



STOP TALISMAN SABRE WAR GAMES!

Denis Doherty and Hannah Middleton

US-Australian war games, currently being played in Queensland, should be cancelled for compelling security, environmental, economic, and health reasons. Shoalwater Bay must be handed back to the Darumbal people and US military bases, marines, ships, and planes must be expelled from Australia.

Talisman Sabre 2021 (TS21) is a joint United States-Australian military exercise that has taken place every two years in Australia, primarily on the central coast of Queensland at Shoalwater Bay, north of Rockhampton, within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. This year *Talisman Sabre* will run from late June to mid-August, peaking during 14-31 July.

Though significantly down-sized due to the Covid pandemic, Talisman Sabre has 17,000 US and Australian troops engaging in combined land, sea and air war games. The exercise includes the use of US nuclear-powered and nuclear weapons capable vessels, urban warfare, sonar, amphibious assaults, parachuting and land force manoeuvres. Live firing is likely to occur either before or after the official dates.

In addition to the US and Australia, this year's exercise involves forces from Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Korea, and the United Kingdom and observers from India, Indonesia, France, and Germany.

TIED TO THE US

The Talisman Sabre exercises deepen Australia's military involvement with the world's most aggressive nation, the US. Australia can no longer operate independently of the US in military matters.

US and Australian battle fleets conducting nuclear-capable military exercises during these war games will set off political alarm bells in our region and remind the world that Australia is deeply involved and supportive of US military activities.

THREATENING CHINA

Talisman Sabre sends a clear message to China that if conflict breaks out between the US and China, Australia will take part with the US.

Australia has sent troops to US-led conflicts around the world and allows the US to use its military and civilian infrastructure, including communication stations, ports and airfields. Australia houses one of the US's key

satellite war-fighting bases, Pine Gap, which helps guide US weaponry in the Middle East and is part of its missile defence system.

There are up to 2,500 US troops stationed in Darwin, strategically close to China and the South China Sea. Australia allows US planes deployed from Guam to fly over the Northern Territory to drop bombs. Australia allows the US to conduct troop changeovers in Western Australia, and US troops to deploy from Fremantle. Australia hosts about thirty US war-fighting bases.

Australia and the US had announced plans to test hypersonic missiles in Australia this year. On 16th July, during Talisman Sabre, the US and Australian military completed the first ever Patriot surface-to-air missile firing on Australian soil. US soldiers based in Japan and Guam successfully engaged drone targets with the Patriot missiles.

THREATENING THE ENVIRONMENT

In 2005, Australia made a long-term agreement with the US, turning Shoalwater Bay into a Joint Combined Training Centre and the first biennial Talisman Sabre took place. Glossy Public Environment Reports and fact sheets are written for each Talisman Sabre, but they are a public relations exercise. Written by private consulting firms to assuage public concern, they downplay any potential environmental impacts and fail to address social, broader environmental and political impacts of the war games.

This year, the ADF did not engage in a Public Environment Report process. However, Defence has produced an environmental awareness information video for visiting troops, promoting the military use of the Great Barrier Reef.

With many environmentally significant sites, species of birds and turtles, RAMSAR Convention listed wetlands key to international migratory birds, critical sea grass beds, diverse flora, coastal shores and waters protected as part of a world heritage site, dugongs and migrating whales, let alone protected coral reef and all its inhabitants, Shoalwater Bay should never be used for any military training.

This is even more true of these war games, which include the use of nuclear powered and nuclear weapons capable vessels, noise of low-flying planes and helicopters, maritime surface to surface, surface to land and surface



Protesters march down the main street of Yeppoon, Queensland, 2007.

to air live firing of missiles and torpedoes, the use of sonar and experimentation with new weapons.

On 22nd June, the United Nations World Heritage Committee announced that it would recommend that the Great Barrier Reef be listed as "World Heritage in Danger." The Committee identified the need for greater commitment to "countering the effects of climate change, but also towards accelerating water quality improvement and land management measures."

The objective of Talisman Sabre is to increase interoperability with the US military whose environmental footprint is appalling. The US military is ranked among the world's worst polluters and greatest consumer of oil. It has a legacy of leaving bases contaminated and radioactive.

In 2013, during earlier Talisman Sabre exercises, the US jettisoned four bombs on the Great Barrier Reef when they had difficulty dropping them on their intended target, Townshend Island.

DIVERTING RESOURCES

No official reports of the costs of the Talisman Sabre war games are provided by the government except in 2009 when a figure of \$100mil was made public. The games have grown in size and the weapons systems increasingly complex so it is reasonable to assume that costs have also escalated.

This is underscored by the increase

in Australia's overall military spending to \$44.6bil for 2021-22. This could and should be better spent on organising the economy along sustainable lines, protecting us from the pandemic, providing good jobs, education, health, welfare and much more. Australians would undoubtedly benefit from this as history teaches us that buying ever larger quantities of guns and bombs is no guarantee of security.

HEALTH RISKS

Bringing in thousands of troops from overseas poses a severe health risk for the people of Australia. Despite quarantining, the threat of spreading the Delta Covid variant from thousands of troops and observers is considerable.

Despite thousands of Australians not allowed to return home, military personnel from the US, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Korea, the United Kingdom, India, Indonesia, France, and Germany have been allowed into our country to play war games.

The Australian government has insisted that the coronavirus, which led to the cancellation of exercises in the Philippines, will not derail Talisman Sabre.

The Talisman Sabre war games should be cancelled and never be held again. And we should be fighting every day to change the government and the system which depend on exploitation, war and destruction. ✪

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Guardian

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AUS GOV'TS FAVOUR CELEBRITY RACIST OVER CITIZENS

Last week, Far-right British commentator Katie Hopkins had her visa cancelled and subsequently was deported from Australia. Hopkins also received a \$1000 fine by NSW police for failing to wear a mask. Channel 7 flew in the “provocateur” to join the reality television program *Big Brother VIP*. However, Hopkins bragged on social media about breaching safety protocols during her quarantine while describing the COVID lockdowns as “the greatest hoax in human history.”

Minister for Home Affairs Karen Andrews qualified Hopkins antics as “shameful” and her actions as “appalling.” However, Hopkins’ behaviour is well-documented not just on COVID-19 but on a variety of issues. When asked whether someone like Hopkins – who has likened migrants to cockroaches – should have been allowed to visit in the first place Andrews, in typical Coalition fashion, passed on the buck. “[A]ctually,” says Andrews, “[she] came into the country with support of a state government. [...] state governments approach the federal government on the basis that there is an economic benefit to some people coming in over the quarantine caps.”

Further defending that the decision was of “economic benefit,” NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard stated that “We put in place a process where the film companies who are guaranteeing a massive boost to our economy and jobs can make applications, as long as they do it in a way that is not going to impede on the number of Australians coming back.”

Channel Seven and production company Endemol Shine Australia also put out a statement saying they “strongly condemn her irresponsible and reckless comments in hotel quarantine.”

However, the shock both the ministers, network, and production company express presents a serious problem. Either a.) all parties involved didn’t do their job in investigating Hopkins’ character, or b.) They’re lying and were aware but did not care about putting a raging racist on TV. The evidence favours the latter.

Hopkins’ Instagram account is littered with COVID denialism. Her comments were not a revelation but rather an affirmation of her character. The whole reason why she, a UK “columnist,” was brought in was because of her reputation, and her reactionary opinions would most definitely have garnered ratings.

All the more upsetting is that such a person was allowed into this country when thousands of Australians have been left stranded overseas. According to *The Guardian* (UK), “[s]ince July just 3,070 arrivals are allowed each week, despite there being more than 30,000 Australians stranded overseas and seeking to return home.” Furthermore, “[t]he limit on the number of international arrivals coming into Australia via commercial flights was halved from [the 14th of July]” over concerns arising from the Delta strain.

The Coalition’s prioritising of perceived “economic benefits” over its own citizens, which it has showcased with its failed handling of the pandemic, is just the latest example of the Coalition’s contempt for the working class. The CPA, through its electoral expression – The Communists, will put Australians before profits. Register at communists.org.au/registration to help us make the ballot!

GREEN BAN REAFFIRMED AS LEGAL AVENUES TO SAVE WILLOW GROVE EXHAUSTED

N Stallon

On Friday 16th July, the NSW Court of Appeal ruled against the North Parramatta Residents’ Action Group (NPRAG), upholding the Land and Environmental Court’s judgement that Infrastructure NSW’s Environmental Impact Statement was valid.

The ruling paves the way for the demolition and indefinite storage of the historic 1870s Willow Grove Italianate villa and former maternity hospital.

The villa is to be reconstructed elsewhere, although discussions on the location and date will not begin until after the demolition, leaving residents sceptical. The demolition comes as part of the plans for a new Powerhouse Museum at the flood prone site in Parramatta CBD.

In the original case, the NPRAG alleged that the government had not realistically entertained the idea of retaining Willow Grove as part of the new development or considered alternative sites for the villa.

Former Liberal minister Justice Tim Moore found that although regulation requires “analysis of any feasible alternatives”, Infrastructure NSW was not required to do this and that in his opinion there was “no feasible alternative”.

This constitutes little more than the Justice’s personal point of view, and its upholding on appeal is damning. All legal avenues to prevent Willow Grove’s demolition have now been exhausted.

