centre modelling, fracking in the Beetaloo Basin could increase Australia's emissions by 13%.

Opposition to Beetaloo was expressed in a statement released by the Nurrdalindi Native Title Aboriginal Corporation, “The government is doing the wrong thing backing fracking on our country, it is poisoning our water, our animals and upsetting the songlines that run across our land”.

Protect Country Alliance spokesperson Graeme Sawyer also stated, “Ninety-nine point nine per cent of Territorians won't benefit from this industry - instead we will suffer as fracking pollutes our rivers and groundwater, and drives dangerous climate change that is already leading to never before seen heat records in the Top End.”

The Morrison government persists in its “gas-led recovery” delusion.

Supporting this delusion are the 600 kilometres of pipeline already in construction, with another 12,000



kilometres planned through the 2021 National Gas Plan. They would link the new gas basins in Beetaloo, Narrabri, and Scarborough in Western Australia, to export terminals in the North and West, as well as to the East Coast.

But, as pointed out by Dan Gocher, director of climate and the environment at the Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility, “Gas demand on the east coast is forecast to flatline or decline ... It's a massive stranded asset risk either for the taxpayers that build them or the companies that operate them.”

### Coal shipments export emissions

Thermal coal production for electricity generation in Australia is winding down as profits are squeezed by wind, solar and battery farms, and by shareholder activism embracing “green” energy.

Australia's largest coal-fired power station, Origin Energy's Eraring in the NSW Hunter region, will close in 2025, to be replaced by a 700 megawatt battery plant.

Other planned closures include AGL power stations Liddell, NSW (2023), Loy Yang A, Victoria (as early as 2033), Bayswater, NSW (as early as 2040), and Energy Australia's Yallourn, Victoria (2028).

However, as thermal coal exports also taper off, LNG exports are booming, and coking coal or metallurgical coal will continue to be exported in large quantities for use in steel production overseas.

China, which has a number of newer blast furnaces, is likely to want many years' more use before switching away from coking coal to emission-free technology.

In the meantime, Australia continues to be the largest exporter of coking coal in the world.

Consequently, in the months prior to COP26 the Morrison government approved a flurry of mine expansions, including Whitehaven's Caval Ridge in Queensland and Simec's Tahmor mine

in NSW, plus granting \$175 million to the expansion of Pembroke's Olive Downs mine in Queensland which will clear more than 5000 hectares of koala and glider habitats.

### Capitalist solutions to climate warming – piecemeal at best!

The recent takeover bid for AGL's Bayswater power station by Australian software capitalist Cannon-Brookes and Canadian company Brookfield Asset Management has not gone ahead.

Cannon-Brookes wanted to shut down the power station and build a new battery storage facility to provide eight gigawatts of renewable energy.

## Colbeck's Curse: Continued neglect of Aged Care

By *Paul K.*



*Aged Care Minister Colbeck*

### The Royal Commission's Report into Aged Care Quality and Safety was released over 12 months ago.

Since then we have seen continuing neglect and deliberate avoidance of addressing key recommendations within the report that were aimed at improving the condition of both the aged and their carers.

This simply re-confirms the fundamental principles that condition a response to aged care within capitalism.

The primary issue is that the aged are seen as non-productive and hence have very little relevance to the ongoing

production of wealth and private wealth accumulation within capitalism. They are treated as a burden and this is reflected in the policies and lack of support for both the aged and their carers.

Relevant points relating to developments since the Royal Commission report include:

The absence of focus and discussion on the aged.

The neglect of the aged and their carers during COVID – some of the worst examples of neglect in relation to quarantine and immunisation.

A complete failure to address the totally unacceptable remuneration for aged care workers.

This failure includes the completely inadequate once-off “bonus” announced by Colbeck and Morrison on February 1 of an amount ranging from \$300 (for persons working less than 15 hours per week in home care, up to \$800 for persons working more than 31 hours in residential care.)

The staggering contrast of the impact of COVID on the aged between

## Colbeck's Curse: Neglect of Aged Care



government and private providers.

This arises directly from a number of issues including: a focus on user pays, the emphasis on private enterprise and profit ahead of meaningful attention to better outcomes for the aged and their carers, the associated attempt to reduce costs through the lowering of standards and requirements in relation to aged care.

Since the report was released, there has been a significant lack of effort to ensure the public are aware of developments in this area. There is the occasional article in the popular press that will highlight a specific failure on the part of the health care "system" but no clear focus on continuing to address the Commission's recommendations.

