

Communist Party of Australia



Political Resolution

12th National Congress

October 4 – 7, 2013

**Active and united
for a socialist Australia**

Communist Party of Australia

Political Resolution

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The decisive factor in this historical period is the intensification of the class struggle which is reflected in the rising level of action by millions of ordinary people against the injustice and misery inflicted by capitalism. The struggle to change this situation will lead to reforms and revolutionary transformations.

Capitalism, which came into existence as a step forward compared to its feudal predecessor, has now outlived its usefulness and its original progressive features. It is holding back the development of humanity and taking the planet and its peoples to the edge of the abyss.

While it may take many new forms, the source of exploitation – the basic contradiction between the social character of production and the private appropriation of the products of labour – in essence remains the same.

Although capitalism has increased production enormously compared to previous social systems, it distorts and holds back economic and social development, subjecting it to the profit motive. It exploits and destroys natural resources and the environment. Finance capital is at the helm. The independence of nations is sacrificed to force down the price of raw materials and the environment and people's lives are secondary to this drive. National independence is being stolen from nation after nation by these transnational organisations.

After more than 200 years of capitalist domination, the people of the world are facing global financial and economic crisis. This brings with it a food and water crisis destroying the lives and health of hundreds of millions of people, an environmental crisis threatening the future of life on our planet, the possibility of devastating new wars, and a catastrophic energy crisis as finite resources are depleted without the development of safe, sustainable alternatives.

At the same time, the situation creates new opportunities for fundamental progressive change and a socialist future for the people of the world. The crisis of capitalism is leading millions of people to consider alternatives. US-led imperialism is in decline but remains a

formidable military force. Its desperation is leading it to embark on one military adventure after another. More and more people are asking fundamental questions about the desirability and sustainability of capitalism. The concept of socialism is gaining wider support among the people in the battle of ideas.

With two billion of the world's seven billion people lacking adequate nutrition, sanitation, health care and education, there is real and growing anger against these and other effects of the capitalist system. However, the objective necessity of socialism as the only real solution for their problems does not spontaneously become a subjective conviction in people's minds.

Through class struggle the working class accumulates valuable experience that contributes, in combination with the political-ideological work of Communist parties, to the development of class and political consciousness. The political and ideological work of Communist Parties is a critical factor in the development of this political consciousness.

The Communist Party of Australia must be built into a party capable of organising, educating, leading, uniting and fighting alongside all politically progressive forces in building a broad people's movement for real change led by the working class. The essence of this movement must be anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and democratic.

The successes in building socialist societies so far, despite the difficulties and setbacks, indicates that it is possible to change Australia and create a better society. It is this vision of a socialist society leading to a world free from war, poverty, exploitation and environmental destruction that motivates the work of the members of the Communist Party of Australia.

Internationalism is a vital part of the struggle against global capital, including the strengthening of the international Communist, workers' and peoples' movements. The Communist Party of Australia will continue to support, wherever possible, the struggles of fraternal

Communist and workers' parties the world over and participate, whenever possible, in the International Meetings of Communist and Workers' Parties.

The Communist objective of economic, social and national liberation of the people is the fundamental direction of our times. The historical period of the transition from capitalism to socialism on a world scale continues to develop.

Australia Today

Australia is a developed capitalist economy which has undergone major restructuring since the 1970s when rural production and manufacturing were major employers and key exporters. Transnational monopoly control of the economy has reached an advanced stage. The transnational corporations occupy significant positions in many key industries, such as mining, energy, food and agriculture, as well as in financial institutions. Foreign direct investment is playing a major part in the Australian economy and this has influenced Australia's foreign policy.

The Australian economy is controlled from the commanding heights by monopoly capital. The dismantling of government ownership of banks, airlines and telecommunications, along with transport and other major sectors of the economy, has weakened Australian governments and left transnational corporations freer to plunder the Australian economy. Governments are simply subsidising these corporations and, at the same time, are being urged to drive down the wages and living conditions of the people. The combined impact of four decades of these policies of neo-liberal reform under the two-party system have led us to this point.

Successive governments have encouraged the growth of the financial sector, export of education, tourism and hospitality at the expense of the industrial sector. The services sector employs close to 75 percent of the workforce and contributes about 70 percent of national income (gross domestic product – GDP).

China, Japan, South Korea, India and the US account for over 50 percent of Australia's exports and trade with China and India has been growing the most rapidly in recent years. Our top exports are coal, iron ore, education services and crude petroleum.

Australian resources

Australia continues to be a resource basin for plunder by transnational corporations and export of primary commodities.

Australia is rich in natural resources. It ranks in the top five globally for bauxite, black and brown coal, copper, diamonds, gold, iron ore, lead, lithium, nickel, uranium and zinc. The plunder of these resources is being accelerated by transnational corporations with no heed paid to their environmental impact or planning for longer term needs.

The people of Australia, who own these resources, receive little benefit from their plunder. The federal government's mineral resources rental tax was designed and manipulated by the big three mining companies to deliver minimal returns to government. Mining corporations are stealing massive wealth and resources from future generations of Australians. The CPA stands by its position of nationalising the resources sector to ensure the current and future prosperity of the Australian people. Natural resources are public property and should always remain so.