Nonetheless, in a media release by the NPRAG, spokesperson Suzette Meade reaffirmed the community’s commitment to save Willow Grove.

“Plan A has always been the passion and the power

of the community and unions working together,” said Meade. “In the spirit of Jack Munday, a construction union (CFMEU) greenban will save this site.”

“Premier Berejiklian should be under no illusion. If the destruction of Willow Grove or St George’s Terrace commences people will be prepared to put their bodies in front of machinery.”

The CFMEU reaffirmed their commitment to the green ban in a similar media release.

“The CFMEU will stand with the community of Parramatta to protect this unique and irreplaceable piece of local heritage,” said CFMEU NSW Secretary Darren Greenfield.

The union warned the NSW government against using the COVID-19 lockdown to begin demolishing Willow Grove and promised to intervene if builders were to move onto the site to begin demolition work.

Fortunately, the NSW government’s two-week construction lockdown until 30th July has seemingly halted the demolition for now. However, the CFMEU and NPRAG remain alert, with supporters of the green ban monitoring the building around the clock.

The CFMEU urged the NSW government and Infrastructure NSW to negotiate with the community “to find a way to build the Powerhouse without destroying this important heritage site.”

The community is being mobilised to defend the site when the time comes, with the Sydney Branch of the Maritime Union of Australia and NPRAG organising Non-Violent Direct Action Training sessions.

“The people of Parramatta shouldn’t have to choose our heritage or cultural funding,” Mead said. “We deserve to have both, and the community will continue to fight for this.” ✳



Special Appeal Reds go Green

The *Guardian* is running a special appeal with the aim of raising \$10,000 for solar panels. The panels will not only make substantial savings in electricity bills but also put into practice our commitment to a sustainable future. They involve a substantial cash outlay, but we believe that every measure we can take to reduce carbon emissions is important.

It is not enough to preach “green.” We must act “green”!

We are looking to *Guardian* readers and CPA members and supporters to assist us with this important project. Every contribution is appreciated, no matter how small or large.

Send your contribution today.

Name

Amount \$

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Send your contribution to 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, email info@cpa.org.au or pay by PayPal on cpa.org.au

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VACCINATION THE ONLY WAY OUT

Anna Pha

The delta strain of COVID-19 had spread to all states on the eastern seaboard and to South Australia and border closures are in place at the time of writing. There is growing anger and frustration over the shambolic and botched roll-out of vaccines. Constantly changing, and at times unclear, government messaging is causing considerable confusion.

The reality is that lockdowns and border closures will continue until as close as possible to full vaccination is achieved. At present, that is not possible. Australia has one of if not the lowest rate of vaccination of any comparable country. Britain and the Netherlands, with far higher rates of vaccination, lifted restrictions with deadly consequences. The virus took off, cases rising alarmingly, so much so that days later the Netherlands reinstated the closure of nightclubs to curb the exponential growth in cases.

In the race we are not having, Australia has vaccinated the smallest percentage of its population of any OECD country.

BOTCHED ROLL-OUT

The federal government botched the ordering of vaccines, resulting in a shortage of Pfizer and an oversupply of the cheaper AstraZeneca and Moderna on the horizon. AstraZeneca is not recommended by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) for anyone under sixty years of age.

Despite repeated appeals by the Prime Minister to ATAGI, it still refuses to change its position. The science remains unchanged, and ATAGI maintains its independence and integrity.

Morrison, as always, refuses to accept responsibility for the dangerously slow roll-out. He has attempted to deflect blame on states for the roll-out. He has pointed the finger at medical experts, including ATAGI. He didn't support the hard lockdowns of Victoria and closure of Western Australia's borders by Labor Premiers. Instead, he played politics with them and did an about-turn when Coalition Premier Gladys Berejiklian imposed a lockdown.

As a direct result of the government's failure to communicate clearly and consistently, and with some help from anti-vaxxers, there is a strong resistance to AstraZeneca among sections of the population. This is particularly the case in the southwest of Sydney, where a GP practising in the area told the *Guardian* they want Pfizer but cannot get it.

TOO SLOW TO RESPOND

When the Delta strain of COVID-19 first emerged in the Sydney suburb of Bondi, the NSW Coalition government failed to impose



swift, hard restrictions to curb its spread. It lost eight critical days before introducing a soft lockdown. It was an ill-thought-out, weak reaction to a fast-spreading virus that is far more virulent than other strains that have hit Australia.

The number of cases continued to rise before plateauing around the one hundred-mark, before stronger measures were introduced from 17th July. These included a harder lockdown of greater Sydney and the singling out of the local government areas (LGAs) of Fairfield, Canterbury-Bankstown, and Liverpool in Sydney for tighter restrictions. A ring of steel was put around these predominantly ethnic and working-class areas, preventing all but healthcare and emergency workers going to work outside of the ring.

As the *Guardian* reported (the 19th of July, 2021), workers in Western Sydney were disproportionately targeted for police harassment, hefty fines, and intimidation. Before that, when most cases were in the wealthier suburb of Bondi, there was no similar presence.

When announcing the 17th July lockdown, the NSW Coalition government belatedly defined what essential work is. This resulted in many non-essential retail outlets closing. It also banned all workers except health care and emergency workers inside the ring of steel to work in other parts of Sydney.

However, the lockdown provisions failed to recognise the largely working-class composition of the three LGAs, or that greater Sydney relies on them for many essential services that keep Sydney working. They drive

taxis, clean hospitals and public transport, work in supermarkets, deliver for Australia Post and supermarkets, drive buses and trains, etc.

When, over the weekend the light dawned, the Berejiklian government expanded the categories of workers who could work outside of those LGAs to ensure such basic services could continue. However, any worker leaving the steel ring for work must queue up for hours to get tested every three days.

At the time of writing, the lockdown is set to be lifted on the 30th of July. There is a time lag of five days or more from its introduction before the effectiveness of this lockdown can be assessed. At the time of writing, the number of people in the community, while infectious, remains worryingly high.

Berejiklian, known as the developers' friend, shocked construction companies, tradies, and unions by locking down all non-urgent construction work and non-urgent maintenance. This had never been done before in any previous lockdown.

The federal government is now importing one million doses of Pfizer a week. The Doctors' Reform Society is calling for more vaccines for Sydney's locked down suburbs. There are approximately 600,000 people in the steel ring. Just one week's supply of Pfizer would be enough to vaccinate them all, with a substantial quantity left over for other states.

NO END IN SIGHT

Modelling by the University of Sydney forecasts that with full compliance, it would be mid-August before the number of cases

could be reduced to less than five, the NSW Premier's stated aim. Modelling by the Burnett Institute of Medical Research in Melbourne suggests that it would take a month of tight Stage 4 restrictions with full compliance.

A model developed by the Populations Intervention Unit at the University of Melbourne, based on the current Stage 4 Sydney lockdown settings, found that the threshold would be reached on the 4th of September.

Morrison promised fifty-one million doses of vaccine to the Pacific but has only delivered 620,000 doses. The situation in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste is critical. Indonesia is facing an emergency, with 40,000-50,000 new cases every day. Instead of attacking China for reaching out to Pacific nations with its vaccine, Morrison should honour his commitments.

He should also support the proposal at the World Trade Organisation to introduce a temporary waiver on vaccine patents and related knowledge and ingredients. Australia should stop refusing and lobby the US and other rich countries to agree. Big Pharma is driving the agenda. That must end. Lives are more important than profits.

There is a race to get vaccinated, not just in Australia. The longer the virus continues to spread, the greater the odds of vaccine-resistant strains emerging. It is extremely short-sighted of the wealthy nations to hoard vaccines in quantities up to ten times their population. We are really "all in this together" and can only get out of it together. ✖

BRING BACK JOBKEEPER!

Anna Pha

Thousands of workers face a substantial loss of income with the extension of lockdowns in Victoria and NSW and a new one in South Australia. Pressure is mounting from trade unions, employers, and on the government to bring back JobKeeper. The form and amount of the present emergency support for workers fall far short of what is required.

JobKeeper should never have been removed. Prior to being wound down and eventually abolished, it paid workers \$1,500 a fortnight. Employers could apply if their income fell by thirty per cent or more compared with the previous

year. Importantly, it retained the link between employer and employee. It was this link that enabled the economy to pick up so quickly as lockdowns were lifted. Jobs in many sectors could be immediately restored.

The new payment, for workers who have lost twenty or more hours work, is \$600 per week. For those who have lost between eight and twenty hours the payment is \$375. It is paid directly to workers via the myGov website. There is no link to their employer. Employers are also entitled to assistance from the government under a different scheme.

\$600 is barely enough to pay the rent on a family home in the western suburbs, and \$375 is below

the poverty line. Workers in higher paid jobs such as construction often have a mortgage or rental payments and other commitments in line with their incomes.

The JobSeeker supplement that was introduced saw the unemployed paid \$1,130 per fortnight. It was also phased out, and today the payment is a punitive, below-subsistence level of \$565.70 a fortnight or \$282.85 a week.

"With lockdowns now in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales, over one million people, including hundreds of thousands of children, are excluded from the Federal Government's COVID Disaster Payments because they are on a social security payment, even though many have lost part-time

paid work," the Australian Council of Social Security (ACOSS) said.

