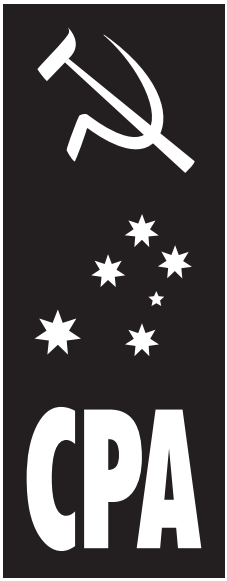
This is the
CPA

A brief outline of what the CPA stands for



COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA

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What is the CPA?

1. WHAT THE CPA STANDS FOR

The Communist Party is a party of activists who work in trade unions, peace and environmental groups, solidarity organisations and a variety of other community movements as well as undertaking campaigns in the name of the Communist Party.

Party members work to eliminate unemployment, poverty, injustice, homelessness, racism and war. Our members and Party organisations have strenuously opposed the GST and the privatisation of the people's property such as Telstra, the Commonwealth Bank, QANTAS, and other public utilities. These should have remained as public property. Our members support and are active in the many trade union struggles for improved working conditions, wages, rights, jobs and so on.

We work for a society in which publicly owned enterprises play the major role in the economy, which encourages the participation of people in democratic decision making and management, a society where Aboriginal people, women, and migrants are treated equally and with dignity. We work for a society where the environment is protected.

The CPA advances an alternative political agenda before the people that puts the people's needs and interests first. In our vision of an alternative, the people's voice and participation are paramount. The purpose of our economy must be to fulfill people's needs, not to produce ever-increasing wealth for private corporations and the super-rich.

We strive to develop the Communist Party into a party capable of helping to educate, organise, unite and fight together with all the left, progressive and democratic political forces in building a broad people's movement for full employment, for democratic rights, for equality and

dignity, for a high standard of education and health care for every citizen.

Many conditions and democratic rights have been won in the past and we believe much more can be achieved by a movement which is united and determined to stand up for what is right. In the process of battling for reforms the movement will grow and will eventually bring about real changes and start to build a new Australia.

The work of party members and the party's policies are guided by a set of ideas called Marxism-Leninism which are applied to Australian conditions.

2. HOW CAN THESE OBJECTIVES BE ACHIEVED?

The Communist Party of Australia believes there is a way to overcome the insecurity, worsening conditions and the social and economic problems that face many workers and their families. To do this it is necessary to change the direction of the economic and political policies pursued by Australian governments and to eventually replace the capitalist system with a socialist one.

Wage and salary earners and their families, professional people, farmers, pensioners, unemployed people and students make up over 85 per cent of our population. They are the overwhelming majority. These are the people who, by their work, create the wealth of Australia, but they suffer the exploitation imposed by monopolies. Many face unemployment as plants are closed, they experience the cuts in government spending, the closure of services, schools and hospitals, and pay high rents and mortgages.

Big business owners, on the other hand, are only a very small minority of the population, but they tell governments what to do. They benefit

from the discriminatory policies of governments and receive billions of dollars in government handouts, tax-breaks, etc.

We fight with the majority, to defend their rights and well being, to help them decide the direction of society, to decide their future and to control their own destinies. The Communist Party of Australia is on their side.

The struggles and campaigns of the people take many forms from small meetings to large demonstrations, strike struggles and pickets, petitions, election campaigns, international solidarity actions, etc. In our opinion, it is the actions of the people that are the key to bringing about change.

3. SOME OF THE PARTY'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICIES

Detailed policies for all workers, the unemployed, women, students, Aborigines, migrants, policies on health, education, the environment and many other issues are set out in the CPA's Program and in various policy pamphlets.

The following are examples of our economic and social policies around which people's movements and struggles can be built right now:

We call for an end to the flood of privatisations that have cost thousands of jobs and placed much of the Australian economy into the grip of foreign transnationals.

We call for the GST legislation to be repealed and replaced with a progressive tax policy that is based on the principle of higher income earners and companies paying a higher level of tax.

The burden of taxation must be taken off workers and low income families who are slugged through the PAYE tax system.

Both Labor and Coalition governments have progressively reduced corporate tax rates to only 36 per cent. This rate is to further increase to only 30 per cent in the next two years. Many companies do not even pay this rate of tax as they implement tax avoidance schemes. The Government has halved capital gains tax. This represents another big handout to corporations and shareholders. Tax rates for big business should be increased not reduced. Profits going overseas should be heavily taxed.

Unemployment is a major problem in Australia today, causing poverty, hardship and depression for thousands of families. Our job creation program includes an expansion of the public sector and investment by governments in the revenue raising sectors of manufacturing and trade.

We call for the adoption of a national minimum or basic wage, based on a socially acceptable standard of living. All wage rates should be regularly adjusted in accordance with rises in the cost of the necessities of life. Unemployment and falling living standards for most workers mean people can buy less. This falling demand contributes to job losses.