While minerals and fuels account for just over half of Australia's exports, the Australian economy is not as dependent on them as governments and the media would have us believe.

The mining sector contributes less than ten percent to GDP and directly employs a little over 200,000 workers with a similar number in flow-on jobs. With other key sectors of the economy stagnating or in recession, the mining sector has played a key role in keeping the GDP in the black. However, it has done little to help the rest of the economy. In particular, it has contributed little to the economic well being of the Australian people.

Partner to US imperialism

The Australian ruling class plays the role of junior partner to United States imperialism. This has led to the establishment of a number of key US military bases on Australian territory and is reflected in the increasing militarisation of Australia, escalating military budgets and the subservience of successive Australian governments in following the military dictates of US imperialism such as involving Australia in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Subservience to the United States has been accompanied by an offensive on democratic rights. Australia's intelligence organisations and police now have extensive powers to detain and question innocent people. "Anti-terror" laws extend the power of the state, removing long held fundamental rights such as the right to remain silent, the right to see evidence, the right of a detained person to be present in court, and the right to freedom of speech during and after detention.

The capitalist system is the cause of many social problems, including extremes of wealth and poverty, ignorance, drug addiction, violence, racism, sexism, environmental degradation, conflicts and wars. The application of profit-motivated "solutions" to social problems creates conflicts while the contradictions inherent in the system of capitalism inevitably produce booms and slumps in the economy.

Racism and discrimination against Indigenous people, migrants and refugees, discrimination against women, plus poverty, insecurity, homelessness and social breakdown are now commonplace and affect everyone in Australia directly or indirectly.

Cuts in government spending are affecting social welfare, public education, health and housing programs and employment. A permanent pool of unemployed and under-employed is deliberately maintained and the number of people living below the poverty line has increased.

The working class of Australia is being subjected to a relentless offensive by capital in almost every sphere of life. As a consequence many social and workplace rights have been eroded. The CPA supports a struggle-based approach by unions and the working class in dealing with the employer offensive.

This capitalist offensive needs to be opposed by united working class action. This action has been hampered by a class collaborationist influence within the trade union movement and working class, particularly through the Accord years, resulting in a serious weakening of unions both ideologically and in terms of trade union density. The weakening of left forces in the trade unions and more generally has been a contributing factor to this situation.

The Communist Party of Australia opposes Australian Free Trade Agreements negotiated with the agendas set by multinational corporations that seek to remove labour, environmental and social protections and threaten the sovereignty of Australia.

We support the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and reject anything that will impose higher prices for medicines. The Communist Party rejects special rights being given to corporations under these agreements to undermine labelling of genetically modified food and environmental protections. The CPA rejects agreements that threaten local jobs or limit trade union rights.

Recession in Australia

Capitalism is in crisis and its impact is being felt in every part of the globe, including Australia. The present crisis threatens the stability of not just the global financial system but the capitalist system itself. The full impact of the crisis has not yet been felt in Australia.

The crisis has its roots in the capitalist mode of production, in globalisation, in the massive amounts of accumulation and concentration of capital that are the product of monopoly capital's growth and penetration of world production and markets. The largest of these transnational corporations have assets far larger than those of the many countries they dictate to.

The situation has been compounded by the growth and domination of parasitic financial institutions which have diverted billions of dollars from the productive sphere into highly speculative activities and outright gambling.

When economic crisis set in in Australia, the government and corporate sector were looking to the strength of trade with the People's Republic of China to provide Australia with immunity and then, when that did not happen, to soften the impact of crisis. The economic importance of China to the Australian ruling class has created an on-going contradiction between their economic interests and the alignment of political/strategic interests with the USA. Divisions have emerged within the ruling class over Australia's military subservience to the US.

In the early stages of the economic crisis, the Rudd Labor Government turned to measures to increase purchasing power, a recognition that consumer demand needed to be increased or companies would go bust, more jobs would be lost, purchasing power would decline further and the economy plunge deeper into recession. Much of the wealth of millions of working people in Australia locked up in Superannuation funds was lost during the economic crisis.

In addition, there were a number of other measures aimed at stimulating spending and creating mostly temporary employment. The underlying neo-liberal policies of deregulation and privatisation remained intact.

The infrastructure and other projects funded by the stimulus package are forms of direct assistance to the private sector. The same funds allocated to the public sector could have created many more jobs and provided more infrastructure and services.

The Labor Party is once again proving to be a loyal manager of capitalism in crisis and an agent of anti-worker, anti-people attacks. It did not abandon neo-liberalism. One feature of this was the federal government effort – which finally failed – to create a budget surplus, which is a means of arguing for cuts in social welfare and public services to fund corporate tax cuts.

The government has not curbed the operations of the financial institutions and corporations that are receiving its support. It has no intention of taking any measures to regulate currency trading, foreign investment or trade.

The role of the sovereign state in economic governance is being wound back, leaving many critical policy matters to the so-called free market. This process has involved a significant transfer of power from elected governments to monopoly capital in its most dominant form – finance capital.