"We're talking about people on the lowest incomes in the country being excluded by the Federal Government from its financial support package in response to the lockdowns," ACOSS CEO Dr Cassandra Goldie said.

"These are students, older women, single parents who have been hit hard by this pandemic again and again – how will they keep a roof over their heads or food on the table?"

"Many have lost part-time paid work that they relied on to cover the rent, with social security payments like JobSeeker and Youth Allowance being well below the poverty line."

"This is a public health issue

– people can't stay home in lockdown if they lose their home because they cannot afford to keep it," Goldie concluded.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Treasurer Josh Frydenberg stubbornly refuse to restore JobKeeper or increase JobSeeker and the Youth Allowance. Instead, they treat the victims of the pandemic as though it is their fault. The government should take responsibility for its failure to acquire sufficient vaccines, establish dedicated quarantine facilities, and organise an orderly and efficient vaccine rollout in line with the original priority list. ✖

BETTER READ THAN DEAD WORKERS BEGIN AUSTRALIA'S FIRST RETAIL INDUSTRIAL ACTION IN 50 YEARS

N Stallon

100 per cent of Retail and Fast Food Workers Union (RAFFWU) members have voted yes to all forms of industrial action. The move will escalate their struggle for their first Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) at Sydney local bookstore Better Read Than Dead.

The workers are demanding no less than the bare minimum that all workers should be entitled to: safety policies covering bullying, workplace harassment and discrimination; job security rights, including conversion from casual to part-time employment and protections in the case of redundancies; and a living wage of \$25 per hour.

In retaliation, the owners have led a fierce union-busting campaign, including recently making two workers redundant. The first being the union delegate and bargaining team member and the second being the unionist store manager.

The protected industrial action commenced this past Monday 21st July, with workers first initiating bans on overtime, handling cash, and updating window displays.

In a forum organised by the 1st of May Movement in conjunction with Better Read Than Dead Workers and RAFFWU that was attended by hundreds of community supporters, workers and union officials foreshadowed further industrial action if the owners refuse to come to the table, including the possibility of work stoppage.

On Thursday 22nd July, RAFFWU announced that workers had decided to escalate their industrial action with new bans, including a ban on work associated with web orders set to begin on Monday 26th July.

Workers discussed the poor conditions at the bookstore. These included a work culture that demanded all workers carry out a variety of roles despite being paid the minimum retail award rate, worker favouritism, high casualisation, a high staff turn-over rate, and aggressive union busting.

Paul Keating, Sydney Branch Secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia and Darren Greenfield, NSW Branch Secretary of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union Construction and General Division



spoke at the forum, congratulating workers on their courage and pledging support from their respective unions.

In a show of solidarity, *Overland's* editorial team published an open letter in support of the workers' struggle. The letter has been signed by over 250 Australian authors.

This is a ground-breaking moment in the Australian retail sector, marking the beginning of the industry's first case of industrial action in over 50 years, after the betrayal of the sector by the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association (SDA).

The brave workers at Better Read Than Dead have stood up not only for themselves, but for 1.5 million of society's most vulnerable workers in an industry known for casualisation, underemployment, underpayment, and poor working conditions.

The return of industrial action to the sector is a positive development that poses an existential threat to the not only the retail bosses, but the SDA that protects them.

A rare positive outcome of the COVID pandemic has been the realisation that retail workers are essential workers, and that society cannot function without them.

This rings particularly true in Sydney, where the NSW government is reluctant to lockdown the industry for fear of the economic and societal impact, instead expecting retail workers to put themselves in harm's way by working in sites prone to COVID exposure.

It is time that retail workers receive the pay and conditions that they deserve.

Better Read Than Dead, with the support of RAFFWU, are leading the fight through

collective industrial action. Their actions can serve to guide an industry that has been taught by the SDA to accept far less than they deserve.

RAFFWU is calling on the community to support these workers in their struggle by donating to a Welfare Support Fund that will spend the money on "welfare support for workers losing wages while engaged in industrial action and welfare support for workers sacked as part of the employer's union busting".

The *Guardian* encourages those that can donate to do so. The link to the Welfare Support Fund has been shared below. ✨

chuffed.org/project/btrtd-welfare-fund

WOMEN IN AUSTRALIAN POLITICS MEET TO ADDRESS "TOXIC" WORKPLACE CULTURE

E Lennon

Earlier in July, a number of female politicians, staffers and academics met to form the basis of a model for the nation's parliamentary conduct. The results from the summit will be handed to the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces at the end of July.

The ANU Global Institute for Women's Leadership summit called for an end to workplace inequality. Former Prime Minister Julia Gillard chairs the institute, which has stated its aim is to "understand and address the causes of women's underrepresentation."

While Gillard promotes glass-ceiling feminism, her government itself disenfranchised many single parents. The majority of whom were women. Her government's bill pushed single parents onto the Newstart allowance and came at the same time she gave her "Misogyny Speech."

The summit will hand down their recommendations to the review, trying to fix a system of governance plagued with inequality in all forms. However, the summit and similar stratified approaches to fixing gender parity will only treat the symptoms of misogyny and not the core.

"Progress on gender equality is not just slow – in some places it is reversing," states Former

Prime Minister Julia Gillard on the Institute's website. "This lack of movement, combined with the current public debate about how women are treated in workplaces and wider society, means there has never been a better time to tackle these issues head-on."

"The Global Institute for Women's Leadership is well-equipped to do so. It works to help create a world in which being a woman is not a barrier to becoming a leader in any field, nor a factor contributing to negative perceptions of an individual's leadership."

It is irrefutable that workplace culture in Australian politics is fraught with misogyny. The summit follows on from many women who have come forward this year about

the abuse and harassment faced in their parliamentary roles.

"Revelations of sexual harassment, misogyny, bullying and even criminal behaviour between and among parliamentarians and political staff have rocked Australia and sparked mass protests across the nation," the Institute's website says. "While Australian parliaments were early adopters of some practices to ensure parliament was a more gender-equal workplace, in other areas they lag behind the rest of the world."

While the first female Australian prime minister may rally for change in a parliamentary setting, the issues women from lower socio-economic backgrounds face remain outside the corporate and political

world of Gillard and her peers. The kind of equality that glass-ceiling feminists espouse does not form class solidarity and only feeds into individualistic notions of empowerment. The only way that women and gender diverse people can work towards equality is through class solidarity and action outside of the boardroom.

It may sound bold to hear Julia Gillard state that she "will not be lectured" to by the likes of Tony Abbott. However, it is contradictory to the goal of equality when women in positions of power misuse it when their actions have implications for the lives of other women and minorities. ✨

ASSANGE: WHEN THE PROCESS IS THE PUNISHMENT

Casey Davidson

Australian Wikileaks journalist Julian Assange spent his fiftieth birthday in a London-based high-security prison earlier this month following eleven long years of brutal containment for leaking highly disturbing war crimes committed by US military personnel against civilians in the Middle East. Countless groups have condemned Assange's imprisonment across the world on both the left and the right for a multitude of reasons, including press freedom, freedom of speech, human rights, the right to a fair trial, disproportionate punishment, internet freedom and government censorship of issues of public concern.

TORTUROUS CONDITIONS FOR UNCONVICTED ASSANGE

Regardless of the fact that Assange has still not been convicted, he continues to be held in Belmarsh Prison under inhumane conditions, which have caused considerable damage to his mental health. Concerns over risks of suicide have led to a decision to reject his extradition to the US while on trial; however, the US has recently appealed against this on the grounds that once convicted, he would serve out his time in Australia.

However, Julian Assange's partner, Stella Morris, has expressed that the "process is the punishment," as they prolong his suffering in a supermax prison where he has little opportunity to see his family. While the trial is continuously dragged out, Assange is held in torture-like isolation conditions with rare access to see his fiancée and children, in a situation completely disproportionate to his alleged crimes. Even UN Special Rapporteur on torture, Nils Melzer, who has worked with Assange and investigated his case closely, believes that house arrest is highest level of containment that would be humane.

STRIKING FEAR IN THE HEARTS OF WHISTLEBLOWERS AND JOURNALISTS

Melzer proclaims that the purpose of the isolation is to further silence Assange and prevent him from exercising his freedoms. Additionally of concern, the appeal contains a clause that would allow the US to keep Assange in a US prison depending on "diplomatic assurances." Many other critics have suggested that the harsh and disproportionate treatment of Assange is to make an example of him, to threaten other investigative journalists who are tempted to publicise crimes of the US and other Western powers, especially those revealed by courageous whistleblowers.

Anonymous ex-Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) whistleblower Witness K has also faced prosecution following his leak of Australia's interference in Timor-Leste's affairs over oil and gas reserves in the Timor Sea. Australian Defence Force (ADF)



lawyer and whistleblower David McBride has been charged disproportionately for revealing war crimes of Australian SAS soldiers in Afghanistan. Several Australian journalists' have had their homes raided for holding information that could cause "harm to Australia's interests." It comes as no surprise that these interests do not refer to the interests of the Australian public but to Australia's political elite's imperialist ambitions and cooperation with US imperialist ambitions.