When articles do appear, they reveal appalling neglect.

In an article by Anne Connolly in the *Age* in early January titled "As Omicron moves in, Australia is facing a predictable tragedy in aged care", she points out that "just one third of elderly residents have received a COVID booster from the government" and "if the federal government had vaccinated them in April last year under its 'priority' listing as promised, every one of them would have been able to receive it by now".

Anne Connolly also points out that at the time of her writing the article, almost 1,000 aged care residents had died from COVID, and that there were more than 1,600 people in aged care infected with COVID, with 80 lives lost within the previous two months.

With under-vaccination and rapid spread of the virus with the "opening up" of society, the situation is now much worse.

She states: The Aged Care Royal Commission set out comprehensive recommendations to avert such a disaster by increasing staff numbers and paying proper wages, ensuring up-to-date vaccinations and giving families regular access to their loved ones.

This abysmal neglect also highlights the government's focus on private providers and an unwillingness to hold them to account.

As the Minister for Aged Care Services, Richard Colbeck admitted, "Some of the private contractors who received millions for administering the initial vaccinations and the boosters .... may have taken time off over Christmas".

This reliance on private providers and a failure to hold them to account is further highlighted by the fact that the above statistic on booster vaccinations may not be accurate as the government has not been collecting data.

The comparison between private providers and State run providers clearly demonstrates the failure of capitalism to address the needs of the more vulnerable in society.

In an article in the *Age* on the 15th February titled "Why Victorian public aged care homes were spared the worst of coronavirus", Clay Lucas states "Coronavirus has ripped through private aged care in Australia over the past two years, but one form of aged care has only been lightly touched by the pandemic – publically run homes in Victoria".

He also points out that "the 179 state-run homes in Victoria have more nursing staff, higher wages and are often located near other health facilities. The state-run providers have significantly lower rates of infection and deaths."

In 2020, three public sector residences contracted COVID with no deaths, while private and not-for-profit homes recorded 2000 infections and 655 deaths. In 2021, three residents of Victoria's public aged care homes died.

Up to mid-February this year (2022)



## Editorial

### **Federal election: Get Morrison out – no illusions about Labor!**

**The May 2022 federal election must see the removal of the Morrison coalition government.**

As US author and humourist Mark Twain observed: "Politicians and diapers must be changed often, and for the same reason."

The observation loses some of its force, however, when the new set of diapers is likely to be as soiled as those it is replacing.

Except in a few areas such as minor changes to IR laws and increased spending on aged care, Labor has kept as close to Liberal policy as it can.

No-one regards this as an "It's Time!" moment. There is enthusiasm for finishing off Morrison, but there is no sense in which people expect an Albanese government to make Australia a country less-controlled by giant local and foreign corporations, that it will end fracking or the disastrous reliance on fossil fuels, or make it a more peaceful and independent country in foreign policy.

This is not to denigrate the Labor Party's working class and progressive rank and file members, supporters and the honest politicians who enter parliament, not as careerists and opportunists, but genuinely believing they can improve the lives of working people.

But no sooner do the elected politicians enter parliament then their singular role becomes that of serving the interests of capital, not the workers. There are countless examples of this, especially in the history of the ALP-aligned section of the labour movement.

For some, despite all the betrayals by previous Labor governments, it's hard to break out of a cycle of hoping for a better deal, and then losing heart every time Labor wins office and backtracks on its promises, to the point where it seems indistinguishable from the more open party of big business. We respect this sentiment, but do not share it. We need to break out of its dead-end cycle.

We can do this by uniting around key elements of an independent working class agenda, that is, a set of demands that go beyond Labor's minimalist parliamentary program. Demands and struggles for workers' rights, including the right to strike, job security, the cost of living, climate crisis, self-determination for the First People, and peace and independence for the people of Australia and the region. We need to have confidence, not in elected representatives to the parliamentary talking shop, but in our own collective strength built in our workplaces and communities.

It is those places, where struggles can be built and maintained, that real change will come – not from the exercise at the ballot box once every three years. Real change always come from waves of defiant, militant and at times "illegal" struggle on the job, in the streets and in our communities.

with the rapid rise in infections, Omicron has killed an average of 17 aged care home residents each day, with just three people in total in Victoria's state-run homes having died.

0.1 per cent of public facility residents have died since the pandemic started compared with approximately 2 per cent in private homes.

There are no ratios for nursing staff to residents, or minimum standards in private and not-for-profit aged care.

Public sector homes are generally attached to a larger health service of some form, and most are staffed almost entirely with qualified nurses.