At federal, state and local government levels, government responsibilities are being handed over to the private sector. Privatisation results in a fundamental change in the objective of service provision from one of providing government or the public with a service based on need to one where the service becomes a vehicle for making private profits. For example, SERCO has signed multi-billion dollar contracts to provide hospital, prison and other public services.

The public sector was a major employer of apprentices. It offered relative job security and better working conditions than those commonly found in the private sector. As a job creator, it provides more jobs for

the same outlay than the private sector. As a service provider it can be more reliable, more efficient and inherently cheaper because the layers of profit-gouging are absent.

Strengthen the party for the tasks ahead

The Communist Party of Australia is a working class party based on the understanding that the working class is the only force capable of engaging in and leading other social forces in the necessary actions to take political power from the capitalist ruling class, establish the power of the working class and achieve the revolutionary changes necessary to build a socialist society. The Party has no aims separate from those of the working class and all exploited people.

The aim of the Communist Party of Australia is the establishment of a socialist society that is fairer, co-operative, more democratic, where the working class has state power.

The Party needs to learn from the collective experience of the working class. Party members must study reality and apply Marxist-Leninist thought to it. The Party must build and strengthen the struggles of the people. It is this crystallised experience that develops a revolutionary party deeply entrenched amongst the people.

Unity is based on knowledge of what we are trying to achieve. In developing this leadership, we need to develop our own sense of humility and be prepared to learn, study and practice. We must avoid the pitfall of arrogance that sees us as the ones with all the answers and instead practice fraternity with our own comrades and those we seek to work with. This means learning from them as they learn from us. Discipline is also essential in how we behave and work.

Our goal is the creation of a society that will set about eliminating the problems inherent in capitalism – war, exploitation, environmental destruction, oppression, poverty, unemployment, ignorance, bigotry, racism, discrimination and the lack of access to services and rights.

The CPA: a centre of political activity

Our Party's immediate tasks are to build our numbers, to strengthen Party unity and activity, to develop the class struggle and to build the movement to challenge the power of monopoly capital. We are committed to fighting for workers' rights, democratic and proletarian internationalism, the preservation of peace and the environment with the perspective of socialism.

For the Party to win the battle of ideas for social change, we must build our capacity and improve the quality of our work. Even with our limited resources, we can achieve a great deal if every Party member is an activist who brings their work into the Branch. By doing so, the Party is stronger, turning these efforts into Party work and giving the Branch the opportunity to provide comrades with guidance and support. This work must be co-ordinated and have the aim of building the class struggle and the fight to win a socialist Australia.

All Party organisations must focus their work over the next four years around building Branches as centres of political activity and campaigning in the mass movement in the interests of workers for socialism. In this process attention to education, recruitment, finance, and *The Guardian* is essential.

Party Branches should be centres of political activity in the industry or locality in which they work. This means carrying out campaigns, developing contacts with others who are struggling around similar issues in a way that builds each Branch into a respected political force in these areas.

To effectively achieve its aims, the CPA and its members must be an integral part of the day-to-day struggles of the working class and community. The Party's leadership capability can only be developed and proven by putting it into practice in the people's struggles consistently over many years.

Occasional involvement in local issues will not help the Party win the leadership of the working people in their locality or workplace.

We need to recognise the big changes that have occurred in composition of the working class in Australia. Over the last three decades most large manufacturing enterprises have disappeared from our suburban landscape making it more difficult to organise people in their place of work.

However, working people still live together in large numbers in working class communities and our struggle to win leadership of the working class needs to focus on the communities that working people live in as well as their workplaces.

Through our role in daily struggles, we can win the confidence of the people, proving that we are the best advocates of their immediate and long-term interests. Through daily struggles the Party can help build a force that is politically and organisationally able to challenge and defeat the capitalist system.

The recent election of a Communist Party initiated community ticket to Auburn Council in Sydney is the product of years of locality work by a Party Branch in a progressive coalition and shows the value of alliances based on community interests.

The CPA endorses this kind of community, workplace and industry campaigning in the work of our Party and calls on all Branches to adopt this method of work wherever appropriate and to build their Branch as a centre of political activity.

Whether a campaign is a success or not is not measured solely or sometimes even partially in terms of reforms won or material gains

achieved. Even if no immediate gains are achieved, a campaign should still be hailed as a success if it results in a raising of class-consciousness on the part of the workers who take part, or if it brings previously inactive workers into action, or if it helps to build the labour movement.

Party members must be activists in non-Party organisations, most importantly trade unions, to strengthen and further the aims of those organisations and introduce relevant Party policies to such organisations in an appropriate manner.

Branches should develop “know your industry/community” programs to ensure that all members can act effectively in local campaigns.

Branches should put out regular newsletters and/or leaflets in their area of work identifying the Party’s policies and views on local or workplace issues.

Campaigning

In addition to their specific aims, Party campaigns are also a main way of winning support for Party policy and encouraging workers and the broader community to be active with us and to join the CPA.