REMEMBER THE REAL CRIMES

For this reason, the work of whistleblowers and investigative journalists should not be overshadowed by false and misleading accusations but instead maintain focus on the reasons they have put their lives on the line. Assange's online document archive, Wikileaks, provided important and reprehensible information to the public, such as the 2007 leaked video "Collateral Murder" in Iraq, in which a group of journalists and other civilians were murdered by airstrike by US military, in a shockingly nonchalant fashion. It also revealed the mapping of over 100,000 deaths in attacks by insurgents, including 15,000 that had not been previously published. Without public knowledge of the brutality of these forces, the average person in the West remains unaware of their nation's participation in the suffering of innocent people abroad. They also remain ignorant of the terrible environmental effects of the military and the disingenuous reasons for attacking these regions.

McBride has uncovered gruelling reports

of Australian SAS soldiers committing sanctioned massacres on civilians, slitting the throats of children and dumping their bodies, pressuring other soldiers to execute Afghan prisoners to 'get their first kill in' and more horrific acts which have been covered up systematically. This is where public outrage should really lie.

WESTERN CHAUVINISM AND HYPOCRISY

Stan Grant, Senior Fellow for the military defence-funded Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), recently conducted a cringe-worthy interview in which he boasted to China Global Television Network (CGTN) journalist, Liu Xin about exceptional media freedom in the West compared with China. He ignorantly grandstanded about Western organisations being free to criticise their government, to raise uncomfortable issues and being free to protest, unlike China. Unsurprisingly, the ABC News YouTube video of the interview was overflowing with comments such as, "Press freedom? What about Julian Assange? [You are] just deplorable." and "Free Assange – a real journo that deserves better – how can Australia speak about press freedom with any credibility while he is still locked behind bars?"

Liu however, did not focus on this, but on the fact that China has no interest in creating division, but to build bridges of understanding to different sectors of society, and behave responsibly in the international community, with the main focus always being on developing countries. She remarked that the Chinese people are happy and proud

under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, and have no interest in being part of any "club".

AUSTRALIANS BAND TOGETHER IN SUPPORT OF ASSANGE

It is curious that while the Australian public have generally expressed more anti-China views in the past, the majority of those commenting on Grant and Lui's exchange remarked on the Chinese journalist's integrity, intelligence and composure in the face of Grant's regurgitation of 'five-eyes propaganda on a state-funded channel', frustrated with the lack of discussion about Assange's situation.

Due to Assange's case, an exceptional circumstance has arisen, where a group of Australian Senators and Members of Parliaments (MPs) ranging from Greens, to Independent, to Labor, and even one Liberal Party member have campaigned together to call on US President Biden to drop Assange's unprecedented espionage charges, to release him, and to allow him to return to Australia. While this group has vastly contrasting political perspectives, they all agree that the treatment of Assange is a breach of citizen rights, threatens journalists worldwide and corrupts Australia's alliance with the US.

MORRISON'S ALLEGIANCE

Meanwhile, the silence from Prime Minister Scott Morrison and other leading Liberal Party members is deafening. George Christensen, the one outspoken Liberal Party member who supports Assange's release, recently announced his resignation as MP after expressing frustrations with the party becoming increasingly dictatorial, intolerant of criticism, and introspective, therefore becoming less democratic. While this is somewhat unsurprising, it is shameful that Morrison would allow an unconvicted Australian citizen to be buried in the US justice system, and demonstrates his allegiance to the US government over his own people.

With the exposure of Australia's participation in war crimes, the inhumane treatment of Assange, and the unfettering lack of criticism towards the US on this issue, it is hopeful that attitudes in Australia could continue to shift towards a more critical view of the imperialist core and Australia's human rights abuses. ✪

It is shameful that Morrison would allow an unconvicted Australian citizen to be buried in the US justice system, and demonstrates his allegiance to the US government over his own people.

HORN OF AFRICA

Eileen Whitehead

It is almost impossible to find out any news of what is happening in Africa. It's as though the continent is completely off Australia's radar, yet what is happening there will have consequences for the whole world. The reason why this region is subjected to so much political meddling needs to be understood.

The Horn of Africa consists of eight countries: Uganda, Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Somalia. These countries are victims of international interventions and interference that is causing extreme destabilisation in the region, from Djibouti and Eritrea to Somalia and Ethiopia. Western imperialists continue to support dictators and block any attempt at independence, while the western-backed Gulf States are transforming the region into a battlefield against not only Iran, but each other.

At the end of the Cold War, principal power groups in the US – driven by hegemonic ambitions and impulses – set out to shape and consolidate a uni-polar world that would operate under their “guidance.” Their scheme involved segregating the world into spheres of influence that would be controlled through handpicked surrogates or “anchor” states. The primary causes of the global and regional crises that prevail today can be put down to this misguided policy perspective and the distress we see in the Horn of Africa is testimony to this state of affairs.

This region is of geopolitical importance – hence the US interference. The Republic of Djibouti is located on the African shore of the Red Sea, at the southern entrance of the important waterway which passes through the Suez Canal in Egypt. This tiny state is nestled between Ethiopia with more than 110mil people, Somalia with more than 15mil people and Eritrea with more than 6mil people. Although one of the world's smallest countries Djibouti currently hosts more US military personnel than any other African nation. Roughly 4,000 US military personnel on the continent are temporarily deployed to Djibouti, and have been there for years. Camp Lemonnier is the only permanent US base in Africa, and serves as a key outpost for surveillance and combat operations against



Maintenance being carried out at Camp Lemonnier, the only permanent US base in Africa.

al Qaeda and other extremist groups in the region. It is interesting to note here that the US has made no objections to Sudan providing troops in support of the murderous Saudi intervention in Yemen.

The US has a military presence in virtually every African nation. According to June 2021 figures from the Pentagon, most nations have at least a handful of active-duty personnel temporarily deployed there. The US strategy in Africa is mainly to equip African forces and help allies like France abroad to

build those nations' security capacities and stabilise the region. The strategy doesn't appear to be working. The country with the second most US military personnel deployed there is Niger, with roughly 800, followed by Somalia, Djibouti's neighbour, with roughly 400 US military personnel, and Cameroon hosting 100 US military personnel.

Key ramifications of the US's misguided policy are:

1. infringement of the sovereignty of peoples and nations;
2. flagrant breach of international law;
3. interference in internal affairs of other countries;
4. resort to intimidation and the logic of force;
5. inducing paralysis of regional and international forums to render them susceptible to domination;
6. invoking crises, conflicts and polarisation in order to manage the resulting chaotic situation;
7. increasing attitudinal and cultural norms of demonisation, condemnation, sanctions, punishment ... etc.

Add to these global policies other deleterious regional and domestic policies such as ethnic polarity, corruption, fundamentalist extremism, and terrorism. We see the immense damage in the Horn of Africa both collectively as a region and in each country.

The US government's political posturing toward Africa has a history of turning into fatal consequences for African peoples. A decade ago, several of the same individuals who now hold positions in the Biden administration were accomplices in the US-led NATO decimation of Libya. This was “rationalised” under the guise of protecting “pro-democracy” activists from massacre by the “so-called” dictator Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, but was actually because Libya posed a threat to its geostrategic interests. The United States and its NATO allies killed and maimed thousands of Libyans, with US leaders (like Secretary of State Hillary Clinton) taking special satisfaction in the sadistic video recording of Gaddafi's murder.

The United States and its EU-NATO allies have no genuine concern for the African lives in Ethiopia, the Horn of Africa or anywhere else. Their only concerns are solely reflective of their geopolitical interests. In Ethiopia and Eritrea, these are:

- To control or have undue influence over the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a chokepoint critical to securing global energy;
- to challenge the robust presence of China; and
- to impose U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) in the only country left in Africa that has evaded its control, Eritrea.