A typical private or not-for-profit aged care home is 70 to 80 per cent staffed with personal care assistants, who have far less health training than nurses. There are also grossly

insufficient Personal Care workers.

This information in no way suggests that we can resolve the problems of Aged Care and Safety by moving towards public provision within capitalism.

The focus within capitalism is to safeguard the rich and their ability to continue to accumulate wealth.

This is the essence of the capitalist system and is exemplified in the ongoing emphasis on user-pays in the provision of an increasing range of public services including the principal needs of health and education.

The neglect of aged care and aged care providers occurs while public money is readily spent on reinforcing the alliance of the wealthy with their peers. The recent decision to spend billions to purchase nuclear powered submarines is a glaring example of this.

## Marxism Today

### Socialism or Barbarism?

By Simon G.

**German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg famously declared that there were only two possible outcomes of post capitalist human social development – either socialism or barbarism.**

Observing events in the US, Canada, parts of Latin America, in Europe, in Australia (far right neo-fascist movements, Q-anon believers, anti-vaccination adherents, “freedom” marchers etc) is clear evidence of the truth of Luxemburg’s statement.

How did this situation come about? How can it be understood and analysed correctly? What can be done to tilt the pivot away from barbarism?

The cause of the current domestic and international chaos lies entrenched in the nature and development of capitalism, particularly in the most pre-eminent capitalist country, the United States.

The US emerged from WW2 as the most advanced and powerful capitalist country on Earth.

The American people were sold the myth of the “American Dream”, where ordinary people could achieve success through motor car ownership, free-standing privately owned houses full of gleaming white goods and televisions, and the occasional vacation to Disneyland or, for the better-off, to the gambling dens and cabarets of Cuba.

Due to post-war reconstruction, this was a time of mainly full secure employment and high unionisation of workplaces.

Organised and unionised American labour is of course anathema to the US ruling class and the owners of the factories, manufacturing plants and mills and the corporate-owned farming sector.

To combat this, American workers were, from the 1950’s to the 1970’s, faced with an onslaught of anti-union legislation and thuggery designed to weaken their bargaining power and thereby increase corporate profits.

#### **Made in the USA: Globalisation**

The 1980’s saw the US capitalist ruling class fully embrace the concept of globalisation.

Manufacturing was moved out of the

US and into so-called “developing” countries like India, Pakistan, Vietnam, China, Mexico and the like.

These countries could supply labour for US corporate interests at a fraction of the cost in the US with no practical unionisation, appalling working conditions and work hours and usually single party governments armed to the teeth with brute military force in case there was any worker unrest.

The effect of “globalisation” on the work force in the US and in other developed countries dominated by US commercial interests (like Australia) has been devastating.

Whereas formerly, workers in blue-collar cities like Detroit could enjoy secure long-term employment and reasonably safe working conditions, post-globalisation these cities were turned into rust-belts.

Gone was the “American Dream” with private home ownership, employer sponsored health care benefits, aspirations of socialised and successful families and college education for workers’ children.

The hopes and visions of the future for these communities were smashed.

Temporary or contract employment (where it existed) became the norm and the standard of living both in financial and social terms was drastically reduced.

Union membership fell from the early 1950’s to the 1980’s from 39% to 20%.

As a result of all of this, any unified pro-worker movements effectively ceased to exist.

It is a truism that most people will take a political or social position for what they see as good reasons in their circumstances. The key to this is “their circumstances”.

#### **Learn from history**

One only needs to look back at the rise of Nazism in Germany in the 1930’s to understand this.

As a result of Germany’s loss in WW1, the punitive provisions of the Versailles treaty and the 1930’s depression, German manufacturing was virtually destroyed, inflation was



rampant, unemployment soared and an all abiding atmosphere of hopelessness and despair prevailed.

In 1933 the Reichstag parliament building was burnt down covertly by the Nazis and with the backing of the mass media, Bulgarian communists were blamed. Socialists and communists were rounded up and either executed or sent to concentration camps.

The Nazis then established arms manufacturing industries and the Brownshirts were used to restore “law and order”.

Employment grew, the streets were safe again and through a campaign of outright lies and ultra-patriotism, the Nazi party came to power (with the support of almost 50% of German voters).

We might now look back at this time and wonder how on earth an advanced, culturally sophisticated and well-educated populace could be so gullible.

How could they believe such absurdities and fictions like the widely held belief that Jewish Europeans were to blame, were sub-human and should be exterminated?