Campaigning is more than just issuing a leaflet. It should involve a series of activities which allow us to talk to workers, explain the issues and put our perspective. A campaign must be carefully planned, targeted and organised. It must have an aim of addressing the needs of the people, that the people will commit themselves to help achieve.

Our aim is to build a Party able to organise and have a presence and influence among the working class and its potential allies through sustained and visible work and organisation in different areas.

If people are prepared to mobilise for progressive demands, Party members have the duty to actively support them. But they also have the

duty to ensure that the struggle for immediate demands contributes to the development of the working class's understanding of its power and ability for victories at all levels of political power.

Our campaigning must be for goals that reflect the broadest concerns of the working class – jobs, wages, democratic rights, social services, public education, public health, housing, affordable living costs, etc.

We campaign for reforms to improve the situation and further the rights of the working class but that they are not be limited to these improvements. Temporary victories cannot be allowed to divert workers from the class struggle. At each stage the Party needs to be clearly explaining that reforms must be used to develop the class struggle to win fundamental change.

Education

The Party has to provide leadership in many fields – in ideology and the practical application of theory to the tasks of the times, in organisational work, in building the Party particularly among the working class, in the political and theoretical education of its members and supporters, in working to build the necessary left and progressive forms of unity, and in defending and fighting for socialism.

It is vitally necessary to develop many more Party cadres who are capable of providing the all-round leadership to the working people that is necessary. This means, in the first place, education in Marxism-Leninism and its application to the tasks and political developments in society here and around the world.

Improvement is needed in the level of ideological and political awareness amongst the membership of the Party and is a key factor in the building and sustaining of Party unity, discipline, adherence to decisions and observance of the principles of democratic centralism.

Democratic centralism is the organisational principle of the Party. It is a process which entails ascertaining and converting the will of the majority of members into policy decisions which become binding on all. Proper observance of the principles of democratic centralism promotes the activity and initiative of members and unites the Party in which factional and splitting activities have no place.

Democratic centralism ensures a vigorous democratic life within the Party and effective authoritative central leadership, close contact between higher and lower party organisations, the carrying out by all members of majority decisions and lower Party organisations acting in accordance with the decisions of higher Party organisations. Collective methods of leadership are combined with individual responsibility in carrying out decisions.

Theory is not dogma. It is a guide to action that calls for study of the realities of the present time and the correct application of Marxist theory. Theory and practice have to be united at every stage with policies and tactics tested against results. Practice without theory is blind, while theory without practice is sterile.

All Party organisations, from the Central Committee to Branches, should undertake regular study of all subjects – theory, practical work, organisation and administrative skills.

Party committees should impress upon members the importance of individual study, which can be undertaken in conjunction with objectives set by Party organisations and linked to life and work.

All Party Branches must provide prospective and new members with a basic introductory education program which includes understanding the Constitution, basic introduction to Marxism-Leninism; Party aims and priorities.

A dedicated group drawn from leaders of the Party at all levels must be developed to ensure the planning and running of political and theoretical education in our Party. This must be one of the principal tasks of the incoming CC Executive.

Recruitment

The majority and the bedrock of the Party's membership must be drawn from the ranks of the working class.

In recruiting and building the Party membership there are no easy solutions and no one size fits all approach. It's a difficult task but we can plan and prepare the groundwork for more recruits. We need to invest resources and time and not just rely on slogans.

To maximise our chances of recruiting successfully we must focus on good planning and campaigning activity in the Branch, visibility, contacts in struggles and within the broader movement, and good accessible, attractive literature. Party members must lead by example and win the respect and support of those they work with.

Active recruiting must become a conscious part of the Party's campaigning.

Branches must focus on recruitment issues on a regular basis, have it as a regular agenda item at meetings.

We must represent the true national traditions and cultures of all the groups who make up the Australian working class today. We must see the importance of speaking in this way to the people.

Party workplace and industrial Branches were once a basic strength of the Communist Party of Australia. Their relative absence is a weakness, yet developing working class struggles demand their rebuilding as a matter of urgency. Success with this target will require patient, detailed and persistent work.

Every worker in industry and every comrade active in a trade union must be helped in this difficult work. Success requires initiative, resourcefulness and patience. Party members in workplaces can be helped with advice on political and economic questions, helped with writing articles and leaflets, helped in how to deal with and develop struggles within the workplace and industry.

Our work must be regularly reviewed and discussed in a constructive and supportive manner with the aim of improvement.

Finance

We have to build a Party that has the income and other resources required to effectively play its vanguard role. A longer term goal is to establish a full-time cadre of the Party in major centres throughout the country.

Greater involvement with people in local or workplace issues creates opportunities to change the current situation in which our members are usually our main source of finance. Organising successful fund-raisers could also provide the Party with significant financial support.

At the same time, the Party must place greater importance on regular financial pledges from members.

Guardian

The Communist Party's national newspaper, *The Guardian* and *The Guardian* on-line, should play a central role in the work of the Party. *The Guardian* should help to educate and organise Party members and supporters to carry out activities, openly and honestly informing workers of issues, free of control by vested interests. It should help to give guidance to the Party's campaigns and to share experiences and achievements across Party organisations.