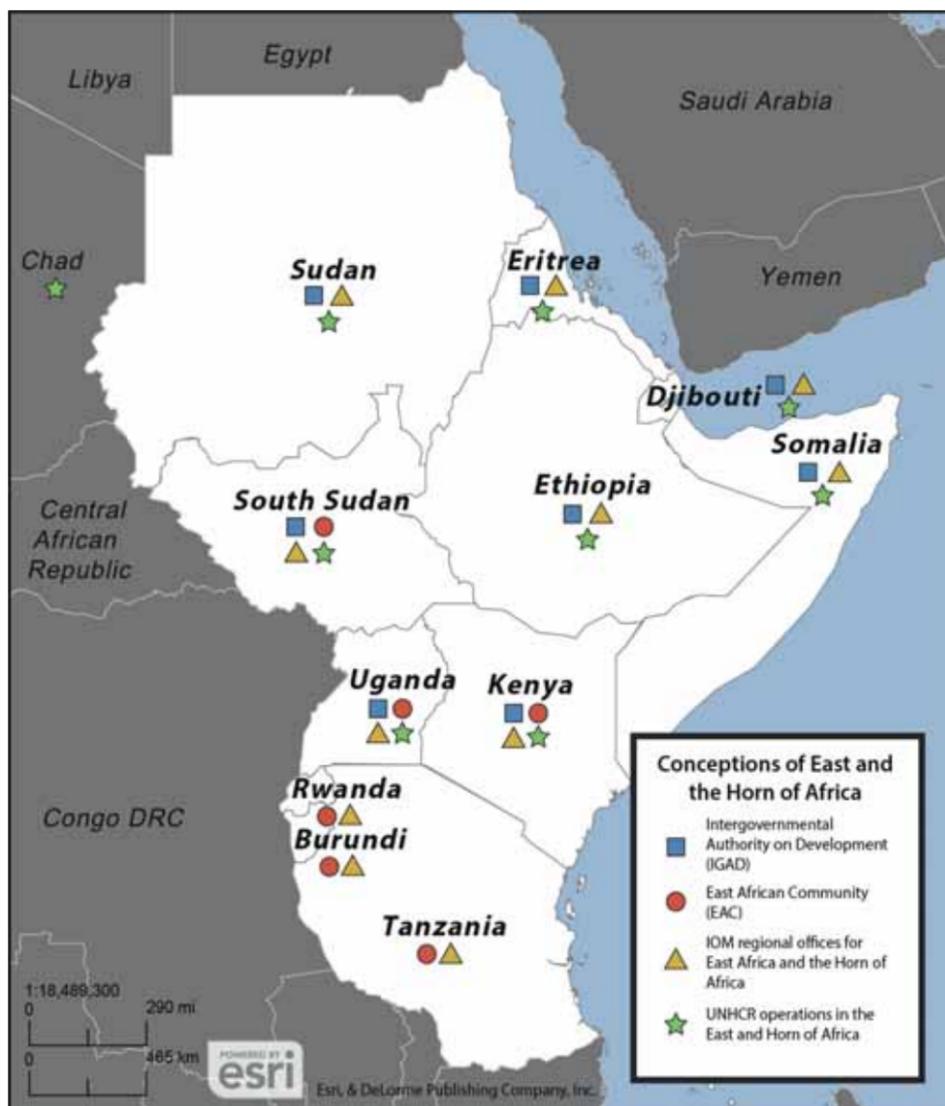
Africa is underdeveloped and destabilised because of centuries of European colonialism and decades of US and Western European neo-colonialism, not because – as the propaganda tries to make us believe – Africans are portrayed as underdeveloped.

As it did against Libya, US imperialism is spreading disinformation and misinformation to exploit and distort the complexity, historical context and political realities in the Horn of Africa to create the pretext for more direct intervention. US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, on 23rd May 2021, in a press statement stated:

“Should those responsible for undermining a resolution of the crisis in Tigray fail to reverse course, they should anticipate further actions from the United States and the international community. We call on other governments to join us in taking these actions.”

Professor Amina Mama, director of the Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies program at the University of California, Davis, in a recent interview, said that “militarisation, violent conflict, civil wars, military rule – and all the invidious and pervasive political, social, cultural and economic effects of military institutions, discourses and practices – are significant obstacles to Africa's progress towards democratisation, development, and gender justice.” There needs to be a just peace with genuine security demands and a strategy to demilitarise the region. Cultures need to be developed that transform the destructive legacies of militarism currently permeating African societies at so many levels. This is impossible while US bases criss-cross the country.

Having seen the tragic debacle the US (and its mate, Australia) has left behind in Afghanistan, it might be a good time for us to begin to question whether our alliance with the US is really beneficial to Australia, especially as the American political global interference seems to be becoming closer to our own shores and affecting us personally. ✖



SOCIALISM: UTOPIAN OR SCIENTIFIC – A GUIDE – PART 3

Valentin Cartillier

In this third article we'll be further examining Historical Materialism and how the capitalist mode of production brought about the birth of the working class. We will see how capitalism historically emerged, how it operates, and how class struggle works within it.

Engels cites two historical moments which allow us to see this picture most clearly. First, in 1831, the first localised working-class uprising took place in Lyon, France where silk workers managed to take control of the city. The second was the national working-class uprising between 1838 and 1842, in the form of the English Chartists. For Engels,

"The class struggle between proletariat [working class] and bourgeoisie [capitalists] came to the front in the history of the most advanced countries in Europe, in proportion to the development, upon the one hand, of modern industry, upon the other, of the newly-acquired political supremacy of the bourgeoisie."

Uprisings have happened countless times throughout history. Revolutionary transformation is the historical norm, not the exception. The two events above described were the first of their kind to happen in the newly emerged industrialised world. From this new material, reality arose the possibility of a higher level of understanding.

Engels maintained that old ideas of history were still stuck in the inertia of idealistic thought, based upon vague appeals to the "cultural development of civilisations." What the industrial revolution finally allowed us to see clearly, for the first time, was that history is materially grounded in, and develops according to, class struggles based upon economic interests. It is this idea that the utopian socialists, and the political economists of the time, could not work out.

For Engels and Marx, history could be analysed anew. Engels states:

"The new facts made imperative a new examination of all past history. Then it was seen that *all* past history, with the exception of its primitive stages, was the history of class struggles; that these warring classes of society are always the products of the modes of production and of exchange – in a word, of the *economic* conditions of their time."

These economic conditions (known as the "economic base") are the basis upon which all other parts of society were founded; religious institutions, legal systems, philosophical ideas, the education system etc. (these institutions are known as the "superstructure"). The development of the superstructure is tied to the economic base of the historical epoch and the society it emerges from. Understanding how the economic base and the superstructure interact and develop with each other is critical for understanding the working class' place in the capitalist world. This analysis lies at the heart of scientific socialism.

Socialism was made no longer the utopian goal of dreaming up the perfect society, but rather its task was to "examine the historical-economic succession of events from which these classes and their antagonism had of necessity sprung." Put otherwise, the antagonism between classes is the necessary outcome of changes in the economic mode of production.

What is unique about the capitalist mode of production, not present in previous historical epochs? Marx and Engels respond: *the secret of surplus-value production.*

For a capitalist to make a profit, they must pay the worker less than the value they produce. For example, if a worker on a factory



line produces \$200 worth of a particular product in an hour, their wage cannot be \$200/hr, otherwise the business would go broke. The worker will only get a fraction of the value they produce, say \$25/hr, allowing the capital to pocket the surplus of \$175.

It is the *labour* of the worker that creates the value of a product or service, then sold for a profit by the capitalist. Without this fundamentally unequal economic relationship between capitalist and worker, capitalism ceases to function. The capitalist, by virtue of owning the means of production, is able to extract the surplus value created by the labourer. This is the fundamental class division that occurred during the emergence of the capitalist mode of production.

This class division is the foundation of historical materialism. Building off of what we've already learnt, Engels gives us a precise definition. He states:

"The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of every social order; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view, the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought ... in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the *philosophy*, but in the *economics* of each particular epoch."

Here we can clearly see that social change and political revolutions are not simply found within the minds of people (the idealist position) and their lofty ideas (utopian socialism), but occur through changes in the modes of production and exchange according to the specific interests of the ruling class. The aim of the scientific socialist is to understand how these changes in the mode of production actually occur.

It is worth noting what unites utopian and scientific socialism. Both recognise that existing social institutions are unjust. What separates them is that the utopians are unable to understand the significance of the mode of production.

What then does the theory of scientific socialism tell us? If history and societies are subject to the same laws of motion and matter that we examined in the previous article, then that means that the existing mode of production must eventually change as well. As much as it would like us to believe, capitalism is not fixed and unchanging for all time; it too must give way to a new system.

Just as feudalism gave way to capitalism, so too must capitalism give way to another mode of production – socialism, where the means of production, which were privately owned under capitalism, are collectively owned by the working class.

Under feudalism, production was based upon the model of a series of small-scale producers, such as guild workers (like blacksmiths), artisans (textile workers for example), peasants etc. Each produced their own product, with minimal help from others, then took it to the market. In the case of peasants, they toiled the land, gave a percentage to their lord as tax, and if there was any extra produce left over after feeding the family, they could take the surplus to exchange at the markets.

Under capitalism, all of this changed. Rather than a series of small scale-producers, capitalism began concentrating production, over a long period of time, by funnelling people into larger and larger factories. A person was no longer selling the product of their own labour, but their very labour *itself* to someone else in exchange for wages. That someone else was the capitalist, the owner of the means of production. This is how the working class, as we know it now, emerged.

We can see how this analysis of the change in the economic mode of production corresponds to the way that dialectical

materialism works, as discussed in the previous article. The newly emerging working class was not a different *kind* of peasant, though we can say that both the peasant and the working class are exploited. As we have shown above, the working class' relationship to labour underwent a fundamental transformation according to the development of the mode of production.

Historically, the peasant and the working class initially appear as complete opposites of one another. This, however, is not the case, under closer examination we have seen how the peasantry underwent a fundamental transformation through a shift in the mode of production to become the working class. As Engels rightly pointed out, "this contradiction, which gives to the new mode of production its capitalistic character, *contains the germ of the whole of the social antagonisms of today.*"

What initially started off on the fringe of society, the capitalist mode of production, eventually became the rule, and with that transformation, the peasant who worked for a lord was forced to become a wage-labourer for the capitalist, creating the modern working class.

A slightly different process occurred between the emerging capitalist class and the feudal aristocracy. While they were initially in direct competition with each other, the aristocracy failed to properly align itself with the changing mode of production backed by the capitalists, so eventually they were swept from power. The old exploiting class was replaced by a new one. The antagonistic division of society into the capitalist class and the working class is the division we've had ever since.