The Nazis gave the hopeless and alienated German populace hope, a vision of the future and someone to hate.

In exactly the same way, the alienated and hopeless victims of globalisation are attracted to right wing fanatics and fantasists who purport to give them hope and someone to hate (even to the extent of believing that paedophiles and children’s blood drinkers are in control of their lives).

It is a mistake to believe that the majority of anti-vax and “freedom march” crowds are fascists.

They, like the German people in the 1930’s, are being seduced and manipulated by anti-science, anti-working class and divisive forces ranging from neo-nazis, fairies at the bottom of the garden fantasists, rank political opportunists, multi-millionaire fossil fuel barons and the like, frequently with the backing and

support of the monopoly media.

Every Australian, European and American worker knows from their life experience how difficult things are for themselves and their families.

They do not believe the nonsense spouted by their governments about record high employment rates or the “capitalist dream”.

With no unified pro-worker forces in existence, the attraction of the “barbarians” will only increase, pivoting toward real barbarism.

The points outlined above must be clearly understood, talked about with our friends and families and publicised widely.

Hand in hand with this, great efforts must be made to build unified pro-working class forces.

#### **Will it be socialism or barbarism?**

We must be able to explain to our children and grandchildren that we learned from the tragic mistakes made in Europe in the 1930’s and did all that we could to prevent and defeat capitalist barbarism.

It is trite to say that a society administered solely for the common good and benefit of the vast majority of its members is infinitely more desirable than one where a tiny minority obscenely benefit from the work and at the cost of the majority.

Since the establishment of capitalism in Europe and North America, we have witnessed unspeakable barbarity as it has sought to carve up the Earth and increase its profits.

As this moribund and decadent economic system becomes more desperate to prolong its existence, without strong and unified workers’ movements, capitalism’s insatiable greed for profit will inevitably lead to what Rosa Luxemburg termed “barbarism”.

For the vast majority of human beings on this planet, to ask the question “Socialism or Barbarism?” is in fact to answer it.



## Magic, and Political Choices

By Ross Gwyther

**In days past, snake oil salesmen did a brisk business wherever they set up shop. Promising all, and delivering very little.**

Modern snake oil salesmen are those with a clearly reactionary political agenda but who connect with people's fears and uncertainties.

There has been a dramatic rise over the past few decades in the number of people whose thinking aligns with some of the most reactionary and anti-worker forces in our community.

In the last Federal election more than one million people gave their first vote to either the Palmer party or the One Nation party.

The QAnon following has grown greatly. During the past two years of living with COVID, large numbers of everyday people have joined in the movement for "freedom, no vax, no mandates, make your voice heard".

Why is this happening? What does it mean for our political strategies of building a working class movement for independence and socialism in Australia?

A common response from many on the left is to say that these people are stupid, ignorant and easily manipulated.

Yet that response is fundamentally flawed.

It provides no opportunity for us to learn from the peoples' experiences and build broader links amongst the people.

It ignores the many and varied reasons as to why people turn to such seemingly reactionary ideology and action. Some of these reasons include:

A widespread growth in insecure and precarious work.

The 2012 Howe Report into Insecure Work and a 2021 Australia Institute Report showed that such work has increased from 15.8% of the workforce in 1984 to 28% by 2004 and is now close to 32% - almost one in three workers in Australia is employed on part time or casual work.

A growing part of that insecure working world is the so-called gig economy.

The underlying networks of capital that create alienating and individualised insecure work are effectively hidden from view.

Instead, workers are encouraged to blame any problems they have at work, on other workers, and on any restrictions placed on the operations of these "new economy" capitalists.

In many cases they are attracted to the reactionary leaders who voice their concerns, encourage them to be active, without having any solutions to offer.

Another factor is the growth of social media – or more properly we should



term it "*anti-social media*" – facebook, twitter, instagram, tiktok etc.

There are two very contradictory aspects to these new media.

On the one hand they fulfil a very human need in most of us to connect with others, and to have a voice.

On the other hand they are specifically designed to ensure shortened attention span, shallow and simplified communications in the sense that dialogue and complex interaction is much more difficult than in face to face interactions.

The software in these media "platforms" is designed to limit connections artificially so that people do not interact with opposing and differing views as much as in real life.

The outcome of this is the "fake news" phenomenon.

Simplistic, diversionary and in some cases quite incorrect information is taken up, amplified and embraced by a growing number of people who feel disempowered and unappreciated by the system they live and work in.