Party members should contribute reports regarding outcomes of various campaigns and actions to *The Guardian*. This is the only way to maintain *The Guardian*'s connection with the people and the struggle.

Our newspaper links the Party and individual members with the more class conscious and politically aware members of the working class

and working people generally. *The Guardian* should clearly state and promote the policies of the Party and that our objective is for a socialist Australia.

The Communist Party seeks to have all its members read, contribute to, sell and distribute *The Guardian* which must develop a wide readership among working class and progressive activists.

Develop unity and alliances to win real change

Today's conditions are ripe for the building of democratic, anti-monopoly and anti-imperialist alliances that aim to challenge and ultimately defeat capitalism and imperialism and to fundamentally transform society.

Such alliances are crucial if real change is to be achieved in Australia. The Party and the working class cannot do this alone.

The Communist Party's Marxist-Leninist based strategic and political outlook, expressed above all in our Program, enables the Party to analyse the major struggles – including that for socialism itself – and to identify the potential allies at each stage.

In this way, on the basis of co-operation and mutual respect, the Party seeks to give guidance and win leadership of the mass movement that must be built for socialist revolution.

Conditions in Australia and experiences in other countries indicate that the process of social transformation is likely to pass through at least two stages. The complexity of dialectical development is likely to see many more phases within this process of social change.

While the process of change is long and complex, the Party has characterised the first stage as part of a social process where the power of monopoly capital is weakened and democratic rights and participation of the people are extended.

The second stage would see the replacement of capitalist class power with working class power and further steps to break the control and ownership of the economy by the capitalist class.

The first stage, as outlined in the Party Program, does not bring about working class rule, which is our ultimate goal. It does however intensify the class struggle and open up the battle of ideas. Internationally today, we see examples of such processes in Venezuela and South Africa.

In this stage the struggle to wrest economic and social reforms from the ruling class not only improves conditions for the working class (as long as the reforms can be maintained) but also raises confidence, expectations and demands. In these struggles for reforms, political understanding can grow about the class nature of society, class rule and the need to fight to change it.

In Australia today we have not yet moved into the first stage. Recent decades have been characterised by a “grab back” of gains made by the working class and its allies in earlier times. Unity in action to win back those gains is essential and will also be key to moving into the first stage. We must build our Party so we can work effectively and win the battle of ideas. We must build campaigns so we bring people into action and increase the Party’s influence. We must build unity ideologically and organisationally to create the force that can bring about such change.

Party members have a duty to actively support people mobilising for progressive demands. Combined with this, we have a duty to ensure that the struggle for immediate demands helps to prepare the working class for the struggle to win working class power.

The working class has the most direct interest in abolishing capitalism, the system which exploits them, denies them decision-making power in workplaces and the wider society, threatens them with poverty and confines most of them to a lifetime of inequality and insecurity.

The working class also has the experiences of coming together in workplaces where they share common interests and experiences in organising to improve their conditions of work, developing their collective strength as a disciplined force.

Other potential allies of the working class also have their own reasons for challenging aspects of monopoly capitalism. Some exploited strata share with the working class a common enemy, which exploits men and women here and abroad, oppresses large sections of society, works constantly to roll back democratic rights, blocks progress on every front, generates militarism and war, and threatens the viability of our planet. Even some sectors of the national bourgeoisie view the activities of the transnational corporations with alarm.

A Marxist-Leninist approach analyses the fundamental economic and political forces at play from a working class perspective.

Party members must work to develop a united front of the working class and at the same time build the various forms of unity that bring together the opponents of monopoly capitalism. This means being prepared to work with other political organisations and individuals willing to advance the cause of the working people irrespective of other differences.

The development of united action by the whole working class is a complex and uneven process. There are many difficulties to be overcome. The low rate of unionisation, the tight grip of social democracy over unionised labour, the many divisions that have been

fostered by the ruling class on the basis of race, religion, unemployment, different kinds of work, forms of employment, welfare dependence, gender, sexual preference and so forth, act as obstacles to unity and the development of class consciousness among the working class.

While putting the main emphasis on the development of working class unity in a united front, it is also essential to build unity among the left and politically progressive people's forces that is strong enough to challenge and break the domination of the two big parties of capital in Australia's political life. This must arise out of the demands and mass actions of the working people, other strata and social groups that seek to challenge the power of monopoly capital and imperialism in the struggle for fundamental change.

The left political parties must strengthen their co-operation, develop effective programs, which reflect the interests of the working class and propose strategy and tactics to implement such programs. Successful struggles of the left forces in uniting workers in action will serve as an example and a stimulus to all progressive political forces and organisations and strengthen further the people's alliance for real change.

At present, no single political party that represents progressive and democratic opinion can command sufficient support to form an alternative government at federal, state and local council level. But a coalition could. Coalitions have proved effective and powerful and are capable of winning much support and generating enthusiasm and struggle.

The mere achievement of a parliamentary majority by left and progressive forces is not sufficient to guarantee long-lasting benefits for the working class and other exploited people. Organisation outside the parliament is primary and essential to ensure that the social change is deepened to arrive at qualitative change – working class political power. It is the organisation of the working class struggle outside of parliament that will form the basis and possibility of creating alternative forms of working class state power.