In the following and final article, we'll further examine how the capitalist mode of production works. Once we have a more complete understanding of this, we'll finally be able to tie all of the concepts we've been working with over this series together. ✨

The capitalist, by virtue of owning the means of production, is able to extract the surplus value created by the labourer.

THE STREETS BELONG TO THE REVOLUTIONARIES



Perth protest against the US blockade on Cuba.

Vinnie Molina

The Cuban people celebrate the 26th July spark of the Cuban Revolution. Also called National Day of Revelry commemorates the assault by Fidel Castro and his comrades of the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba on the 26th July 1953. Despite its failure and the assassination and incarceration of many of its participants the event marked a process that ended with the triumph of the Cuban revolution on the 1st January 1959.

Sunday the 11th July 2021 will be another date to commemorate in the Cuban calendar. Responding to the call of President Miguel Diaz-Canel, communists and the revolutionary people took to the streets in droves in San Antonio de los Baños and other parts of Cuba in defence of the socialist revolution, sovereignty, and their right to self-determination.

The revolutionaries confronted those led by dissidents inspired and funded by the US in a farcical campaign “SOS Cuba” or “SOS Matanzas.” The very sophisticated social media campaign originated outside Cuba, demanding a humanitarian corridor in Cuba.

Behind the action, genuine economic concerns arising from the criminal 60-year-old blockade on Cuba and health concerns worsened by the same blockade were used by the US “outreach” program to agitate and spearhead counter-revolutionary demands against the Cuban revolution and calls for regime change.

Some of the most aggressive protesters shouted denigrating names and threats

against the communist leadership and communists in general. The strategic aim of this campaign was and is the destruction of the Cuban Revolution.

Despite his electoral promises, the US President has not reversed any of the 243 executive orders made by Trump. The most barbaric of these is the inclusion of Cuba on the unilateral US list of countries sponsors of terrorism back in January 2021.

Any hope of Biden going back to the few concessions of the Obama administration or improving relations with Cuba have not been realised. In fact, it looks like Biden is resolved to continue Trump’s aggressions.

The Biden Administration recently authorised more funds to facilitate the State Department to host roundtable meetings with several well-known dissidents to plan counter-revolutionary activities, an attack against the Cuban people.

The Communist Party of Australia issued a statement on the 12th July stating that “the CPA stands shoulder to shoulder with the Cuban Revolution and its revolutionary government.” It will defend the revolution as it is the responsibility of all revolutionaries and communists around the world.

Since the struggles for independence the Cuban people have chosen a path of self-determination, the triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959 and its characterisation of a socialist path by Fidel Castro.

The fact is that the US criminal blockade that has cost the Cuban economy some US\$150bil in losses has also prevented Cuba’s development and the wellbeing of its people. Despite that, the Cuban revolution has been

an example of solidarity and human rights. All Cubans have the right to shelter, education, jobs, health care, and dignity. The COVID pandemic has aggravated the economy, which is mostly dependent on tourism. This is not just a Cuban experience. All countries around the world have been hit hard by the pandemic, in particular the developing world. In many places in Latin America, Asia and Africa, health systems have collapsed, and people have died or been left behind.

Cuba knew well that they couldn’t rely on other people’s vaccines because the inhumane blockade would have left Cubans behind. So Cuba’s biotechnology developed their own vaccines, which will also benefit other people worldwide.

We praise the revolutionary people of Cuba who have taken to the streets in defence of their sovereignty and right to self-determination. Unfortunately, they have paid an enormous price for their determination to be free on a socialist path.

The imperialist calls for a “humanitarian” intervention is a direct attack on the Cuban Revolution. Cuba needs the end of the criminal US blockade not humanitarian corridors.

The blockade means that Cuba cannot purchase any goods on international markets or have access to financial loans as the US controls the economic and financial systems. The Helms-Burton Act Title III also punishes third countries from trading with Cuba.

We have great optimism in the Cuban revolutionary spirit to persist even during these toughest of times no matter how unjust, but we say loudly there is no reason why

an entire people should be asked to endure such an injustice.

During these times of COVID when the greatest cooperation is needed globally among people, Cuba has not faltered in that commitment despite the ramping up of the attacks against it by US Administrations. The Cuban Revolution continues to deliver not only for the Cuban people but more broadly by sharing their medical skills where needed.

A truly amazing wave of solidarity efforts were launched in support of Cuba all over the world. In Australia we are also strengthening the campaign to end the criminal blockade. Cuba is not alone and people are rallying in defence of Cuba outside US embassies and consulates demanding the end of the blockade and all subversive campaigns on the Cuban people.

The Australian government needs to assist Cuba in these difficult times of the pandemic and use its diplomatic channels to press the United States to respect the UN General Assembly’s vote, who for 29 consecutive times has voted against the blockade with only the US and Israel voting to keep it.

We demand the end of the subversive campaign against Cuba.

No to the imperialist call for a “humanitarian” intervention!

We demand the end of the US blockade! The unity of the Cuban people shall overcome!

For information on how to get involved in Cuban solidarity or to donate contact international@cpa.org.au 🇨🇺

Responding to the call of President Miguel Diaz-Canel, communists and the revolutionary people took to the streets in droves in San Antonio de los Baños and other parts of Cuba in defence of the socialist revolution, sovereignty, and their right to self-determination.

US CAN'T UNILATERALLY DEFINE "GUARDRAILS" OF TIES WITH CHINA

Global Times Editorial

US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Wednesday that Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman would seek to show China on her upcoming visit to the country "what responsible and healthy competition can look like." He also noted that the US wanted to ensure there were "guardrails" in the relationship and that competition did not spill over into conflict.

From our perspective, there's nothing wrong with the literal meaning of these words. China does not want competition to spill over into conflict as well. It would be good for both countries and the world if the two sides could work together to set up "guardrails" to prevent the kind of escalation that is widely feared.

Yet, experience suggests that Washington often says one thing and does another, using beautiful concepts as their brand of bullying and forcefully reshaping the meaning of those concepts. For example, Washington often talks about "rules," but the world has seen the US consistently commit the most brutal violations of the rules on which the United Nations system is based. The rules they talk about are actually a framework for protecting the interests of the US and its major allies. They are also a behavioural norm to force other countries to maximise those interests.

If China and the US want to set up "guardrails" between their competition, they must follow the principle of equality and mutual benefit and follow the spirit of the UN Charter. Washington must not unilaterally set boundaries for



China's behaviour, nor can it advocate its interests to harm China's core interests even more.

Such "guardrails" would be a unilateral guardrail for the US but a prison circled by a wire fence for China. If Sherman had come to China with such a purpose, the Deputy Secretary's trip would probably have achieved little more than a taste of Tianjin's delicious steamed stuffed bun.

The "guardrails" between China and the US to prevent conflicts must include the following contents:

First, the US should stop interfering in China's internal affairs, abandon its obsession with "transforming China" and refrain from narcissism with the outward aggression of American values. It is the fundamental principle for building a security wall between major countries to respect each

other and refrain from interfering in each other's internal affairs.

Second, the US military should not press closer to China's core interests, but should keep the necessary distance. Especially in the Taiwan Straits, the US should not give secessionists in the island of Taiwan a sense of military dependence and encourage them to stir up the tension. That would be very dangerous. In the South China Sea, the US cannot directly intervene in disputes. If it tries to influence the direction of the situation in the South China Sea through military pressure, it will lead to a high risk of conflict.

Third, the US must not turn its competition with China into an aggressive suppression of China's development. Its attempts to gang up allies to keep China out of the world's major supply chains will

eventually lead to a fundamental conflict with China if they go any further. A conflict like that would produce a wide divergence, destabilising and creating long-term uncertainty in international relations, and ultimately shaping China and the US as life-and-death strategic enemies.

In general, the US cannot attempt to attack China's system, or divide China, or block its development path. These are the foundations of the "guardrails" between the two countries. If the US breaks these three rules, it is proactively attacking China, not competing with it. And China will fight back no matter the cost.

So, the US needs to have basic honesty. It should not try to deceive itself. For example, if the authorities on the island of Taiwan under Washington's support or instigation

cross the redline of "independence" – the People's Liberation Army will definitely stop it with force. If the US intervenes, a military confrontation between China and the US will take place.

China has no intention to confront the US, but it is a national principle for China to defend its core interests. The US can't unilaterally define the "guardrails" between the two countries out of its own interests, because they need to be defined by both China and the US to advance the interests of both countries. The US has extensive experience in international relations, and hopefully, Washington will not be confused about the core problem of how to engage in competition, instead of conflict, with Beijing. ✪

US SANCTIONS CUBAN DEFENSE MINISTER AND SPECIAL BRIGADES

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez rejected the update of the so-called "Global Magnitsky" list of designated individuals, in which the US government has just included the Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR, Defense), Alvaro Lopez Miera, and a unit of the Ministry of the Interior of Cuba.

Rodríguez, the Cuban Foreign Minister, said the United States should "apply the Magnitsky Act to itself, for the acts of daily repression and police brutality that cost 1021 lives in 2020" in that country.

The measures announced by the Treasury Department were implemented despite calls from members of the Democratic Party itself to end the blockade against Cuba and open a path of dialogue with Havana.