As well as these new influences, there are some significant ways in which workers dissatisfaction with the current social order is based firmly in material reality.

The working class of today is suffering under wages that have been falling in real terms for over a decade, and a much reduced capacity to organise in their workplaces.

Trade union membership has

declined from 40% of the workforce in 1992 to less than 15% in 2020.

Housing is becoming unaffordable for ordinary workers.

The health system has major flaws, and profit is seen as driving force in aspects like early childhood and aged care.

People lack any real say in making their concerns heard.

Many are aware of the dominant role which multinational corporations play in government decision making.

They see the power of big developers to override people's local concerns.

There has been a growth of the "wellness" movement and its rejection of big corporate medicine

When snake oil salesmen like Palmer and Hansen voice these sorts of concerns, they attract interest and support from many workers.

As we build a genuine people's movement we need to engage with those who have been seduced into the snake oil salesmen's tents.

Our task in building the movement is to take their concerns seriously, enable them to have a voice alongside other workers, and work with them to build a genuine class alternative to the rule of capital.

## Aged Care workers' struggle intensifies

By Ned K.

**Aged care workers are preparing for protected industrial action against major aged care providers.**

They have been in negotiations with major providers such as Southern Cross and Anglicare (so -called not for profit providers) and for-profit providers such as Allity and Bupa.

They are demanding substantial wage increases and improved staffing levels.

These workers are Carers and Support Services workers who work in the kitchens, laundries or clean the aged care complexes,

Their action for substantial wage increases has received little media attention and little attention by the federal politicians. The latter are diverting public attention to the Fair Work Commission which is soon to announce its Decision on a 25% wage increase to Award rates by some Unions.

The Morrison Government refused to commit to fully fund any Award rate increase while Albanese said he supported a fair wage increase for Aged Care workers.

The Aged Care workers preparing for protected industrial action are relying on their collective strength to win improved wages and conditions, rather than relying on the outcome of the Fair Work Commission Decision on



Aged Care Award wage rate increase (if any).

The Award rates are some of the lowest of any industry. A Level 1 is on \$21.61 per hour and a trained Care Worker on Level 3 has a base rate of only \$23.39 per hour.

The low wages combined with poor staffing levels and high workloads result in high turnover of labour and contribute to a low level of residential care for aged care residents.

The large private providers in aged care are profit driven and charge residents like wounded bulls through the upfront Refunded Accommodation Deposit they require from most residents. Some of the private for-profit aged care facilities are owned by private equity corporations!

The only way the aged care industry has been able to staff residential aged

care has been to rely on new migrant workers to do the work. The "carrot" for these workers is that if they last at least 12 months in employment their visa status can progress faster towards permanent residency. So, they just put their heads down and do the work in the hope they can last the distance.

Continuous employment becomes their primary objective and their low wage levels are secondary.

However, this is changing now as cost of living increases and the high workloads in their jobs have seen thousands of new migrant workers join their Union and join in the current collective struggle for significant improvements in pay and conditions.

Their time has come. Politicians of both major parties can no longer afford, electorally speaking, to ignore their demands anymore.

# For First Peoples, justice will only be won through socialism

By *Lindy Nolan*

“When we are going to get JUSTICE?”

On the steps of a Darwin Court, Warlpiri Elder Ned Jampijinpa Hargraves’ cry of rage and despair accused a system that ensured over 500 First Peoples died in custody since 1992, with no one held accountable.

Justice is First Peoples’ lands and waters, their culture and lore, their safety, ALL their own affairs – in their own hands.

Again and again, First Peoples have said this, acted for this.

Laying down weapons after 150 years armed resistance, First Peoples continued to organise. Overwhelmingly they obeyed whitefella law, yet still they die.

They work quietly to rebuild culture and lore in a myriad of ways. Learning and reviving language is a catchcry in every community. Culture and lore come from land, from water.

But daily, more land and water are thieved or poisoned or dammed, for fracking, corporate agriculture, mining, real estate and US war bases, while more and more children are stolen, suicide or are jailed, and laws specifically designed to isolate and divide First Peoples are enforced. But resistance, and its lessons for us all, never cease.

Sovereignty is unceded in all the lands and waters called Australia. Land rights must be theirs and reparations paid for theft and mass murder.

Aren’t these truths obvious?

Why aren’t they acted upon?

## Humbugging

Capitalism’s greatest weapons for maintaining its power are immense wealth, force and deceit.

They divide to conquer using racism and a myriad of other barbarisms.