The progressive movements which already exist provide a realistic basis on which to build a broad and active people's unity in support of progressive issues and demands.

In many of these mass movements, workers and working class organisations play a part but their participation is often limited and does not fulfil the need for the working class to play the leading role which their size, experience and organisation calls for.

Major issues

Workers' rights, peace, environmental protection, national independence, democracy, sustainable and just economic progress, Aboriginal rights, public education, health and public housing, jobs, refugees' and women's rights are some of the major issues facing the Australian people.

We should never counter-pose the major political issues against local and community work. It is important not to neglect the issues that people around us are concerned about. If we make this mistake, our campaigns will lack relevance to the everyday lives of the majority of people.

It is the role of Communists to draw the links and relationships of all problems that exist under capitalism. We should strive to bring the class questions to the fore, link the various areas of struggle and unite mass movements across various issues.

With limited resources our Party must select priorities, estimating the areas where our work can be most effective. The Party's priorities in the coming period are expected to be workers' rights, the environment, peace, defence of the public sector and Indigenous rights.

Workers' rights, building a stronger, class conscious and militant union movement

In Australia today the richest 20 percent of the population now own 61 percent of total household wealth, while the poorest 20 percent own just 1 percent. Two million people live in poverty, and at least 100,000 are homeless on any given night.

Official unemployment is 5.4 percent with millions more condemned to casual work and under-employment. This figure conceals the true extent of unemployment and under-employment by including as employed anyone who has been paid for one or more hours work. The true rate is more than double the official figure. The official figure also fails to acknowledge that 40 percent of the workforce is in casual, part-time, contract or other forms of insecure work.

Workers constantly struggle against capital for jobs, especially secure jobs, decent working conditions and democratic rights. The working class is at the centre of the economic life of society because of their work as the producers of goods and services.

Recognising that the trade unions are the main mass organisations of the working class, the capitalist class attempts either to incorporate them as partners in the state-monopoly capitalist system or to destroy them.

The ruling class, with the assistance of successive Labor and Coalition governments and the mass media, have waged an offensive against trade unions. This has included an ideological war, as well as more overt attacks on trade union rights through such means as repressive legislation. This has contributed to a reduction in class consciousness and capacity and preparedness to take industrial action.

When unions do fight for the interests of their members or act in solidarity with other workers, unions, their officials and individual workers face heavy fines and/or jail sentences. Employers take legal

action against unions and even individual workers as a means of preventing strikes, picketing or other acts of solidarity with other workers.

Measures include anti-union laws that criminalise industrial action and outlaw solidarity actions, the use of military forces in industrial disputes and the employment of scabs. Employers can legally lock out workers without pay, close down industries and force thousands out of work. Unionised workers, about 18 percent of the workforce, in contrast have limited ability to take legal industrial action in bargaining periods. While these limited rights exist for all workers, non-unionised workers rarely find themselves in the position to wage such struggles.

A determined ideological, political and organisational fight back is needed.

Trade union struggles can be strengthened by winning the support of other community organisations, including small business and farmers, and by building trade union-community alliances.

In the battle of ideas, the Party must give priority to helping workers understand the cause of the global economic crisis, making the link between the various attacks they are subjected to and the brutal nature of the capitalist system itself. It is necessary to expose the cause of issues like the food crisis, environmental problems and war and link those things to the ever-increasing attacks on workers' rights and conditions.

The Party must also give priority to fight for and win basic trade union rights, including the right to strike. Unions must be able to take action around working conditions, occupational health and safety matters, in support of negotiations, against injustices, in solidarity with other workers, on political questions, and any other matters they deem appropriate. They must be recognised and have the right to negotiate collective agreements on behalf of workers.

The relationship between the Party and the trade unions is extremely important. Trade unions are the property of their members. They

are independent organisations that determine their own policies and actions through their own internal democratic structures. It is not the Communist Party's role, or that of any other political party, to dictate policy to trade unions. The CPA must win the battle of ideas and support for its policies through the work of its members.

CPA members must be active members of their trade union or retired members' organisation and do all they can to build the trade union movement and develop unity and struggle within the movement. Party members have an important role to play in raising class consciousness and promoting policies in the best interests of the union, its members and the working class as a whole.

Environment

Another major issue before the Australian people is the environmental crisis.

Many serious problems have arisen including global warming, soil erosion, salination and desertification, the pollution of towns and rivers, deforestation and the loss of biodiversity. The nuclear industry adds to the environmental problems.

Capitalism causes excessive and avoidable damage to the environment as corporations pollute the water, soil and atmosphere, rip out the resources of the planet, and destroy its vegetation and biodiversity in their criminal drive for profits irrespective of the consequences for the long-term survival of all forms of life on earth.

Rapid industrialisation and growth in former and existing socialist countries, carried out under considerable pressure to develop to compete with capitalism and survive, has also contributed to the massive environmental degradation that has taken place.