The Global Magnitsky Act of 2016, approves a "list of specially designated nationals and persons blocked" by the US government in which natural and legal persons are included for extrajudicial executions, torture or other serious crimes.

The announcement of the new unilateral measures is due to alleged "abuses against demonstrators," following the protests and riots that took place on the island on the 11th of July.

Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen said her department "will continue to implement its Cuba-related sanctions, including those imposed today, to support the people of Cuba in their pursuit of democracy and relief from the Cuban regime," but avoided discussing the impact of the blockade on Cuba.

In response, the Cuban Foreign Minister expressed that "if the US government were concerned about the welfare of the Cuban people it would put an end to the blockade with which it is trying to suffocate us, to the illegal actions of interference in Cuba's internal affairs and to the disinformation campaigns to justify its aggressive measures with lies."

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Australian Unions Launch National Salary Survey

Dear Editor,
Australian Unions have launched a survey of Australian union members, aiming to gather data about wages to inform actions on pay rises. Real wages in Australia, especially for low-income earners, have been flatlining in recent years, the result of declining union membership and increased

job insecurity. The survey measures information about pay, industry and hours worked to develop a comprehensive picture of the state of work in Australia and how unions can better support workers.

Being informed is the first step towards better pay. Australian Unions are asking supporters to complete our official Salary Survey to benchmark real pay rates across all industries. By taking part you will assist efforts to give union members leverage in

seeking higher pay and to produce useful tools for working Australians.

To participate in the survey, go to www.australianunions.org.au/salary-survey

The survey takes about five minutes to complete.

Regards,
N Woodruff

“THE COMMUNIST NEXT DOOR” Jackie Chan expresses desire to join the CPC

Valentin Cartillier

During a recent forum hosted in Beijing, action movie star, director, and martial artist Jackie Chan expressed his interest in joining the Communist Party of China (CPC). Chan has starred in over 150 films, having started his acting career in the 60s and continuing to this day. A Hong Kong native, Chan has gained enormous international recognition over his career.

Chan was at a forum hosted by Chinese film insiders to comment on the recent centenary of the CPC and the speech delivered by Xi Jinping, the President of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and General Secretary of the CPC. For more details on the 100th anniversary celebrations see *Guardian* “The Communist Party Of China celebrates 100 years – for good reason” #1969.

Chan sang in the theatrical performance *Epic Journey* in a celebration this year, which celebrated the centennial of the CPC. The performance is a dramatisation of staged the War of Resistance, fought by the Eighth Route Army, the military force under the command of the CPC who fought against, and eventually overcame, Japanese imperialism from 1937-1945. Chan stated his admiration for the resilience and fortitude of the fighters and his admiration of the progress the CPC has made for the Chinese people over the course of its history and expressed optimism for its future, saying that:

“I can see the greatness of the CPC, and it will deliver what it says, and what it promises in less than 100 years, but only a few decades [...]. I want to become a CPC member.”

While initially seeming like quite a surprising statement, Chan has been in favour of the CPC for quite some time. Since 2013, he has been serving in the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, which is a political advisory body in the PRC and a foundational part of the CPC's United Front system. Ever since the 1997 handover of Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to China, Chan's politics have shifted towards a pro-Beijing stance as he has recognised the advances that the PRC has brought to the region. He was also critical of the Hong Kong protests in 2012.

Chan has quite a unique perspective given his international fame and heavy involvement with the film industries of both Hollywood and China. Not only has he starred in numerous Hollywood blockbusters, but he is also the vice-chairman of the China Film Association. In 2012, during an interview with Phoenix TV, he stated that the United States was the “most corrupt” country in the world. While he has undoubtedly profited from the American film industry, being in such close proximity to it and having the ability to compare it with the Chinese film industry lends this comment quite a bit of weight.

Socialist countries are often stereotyped as bland, monotonous places with a total uniformity when it comes to the arts. This couldn't be further from the truth. Socialist countries have vibrant and diverse histories of the arts, whether it be film, music, painting, etc. The innovative potential that is able to flourish in socialist societies expresses the creative capacities of the people. ✪



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HOW HARVEY NORMAN BUYS THE PRESS

N Woodruff

Open a copy of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Canberra Times*, or almost any other Nine-Fairfax newspaper, and you will see pages of advertisements for furniture retailer Harvey Norman, often before you read a single article.

With newspaper sales on the decline and advertising space bringing in less and less money, publishers have gotten desperate to turn a profit. Harvey Norman and subsidiary company Domayne have been the biggest advertisers in the Nine-Fairfax press, and this financial leverage bears considerable influence on the newspaper's content.

Harvey Norman has been under major scrutiny in recent months, as the multi-million dollar company refuses to pay back \$22mil in Jobkeeper payments. This incident

follows a series of actions by unions, demanding better pay and conditions for staff after the company brought in \$462mil last year.

Very few of these incidents were covered by any Nine-Fairfax, with most coverage coming from the *ABC*, *The Guardian* (both the Party's own paper and the unrelated British media company), and *The New Daily*, an online publication funded by Industry Super Holdings.

Further, Harvey Norman controversies centre around the company's founder and owner, Gerry Harvey. In a 2008 interview, he described giving charity to the homeless as “a waste,” and said that it was “helping a whole heap of no-hopers to survive for no good reason.” Although Harvey seems to hold contempt for Australia's needy, he isn't above accepting charity for himself. In November last year, Harvey Norman appealed for volunteers to work in the back-to-school sales.

The volunteer workers would not receive salaries, but instead vouchers for school uniforms sold in its stores, leading the Secretary of the Retail and Fast Food Workers Union (RAFFWU), Josh Cullinan, to accuse the store of targeting cash-strapped parents for free labour in a move he called “questionable and morally concerning.”

The Harvey Norman volunteer program was later cancelled but received very little coverage in the mainstream media. SBS ran a story, and the RAFFWU circulated information, but nothing was seen in any publication that received funding from Harvey Norman.

The company is unsurpassed in advertising spending, dropping \$165.4mil in advertising money in 2019 alone, more than the Commonwealth government and Amazon combined.

In comparison, Clive Palmer spent \$58.6mil in an attempt to influence the

2019 Australian election, and the Russian interference in the 2016 US election was achieved with only \$100k USD (AU\$133k) of advertising.

The Harvey Norman chokehold over the Australian press raises the alarm bells for democracy, as the nation's biggest advertiser buys up more and more space in Australia's newspapers and dominates the ad breaks and page margins of television and internet news. Media outlets have been reluctant to bite the hand that feeds them, with dire consequences for a fair and balanced press.

Now more than ever, Australia needs a truly free press, independent of corporate influence or the sway of money, to keep our leaders accountable and the public informed. ✪

FLORIDA “RED SCARE” ESCALATES; STUDENTS NOW REQUIRED TO DISCLOSE POLITICAL BELIEFS

Amiad Horowitz

Earlier [...], *People's World* reported Florida Congressman Anthony Sabatini's call for the execution of Cuban leaders. This was followed by Miami Mayor Francis Suarez calling for air strikes on Cuba. Both unhinged calls to illegal violence were in response to the Cuban government's supposed political repression of dissidents. If Florida Republicans really value diversity of thought and the right to protest, though, why do they seek to squelch it in their own state?

Last month, *People's World* reported on the new Red Scare in the state of Florida currently being implemented by its Republican administration. Florida House Bill 233 requires that state-employed teachers register their personal political beliefs with the state. We now know the law is even more problematic than was reported.

For example, the law does not stop with its “loyalty oath”-like interrogations of teachers' political stances. Students in Florida schools will now also be required to register their individual political beliefs and opinions with authorities. Gov. Ron DeSantis claims the “survey” of students will be used “to monitor intellectual diversity” on Florida's campuses. The governor doesn't specify whether the idea is to promote diversity or stamp it out. However, his other statements bemoaning “liberal ideology” among students and complaining that schools have become “socialism factories” give a hint as to his true motivation. Simply put, the government of Florida wants to suppress those political opinions with which the Republican Party does not agree. The First Amendment is under attack.

Unfortunately, as anti-worker laws are very common across the United States, it might be possible for some jaded citizens to not appreciate the gravity of a law requiring teachers employed by the state to register their political beliefs. After all, it is just one more example of how few rights and protections workers enjoy. But how can anyone, regardless of political ideology, not be up in arms about a requirement for students to do the same?

The Florida anti-diversity bill raises many questions. What will be done with the information collected? How will it be used? Will the data be anonymous? Who will have access to the information collected? What happens if someone refuses to answer? Will there be a return of McCarthy-style “blacklists” for those with opinions deemed undesirable? Will Republicans demand “affirmative action”-style quotas to ensure right-wing representation at colleges? Most importantly, how are the bill's demands even remotely constitutional? Despite repeated requests from Florida Democrats and education professionals, DeSantis and Florida government officials refuse to offer any answers.

The State Board of Education previously limited Floridians' freedom to possess or be exposed to ideas not sanctioned by the Republican Party when the State Board of Education banned the teaching of Critical Race Theory. Like HB-233, this policy change limits the ability of teachers to fulfil the role they are trained to do as professional educators and seeks to stamp out what Republicans consider to be dissenting viewpoints.