Its brutal fifteen-year Northern Territory Intervention is due to end in June. Perhaps the humiliating signs about pornography and alcohol



will come down. But will a federal government fund housing on homelands again?

Warlpiri man Bruno Jupurrula Wilson says, “It looks like a Third World country in a First World country.” Will it remain that way?

Will outsiders come at will into community, despite damages they bring?

Will mining and fracking corporations still skip traditional custodians and go to white dominated land councils for quicker approvals?

So asks young Gudanji and Wakaya Traditional Owner Lludi Noralima (also called Rikki Dank).

She says, “I feel like we’re the test dummies for these things,” for governments and corporations to plan how “to get away with doing this to everyone else.”

Because brutality spreads like poison across the country.

Long-term Yuendumu resident, Frank Baada, says the Intervention destroys the social fabric of strong communities, just as fracking shatters the lands.

People were very generous, he says, but Basics Card removed cash, so sharing is much harder.

Baada says Brough and Macklin (former Federal Liberal and Labor Ministers) kept saying Basics Cards

would stop humbugging (standover behaviour).

But capitalism that expands invasion is the real humbug.

Instead of a few dollars, it steals the riches of the lands and waters, attacks language, culture and lore, breaks into communities, humiliates and threatens, gaols and murders.

## The system that destroys us all

First Peoples call to reinstate tribal councils, for no guns in communities, for restorative justice not jails, housing, for just treaties, to raise the age of youth imprisonment, an end to fracking and damming and destroying, for truth telling, and funding for more reforms to enable Aboriginal Peoples around the country collectively take control of their own lives and so flourish.

When united struggle was strong, some of these reforms had been fought for and won. But this did not stop their destruction by capitalist laws and forces decades later.

The struggles for reforms teach precious lessons, for there is a bigger task. The only safety comes with destroying the system that destroys us all.

First Peoples share precious lessons in nearly 250 years of collective struggle. They have many allies.

Communists too thought they had led final collective victories, against capitalism in one third of the world.

Capitalism slandered these shining examples as “mass murder”, as it slandered First Peoples for “running paedophile rings”. Lies!

After World War Two, destruction was so widespread and US imperialism so strong, capitalism successfully regenerated, with its economic compulsion to increase profit, its greed, ego and individualism.

It swamped collective strength from within socialist USSR, then socialist China, and worldwide.

Our enemies here are the very same that First Peoples face – remnant colonialism and rampant monopolising capitalism called imperialism.

The weapons communists used to once defeat capitalism also remain, knowledge expanded in struggle by revolutions, decades of liberating socialism, even as socialism fell, but above all by our own mistakes and victories here.

Side by side, constantly enriched by two-way knowledge of First Peoples and revolutionary Marxism-Leninism, our Peoples can create a new, just, socialist land.

Aren’t these truths obvious?

It’s time to act on them, together.



# The Shame of Financial Hardship

*Contributed article - edited*

**I used to work as a consultant for one of Australia's largest Industry Superannuation Funds. Before this I had no prior experience in the financial sector, every day was a new challenge, there was a lot to learn with regards to the rules and legislation of super and it's probably in most people's best interest to know at least some very basic things about how it works, especially when it comes to accessing it.**

As part of my job as a consultant for a superfund I'd heard a lot of heartbreaking stories from those in severe financial hardship.

A lot of people feel that they need to tell a consultant why they've called and preface their questions that they don't want to dip into their retirement savings but have no other choices.

Illness, injury, disability, surgery, mortgage payments, rent, bills, needing legal aid, food. Just some of the many reasons that people seek assistance from their superfund.

accessing super for financial hardship.

Each step of this process puts more mental load on the person calling about their situation, it's not an easy task and maybe not the right decision for some.

## Obstacle course

To access super for financial hardship the criteria is the following. First you need to be on Centrelink payments for 26 continuous weeks.

Miss a single payment or get a part time job for a couple of weeks and that resets the clock. Not all payments from Centrelink are eligible either, which only adds to the confusion when different payment types have similar sounding names.

Anyone currently in receipt of Centrelink payments has a Centrelink Reference Number or CRN. This is what is used by superfunds to determine that someone requesting access is on the right payments for the right amount of time.

Superfund members will send in their CRN along with all their personal

taxed at the withdrawal of around 20% plus the Medicare levy, so if you request \$10,000, that amount is not going to hit your bank account.

This taxation catches people off guard, only adding to the stress of those who are desperate and need help.

Super belongs to you for your retirement, so it feels like you're being punished for accessing it when you need it before retirement and when you need it the most.