However the motives behind the two systems are quite different. The blind pursuit of maximum profits regardless of social, economic and

environmental costs that is systemic to capitalism is in sharp contrast to socialist society, which works to rapidly improve the living standards of its people. We should not ignore the energy conservation and other environmental measures that were practised in the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and other socialist countries.

In sharp contrast to the capitalist nations, socialist countries have made huge attempts and advances in recent years to address environmental questions and support global measures to reverse global warming and other consequences of past practices. Cuba is a shining example in this regard.

Destruction of the environment is a crime against humanity. Protection of the environment must be a primary struggle of the working class and all people.

Today, the struggle for sustainable development is in essence a struggle to restrain and restrict capitalist corporations and to compel an end to environmentally damaging production processes. It is a struggle to fulfil human needs through more creative, democratic and ecologically respectful practices. The contrast with uncontrollable capitalist growth and exploitation of natural resources for profit is stark.

In the coming period, priorities are likely to include campaigns against coal seam gas and the expansion of coal and uranium mining and the issues around global warming and climate change and market-based “solutions” for the environmental crisis, as well as water usage and biodiversity.

Australia is the highest greenhouse gas polluter per person in the developed world. This pollution is produced overwhelmingly by profit-driven corporations, not by individual members of the community who mostly have a high level of consciousness regarding energy use, water conservation and recycling.

Australia's electricity-related emissions are so high because the country relies primarily on coal for electricity generation and the CO₂ emitted from coal-fired power stations, because of its volume, is the most dangerous greenhouse gas.

Australia has some of the world's best capacity for renewable energy – solar, wind, wave and geothermal. There are no technical barriers to moving to 100 percent renewable energy but this is blocked by corporations which profit from polluting industries. The CPA remains committed to opposing nuclear generated power.

In line with these corporate interests, state and federal Labor and Liberal governments have rejected switching to renewable energy sources in favour of expansion of coal mining and large-scale development of gas. However, coal seam gas extraction does grave environmental damage such as poisoning ground and surface water aquifers and destroying agricultural land. Energy from gas is a substantial greenhouse gas polluter.

The only parliamentary political force to consistently oppose the expansion of coal mining and coal seam gas extraction and to promote the development of sustainable renewable energy sources is the Australian Greens. They, however, do not offer a satisfactory solution for workers in these industries. The CPA advocates that mining and resource jobs should be protected and converted into areas of environmental sustainability on no loss of pay.

Polluting corporations are working with governments to avoid regulations that may compromise their profits and challenge the economic system that created the environmental crisis in the first place.

In fact, state intervention in the form of a carbon tax is market fundamentalism, which the government has used to divert attention away from the causes of the climate crisis, to protect the capitalist system and to protect profit levels. The only potential beneficiaries are the financial markets with their trading in carbon credits and the

big polluters who can buy the “right” to continue to pollute. The CPA booklet *Hot Earth* makes it clear that the carbon tax was and is not a solution to global warming.

What is needed is the political will for a different form of state intervention that will use planning, regulations, legislation and penalties to enforce a reduction in Australia’s carbon emissions. This will only come about through an effective and sustained struggle.

It is crucial that the working class becomes involved in the struggle to save the planet from environmental catastrophe. Workers must be confident that protecting the environment is in their interests and the interest of their children and future generations. No worker must be worse off as a result of environmental protection measures.

Peace and war

In November 2011, US President Barack Obama and the Australian government announced an escalation and expansion of joint US and Australian military activities in Australia and the Asian and Indo-Pacific regions. The decision will have far-reaching local impacts and foreign policy consequences but the announcement was made without debate in Parliament or any consultation with the Australian people.

The major US military realignment, the so-called “pivot” to Asia and the Indo-Pacific, includes stationing of more than 2,500 US troops in Darwin, expanding and upgrading existing naval ports and air force facilities and building new military facilities to accommodate increasing use by the US military across the country, including nuclear warships. There will be more joint war games and the Cocos Islands are likely to host another new US military base.

China is the primary target of the US realignment. The US aim is containment of China with military encirclement of China and

expansion of US war making capacities to give the US the ability to shut down China's imports of energy and raw materials and to cripple its economy.

Within China, imperialism's agents are assisting pro-US political forces and fostering separatist movements with the aim of breaking up China and bringing about counter-revolution. These military, political and economic actions increase the risk of war and could seriously backfire on the US and Australia. Strong differences are developing within the Australian ruling class over the approach to China.

Australia is complicit in US attempts to pull non-aligned India, Myanmar, Vietnam, Indonesia, South Korea and other nations into its camp.

All this, together with an almost complete integration of the Australian government's foreign policies into US strategic goals, will make the whole country a US military base and a launching pad for US wars of aggression in the region.

Australia is host to over 30 US military bases. Its Pine Gap base directs drone strikes in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, while other bases carry out widespread electronic surveillance of ordinary citizens.

The Australian government's role as US deputy-sheriff is important for the US' continuing economic and military domination in the Asia-Pacific. It has serious implications for Australia's sovereignty and independence and for peace and welfare of all peoples in the region.