Unfortunately, the policies and laws aimed at educators are not the DeSantis administration's only attack on the constitutional rights of Floridians. Both follow in the footsteps of House Bill 1, signed into



law by the governor in April 2021. The bill, written in response to last year's Black Lives Matter protests, is dubbed by supporters as an “anti-riot bill.” It is more accurately called an anti-protester bill.

HB-1 is designed to increase both the government's ability to monitor citizens and the power of the state to suppress the dissemination of ideas it deems unfavourable. The law creates the new criminal offence of “mob intimidation” and stipulates that three or more people using force or the threat of force to convince someone to “assume, abandon, or maintain” a certain viewpoint is “unlawful mob intimidation.” Given the open-ended nature of the word “force,” it is foreseeable that an act as simple as obstructing a sidewalk or shouting too loudly could open a protester up to a jail sentence of up to one year and a US\$1,000 fine.

The bill also increases police power and decreases protections for citizens who are practising their constitutionally mandated right to protest. In an effort to encourage local police to be more forceful and violent when confronting demonstrators, HB-1 allows for citizens of localities to sue their government if they feel that local police didn't respond forcefully enough to any protest in their community in which property was damaged.

DeSantis, along with his administration's extremist and repressive right-wing policies, have proven to be very popular among the conservative elite across the country. In recent polls of Republicans by the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), DeSantis ranks as the second most popular choice for the party's 2024 presidential nomination. As he trails only former White House occupant Donald Trump, many are already

talking about a Trump-DeSantis joint ticket.

Florida Republicans have launched an all-out attack on diversity of thought and the First Amendment in their state. They hope to eliminate any idea with which they disagree or which might threaten their hold on power, buttressing their moves by further empowering police to persecute those that disagree and would stand up and say so. The policies work hand-in-hand with the voter suppression measures that the state GOP and Republicans across the country are implementing.

A line in the sand must be drawn. If Florida Republicans get away with these clearly unconstitutional policies, it won't be long before we see the same policies implemented across the United States.

People's World ✪

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Editorial Office
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833
Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Editor: Franc Stregone

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SOUTH AFRICAN CP: STATEMENT OF THE ALLIANCE POLITICAL COUNCIL

The African National Congress (ANC), South African Communist Party (SACP) and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) have begun a nationwide mobilisation of their structures and communities against the violence and destruction that has hit many communities, particularly in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal.

This follows an urgent meeting of the Alliance Political Council, comprising the national officials and office bearers of the ANC, SACP and COSATU, on Thursday morning, 15th July 2021. The meeting was convened to discuss the violence, destruction, economic sabotage and looting that started in some parts of KwaZulu-Natal in the last few days and thereafter spread to some parts of Gauteng, and elsewhere.

The Alliance Political Council called on the state to strengthen its efforts to stop the violence, destruction, looting and sabotage, with immediate effect, and to protect life, restore stability, and ensure the uninterrupted implementation of our national COVID-19 preventative strategy and vaccination rollout. Those responsible for planning and executing these acts must be brought to book by the criminal justice system and face the consequences provided for by the law.

At the same time, the government, working with labour, communities, and business must prepare to achieve economic reconstruction and recovery, provide for disaster relief measures, and strengthen our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Alliance will undertake a coordinated joint effort through its structures to help end the violence and destruction. This will include undertaking community engagements to discourage looting and violence, supporting the work of the organs of state responsible for law enforcement, including through Community Policing Forums, gathering information and responding to

any incidents, and mobilising community members to participate in clean-up operations in areas that have experienced violence and looting. These interventions will be within the framework of COVID-19 preventative regulations.

The counter-revolutionary offensive manifested by violence, looting, destruction, and economic sabotage must be stopped immediately. South Africa must focus on democratic transformation and development by advancing economic reconstruction and recovery to achieve transformation and inclusive growth.

The Alliance Political Council commends communities and different sectors of society that have taken a stance against the violence, destruction, looting and economic sabotage, and encourages them to stand firm. They are setting a clear example of the active citizenry that is needed to defend our democracy, our constitution, and the rule of law.

The meeting expressed deep concern at reports of racial tension and violence, particularly in the eThekweni metropolitan area, KZN Province, and called for immediate intervention by the leadership and security services.

The meeting also denounced the racial profiling reported to be taking place at some shopping centres in KwaZulu-Natal. Non-racial national unity is essential, now and forever. The attempts at fuelling racial tensions are aimed at perpetuating lawlessness. We call on all South Africans to unite to defeat any attempts at sowing racial and ethnic divisions. The attempts by the instigators to set one national group of our people against another must be defeated. Alliance structures, other civil society formations and all communities must work together to promote non-racial and non-sexist social cohesion.

We call on all people in South Africa to forge broad unity in defence of our democracy



and other hard-won gains. We must come together regardless of affiliation and defend our democratically elected government. We must assert with a resounding voice, as the Freedom Charter declared, “for all in our country and the world to know: that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the People.”

As a result of the violence, destruction, and looting, major logistics networks and transportation of essential goods such as food, medicine, and fuel, and other economic activities have been disrupted. This endangers the health and well-being of our people across the country, particularly the elderly and those with chronic medical conditions who need uninterrupted healthcare and medicine supply.

Many workers have lost their jobs as their workplaces, including malls, factories, and warehouses, have been looted, torched, and destroyed. Other workers have found it difficult to report for work, while many businesses in the affected areas have closed. This is a clear campaign of economic sabotage with the counter-revolutionary intention to bring about great hardship to millions of workers and poor South Africans.

The Alliance Political Council expressed support for the governments’ efforts to engage with different sectors of society – including labour, business and the religious sector – to ensure that peace and stability are restored, that looting, and destruction of property stops, that livelihoods and jobs are secured, and that production and trade resume in all the affected areas. ✪

IRAQ AND SYRIA VOW TO “JOIN HANDS” IN FIGHT AGAINST US-SPONSORED TERRORISM

Steve Sweeney

IRAQI President Barham Salih and his Syrian counterpart Bashar al-Assad have vowed “to join hands together” in the fight against terrorism as they discussed relations between the two countries.

In a phone conversation on the evening [15th July], the two leaders spoke of their “two brotherly peoples, who have close historical, geographical and social ties,” and the challenges faced by both Iraq and Syria.

Salih and Assad vowed to

“join hands together in the face of common dangers, especially terrorism [...] and not allow terrorist groups to catch their breath and exploit loopholes to carry out their criminal acts.”

Both countries have successfully repelled the Islamic State (Isis) jihadist group, which at its peak controlled vast swathes of territory in the two countries.

But Isis remains a threat, as does the United States, which is accused of sponsoring terrorist organisations in its drive for regional hegemony.

Under Operation Timber

Sycamore, a covert billion-dollar CIA programme, the US provided weapons and training to a number of jihadist groups in Syria as part of US efforts to overthrow Assad.

Air strikes by the US, and Israel, are also said by critics to undermine the fight against Isis and other Islamist groups.

US President Joe Biden recently launched an attack on the Iranian-backed Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF), which have been conducting joint anti-terror operations with the Iraqi army.

Last month’s air strike, which killed four PMF soldiers, was

condemned by Salih as “a breach of Iraqi sovereignty.”

Since then, US military bases in both countries have been targeted by resistance forces, which have vowed to continue their fight until US troops are driven out.

The Iraqi parliament voted unanimously last year to demand the withdrawal of all US troops after Iranian Quds Force commander General Qassem Soleimani was assassinated in a US drone strike at Baghdad International Airport.

Nonetheless, some 2,500 US military personnel remain in the country.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi spoke to US Special Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa Brett McGurk about their continued presence.

“Discussions took place about mechanisms for [US] combat troops’ withdrawal from Iraq and moving forward to a new stage in strategic co-operation,” the Prime Minister’s office said in a statement.

Kadhemi is set to visit Washington later this month to press for a concrete timetable for the US pullout.

Morning Star ✪



Communist Party of Australia

www.cpa.org.au

cpa@cpa.org.au

General Secretary
Andrew Irving
andrew@cpa.org.au

Party President
Vinnie Molina
president@cpa.org.au

Media
guardian@cpa.org.au
amr@cpa.org.au

Adelaide Liam Ellis sa@cpa.org.au 0405 020 614

Brisbane 0499 476 540 bris@cpa.org.au
PO Box 6012, Manly, Qld 4179

Canberra act@cpa.org.au

Darwin Vinnie Molina 0419 812 872 darwin@cpa.org.au

Melbourne Andrew Irving cpavic@cpa.org.au
Box 3 Trades Hall, Lygon St, Carlton Sth Vic 3053

Newcastle newcastle@cpa.org.au

Head Office (Sydney)

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

phone: 02 9699 8844 fax: 02 9699 9833 email: info@cpa.org.au

Perth Elly Hulm perth@cpa.org.au 0419 812 872
PO Box 98, North Perth, WA 6906

Western NSW Allan Hamilton western.nsw@cpa.org.au
121 McKay St, Cootamundra, NSW 2590

Sydney District syd.dist.comm@cpa.org.au 02 9699 8844 Surry Hills (head office)

Tasmania Andrew Irving tas@cpa.org.au 03 9639 1550

Wollongong wollongong@cpa.org.au

Youth youth@cpa.org.au Surry Hills (head office)