This only feeds people's shame about this process.

So, with tax being withheld on the withdrawal the other major condition of this release is that you can also only request a payment for financial hardship once a year.

Not a calendar or financial year, as in you need to wait 365 days from your last withdrawal if you need to do it again.

So do you request the full \$10,000 to last you as long as possible or go for a lower amount? Another question, another burden.

When speaking with those wanting to

because if you're with a lower performing fund you're going to have less to retire with.

Assistance should be there, implemented by the state, by and for the people because it's for the best. Legislation around financial hardship should be for the benefit of uplifting those currently suffering.

Superannuation is great if you benefit from capitalism and can make regular contributions to it, or if you sacrifice present wants and needs for a potentially more comfortable future for yourself.

## Blame the system, not the individual

The capitalist and individualist society we are part of is the perfect kindling for the burning shame of people who can't do this and feel they will never see the benefit of it.

It's easy to see how individualism can lead to selfishness when able to benefit from it but when you don't that turns to shame instead.

People are empowered to be selfish because they're rewarded for it in neoliberalism.

When that's not rewarded, the empowerment of selfishness is replaced by shame and this was something that wasn't apparent to me until I worked in super, now it seems obvious.

Individual blame on the individual for not being successful financially tends to be processed in two ways, shame and anger.

Anger is another strong and justified emotion.

Desperate people call their superfunds, wanting to know why the process is the way it is and I didn't have an answer for them that didn't come across as defending it or sounding especially cruel.

I empathised and stayed on their side no matter any supposed justification, this fellow human being needs help to navigate a process designed to apply a band-aid to a bullet wound. How could I ever possibly defend legislation around this?

It doesn't have to be this way, this structure in our lives can be changed, moulded and controlled.

Shame isn't something you need to feel when you ask for help.

Working in super and talking to people in need has galvanised me more in my political education than I could possibly have predicted.

Hearing stories from people who are hurting who don't deserve to be forgotten and discarded.

Truly the only shame that should be around financial hardship should be on all those responsible for putting others through these hard times.



Centrelink payments alone can be so infrequent and minute and the service provided so shackled by purposeful underfunding and legislation that people need to seek out their superfund's phone number and call for help.

People felt that they need to apologise, that they were sorry for wasting my time with their situation and that they shouldn't be doing this.

Shame fuels a desire to justify their reason for calling and it really shouldn't. It was my job to help, it was also my job to make sure we did this correctly, together.

As you can imagine, withdrawing super before retirement is not a simple task and will take time, something people in financial hardship tend to have very little of.

As a consultant I needed to make sure that those wanting to withdraw met the legal eligibility criteria and completely understood the implications on

details, bank account details and certified ID for processing.

With your application you can request up to \$10,000 for financial hardship from your super.

That's up to \$10,000 no longer being invested for you and could have been years of progress made by previous work now suddenly undone.

People need to go through all these steps, provide as much information as clearly as possible, hope they've met the correct criteria and then they can be approved for the release of their requested funds.

An inelegant process that to the individual appears to be as difficult as possible for those who need the most help. The frustrations of this process don't end here as well.

## More fine print

If you're under 60 that's going to be

go through this process, I tried to inform as much as possible, it was my job to be a messenger who relays a process that is embarrassing and tedious.

## The nest egg dream

In television and internet commercials, super is sold to us as part of the dream of retirement, the proposal that while young you can invest in your future, scrimp and save away, have your money invested on your behalf in the market.

If you work and sacrifice hard enough, you'll get a big return and live out your golden years day-drinking and travelling.

Super is a reflection of the decades of hard work you put yourself through and reward for participating in capitalism, selling your labour power and paying off your landlord's mortgage.

So, keeping on top of it is important

# The Federal Election and Foreign Policy – Missing in Action

By James R.

**This is a time of major escalation of conflict and of potential and actual war globally – from Europe to Africa, to the Middle East and to Asia-Pacific.**

Australia is spending tens of billions on arms, and a new announcement comes every week. (Curtin RAAF Base near Derby upgrade, Hypersonic missile development, and a new port at Darwin being the latest).

And yet the coming federal election is still mired in the swamp of the so-called bi-partisan stances of the Coalition and the ALP. (so-called because it's not their free decision – it's a response to US domination which has lasted and intensified since WW2).

The only 'debate' is the Coalition implying the ALP is suspect on defence, and the ALP responding by conceding every US-dictated war preparation the Coalition announces.