Over 160 years ago, Karl Marx predicted that the Pacific Ocean – “the great waterway of commerce” – would serve as “the centre of gravity of world commerce”, playing the same role as the Atlantic did in his century and the Mediterranean in Roman times. Marx's comments captured the essence of the significant shift in the global political economy today, with increased trade and investment across the Pacific basin.

The social and economic cost of subservience to US imperialism is enormous. Australia's military spending is 12th in the world on a per capita basis. Meanwhile public schools, hospitals and transport are starved of funds. Australia is also risking its vital trading relationship with China by its involvement in US efforts to contain China.

The new US imperialist military expansion and provocations in the Asia Pacific are a threat to peace and to the national independence and sovereignty of Australia and other countries in the region.

The imperialist states continue to control immense economic, military and political resources and are the main threat to the peace of the world. It is this imperialist control that stands in the way of social and economic progress and peace and security.

Although the might of the imperialist states may seem overwhelming, they face world-wide opposition and their power is being challenged in all continents. This includes Australia where a range of groups have come together in a new, growing, nation-wide movement. The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) is campaigning for an independent Australian foreign policy and against the establishment of foreign military bases and the deployment of foreign troops in Australia and the Asia-Pacific.

Campaigns to stop Australia being used as an economic and military base for US imperialism must become and remain a priority for Communist Party members.

The CPA fights for an independent and non-aligned foreign policy. This means an end to the ANZUS treaty and the expulsion of US and other imperialist military bases from Australian soil.

Indigenous rights

The Communist Party of Australia remains committed to the campaign to win recognition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and occupiers of Australian territory and their right to own and control their land and resources.

Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders form two national minorities within the Australian state. They suffer racial discrimination and oppression, segregation and isolation, and many live in conditions of poverty and deprivation.

Under the impact of over 200 years of colonisation, Australia's Indigenous people have been forcibly integrated into the capitalist system and the great majority have been transformed into members of the Australian working class. At the same time, they have also developed a consciousness of themselves as national minorities.

The struggle by the Indigenous people is centred on land rights. This campaign is more than an issue of civil rights. It goes beyond this bourgeois democratic aim for it contains a significant revolutionary aspect, the demand for the return to collective ownership of part of the basic means of production.

The demand for communal and inalienable property challenges capitalism for it puts forward a case for the expropriation of private property. It creates an alternative to private property and raises the question of social ownership by all the people, black and white, of land and other resources in a people's Australia.

Land rights mean recognition of prior Indigenous ownership of the entire Australian continent. There must be legislation to return land to its traditional owners on the basis of traditional ownership, cultural association, long occupancy, connections or need, including full rights to all minerals and other natural resources. The CPA supports the establishment of autonomous areas on the basis of communally owned land in accordance with the wishes of traditional owners and local Indigenous communities.

In addition to the struggle for land rights, there have been long struggles to maintain their culture, languages and cultural practices. There have been long and continuous campaigns for health, housing, education and legal services and for jobs. Much has been achieved. Much more remains to be done.

In 2007, the federal government's "Intervention" in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory began. It gave the government power to forcibly lease Aboriginal land and hold back 50 percent of Aboriginal welfare payments. The government set aside part of the laws banning racial discrimination and scrapped the permit system which had enabled Aboriginal communities to control entry into their land.

Behind the Intervention in the Northern Territory was the desire of the capitalist corporations to wrest control of Aboriginal lands from the local communities so they could better exploit the mineral wealth below.

The campaign to end the Intervention will remain a priority issue, together with the struggle for the possession by Indigenous communities of communal and inalienable title to their land, including the minerals and other natural resources on and within it and in adjacent seas.

Conclusion

The objective of our activity is socialism. Its achievement depends on a successful struggle to overthrow capitalism and imperialism. This in turn depends on the organisational, political and ideological maturity of the Party and our ability to play the leading role in shaping the future.

Capitalism is killing humanity and killing the planet. It is a bankrupt and moribund system. Our efforts now must be directed at developing

the struggle by the ever-expanding and strengthening working class and its allies against the capitalist ruling class. This is the only way to ensure the future for humanity; a peaceful and socialist future.

Around the world, millions of fighters for freedom, democracy, workers' rights, national independence, peace, the environment and socialism are confronting capitalism. This struggle is an objective process and inevitably arises in response to oppression and exploitation. It is this struggle which is the motor of development of society and the guarantee of social progress.

Socialism arises from the needs and hopes of the working people who are exploited and oppressed. It advances a profoundly humanitarian and partisan science which is a weapon in the movement to achieve a free, just, prosperous and secure society. These objectives remain and Communist parties will continue to fight for them.

The people of all countries, organised and united, constitute a power that has the potential to defeat the power of the huge monopolies and their governments. Such is the strength and vision of these people's movements that the conditions for a new revolutionary wave stretching across the world are now coming into existence.

There is a growing understanding that wars, poverty, lack of democratic rights and environmental destruction are products of the capitalist system and imperialism. The political consciousness of millions of people and their strong opposition to the policies of the corporations and their governments is now at a high level.

Today, capitalism is being seriously challenged. A new revolutionary cycle is emerging. The 21st Century is the century of socialism.