Nothing symbolises more starkly the one-eyed sycophancy of this unity than the sickening tributes delivered on the recent death of former US Secretary of State, the murderous Madeleine Albright.

This is the woman who said about the result of pre-war sanctions, that the death of 500,000 dead Iraqi children was "a very hard choice, but the price we think the price is worth it" and also, "If we have to use force, it is because we are America."

And yet prospective new ALP Minister of Foreign Affairs Penny Wong said she was "a true trailblazer, a champion of freedom and justice. She was an inspiration to so many, including me." Deputy ALP leader Tanya Plibersek was even more starry-eyed.

## The Quad and AUKUS

The Quad (the US, India, Japan and Australia) is no longer looking viable as a cross-regional military alliance under US dominance.

India is clearly unwilling to line up against either Russia (a major trading and military equipment partner) or China – a trading partner and a formidable potential threat from the Himalayas).

India has just signed a free trade agreement with Australia, and that it seems is the desired future for the Quad



from an Indian perspective, despite extensive pressure and lobbying by the US.

That in turn puts the emphasis back on AUKUS: and it would be unsurprising if the US tries to forge a wider pact, perhaps even a NATO in the Pacific, involving at least Japan and possibly South Korea now that it has returned to conservative pro-US rule.

Note also that with India missing, the two remaining Indian Ocean powers are the US (through the significant military base at Diego Garcia) and Australia through Western Australia.

The very recent US-supported ouster of Pakistan President Imran Khan reveals a US fall-back candidate in the Indian Ocean - if it holds against popular protest.

## Labor salutes US imperialism

None of these developments have drawn the slightest objection from the ALP leadership: it seems what the US wants, so do they. The relevant ALP policy is: "Labor will deepen our engagement with our closest neighbours. And we will ensure that the Quadrilateral consultations deliver in our relationships with India, Japan and the United States. We will also support new arrangements, such as AUKUS."

No signs of any real change from Coalition policy there.

And it seems very unlikely that new arrangements beyond AUKUS would be challenged in any material way. The usual practice is to quibble about details,

or about not being properly consulted – and then to support whatever the measure or policy is anyway.

The superficial reason given for this is to avoid a 'khaki' election and running a 'small target' policy.

To some degree or another, this is always ALP practice approaching elections.

The widespread myth that the Shorten-led ALP went to the 2019 election with truly radical (domestic) policies, and that this led to their defeat, adds to the deception.

It simply ignores how conservative much of 2019 ALP policy was – for instance, how they shirked abolishing negative gearing except on new construction. The dire state of Australia's housing market would make the full abolition policy wildly popular now – but no trace of such a position remains.

So if electoral caution is not the reason for ALP conservatism on foreign policy and everything else, what is the explanation?

It is clearly that the ALP leadership, whatever the stance of ALP members, is just as much under the dominance of the US and subservient to their interests as the Coalition.

Economic, military and political-cultural allegiance to the US are all involved.

## Puppets and collaborators

Such organisations as the Australian American Leadership Dialogue, the United States Study Centre and the Australian Strategic Policy Institute cultivate and promote future leaders of the two major parties, and police those who might exhibit unwelcome tendencies of independence and dissent.

They are of course greatly helped in this task by the major media outlets in Australia – the Murdoch press obviously, but the Channel 9-owned

*Sydney Morning Herald* and Melbourne *Age* and Kerry Stokes' Seven West Media all conform to this important role.

That is, to denigrate and publish against any leadership aspirants who might threaten the dominance of multinational business interests, the military-industrial complex and other US-supported centres of power and influence over Australia.

The most important foreign policy announcement under this comprador behaviour was Penny Wong's statement in February putting a 'floor' on military spending of 2% of GDP.

This was then topped by Albanese in March who pledged:

"...to spend more than 2% of Australia's gross domestic product on defence".

When we think of the extravagant announcements in just the last few months by Peter Dutton – tens of billions on tanks, east coast naval bases for submarines, cyber-security, high-speed long range missile defence systems, and a 30% increase in defence personnel to 80,000 by 2040 – are we confident *any* of these would be cancelled by an incoming ALP government?

We shouldn't be. ALP or Coalition-led, Australia remains, with the possible exception of Britain, the most reliable, loyal and obsequious of client-states.

## Meet the CPA (M-L)

Whether you're interested in joining or just want to discuss ideological and political issues, we welcome your enquiries.

Email: [info@cpaml.org](mailto:info@cpaml.org)

with name, location and a contact mobile phone number, to arrange a discussion with one of our comrades.