Pensions, unemployment and sickness benefits and other welfare payments should be at least 35% of average weekly male earnings.

The principle of equal pay for work of equal value should be introduced together with an end to discrimination against women, migrants and young workers.

Prices should be controlled with profit levels and interest rates regulated by the Federal Government. The last two decades have seen a massive increase in the concentration of wealth at the top end. This process has to be reversed.

Governments must ensure that enterprises maintain at least 51 per cent Australian ownership and should control the inflow and outflow of foreign capital in Australia.

We call for a halt to tariff reductions unless agreed to and simultaneously implemented by all our main trading partners.

International trade should be based on mutually beneficial agreements reached among all trading nations, not the dog-eat-dog principles that exist at present. Trade in wheat, wool, meat, coal, iron ore and gold should be the Federal Government's responsibility, with national marketing boards established for these and other major commodities.

Co-operatives covering production, marketing, processing and the procurement of farm equipment should be encouraged to help improve the economic and political position of small working farmers, helping them break the power of the big monopolies in the countryside and ensuring that good living standards are provided to farmers.

It is possible to implement these policies and create a better society. It is this vision of a society with justice, equity and democracy that motivate the work of the members of the Communist Party of Australia.

4. WHY THE WORKING CLASS IS IMPORTANT

The great majority of people in Australia belong to the working class, that is, the wage and salary earners. Because they suffer most at the hands of capitalism, workers have a vested interest in changing society.

When organised and united in trade unions and other organisations, the working class has the strength to play the decisive part in bringing about a radical change in the direction of Australian politics.

Despite attempts since the early 1980s to weaken the trade union movement and prevent workers from struggling for their rights, workers remain an organised and disciplined force.

The working class has a long and rich history of struggle, for wages and working conditions, on health and safety issues, for increased social services, against anti-trade union legislation, against individual work contracts, etc.

Strong campaigns have been waged for democratic rights, for peace between nations (to stop the Vietnam War, solidarity with East Timor, etc), for environmental protection, for the retention of Medicare, for taxation reform, a greater say in production and so on.

We seek to strengthen the working class movement in every way so that it can play a vital role in winning these gains for workers and achieve a real political alternative.

5. UNITING ALL LEFT AND PROGRESSIVE ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

Our aim is to unite all the organisations and individuals committed to a new direction for Australian politics, to create left and progressive unity around an agreed program. Only in this way will it be possible to build a movement capable of challenging the big business controllers of economic and political power in our country.

Such a movement can eventually change the direction of Australia's political life.

There are many struggles in Australia today which need support so that the well being and the rights and liberties of ordinary men and women are improved.

There are many progressive organisations, trade unions, community groups; political parties and others involved in such issues. Our aim

is to strengthen each struggle by bringing together all groups and individuals involved working for commonly held objectives.

This cooperation could take the form of coalitions or alliances. Public support and enthusiasm grows, as people feel empowered when there is united action by many different groups. This brings much greater strength and effectiveness.

In Australia today, no one political party that advances these or similar progressive policies, has enough support to form an alternative government at Federal, State or local Council level. No one party or group represents all progressive and democratic opinion.

That is why coalitions and other forms of co-operation such as an exchange of preferences during elections and the adoption of common programs are especially important.

6. A NEW KIND OF PARLIAMENT

Parliaments have an important place in the struggles to advance the interests of the people - but only if work in parliaments is linked to the struggle by the people outside parliament.

Our present system, in which government is alternately shared between the Liberal-National Party coalition and the Australian Labor Party, is out of touch with the needs of the Australian people. Australian governments are the mouthpieces of the banks and insurance companies, the billionaire media barons, the mining conglomerates and other huge corporations.

There are, however, signs of change. The emergence of alternative and independent political forces in various parliaments, who see the importance of fighting for the rights and interests of the ordinary people of Australia, are an indication of this. It shows that Australia does not have to be condemned forever to the old two-party system, alternating between ALP and Liberal-National Party governments.

To break the two-party system of government, we have to increase the number of progressive, "people's parliamentarians". Our aim is for a left and progressive people's coalition to win government.

Such a new kind of popular government, democratic and multi-party, which really represents the mass people's movement, could implement the demands of the working people, professional groups, farmers and small business interests.

7. DEMOCRACY IS ESSENTIAL

Democracy means different things to different people but most would probably agree that it basically means "government by the people". Democracy includes participation by the people in decision making and in the running of society, the right to organise and struggle, the freedom of expression, equal opportunity, social and job security. It means equal rights for ethnic and national minorities.

Does Australia measure up to this standard?

Democracy is severely limited when company directors can decide to close factories and sack workers at any time and when only two or three very wealthy and powerful men control the mass media. Such powerful people are not elected by nor are they accountable to the workers who produce the goods and services that they sell and from whose labour they make profits.

If Australia is to be a healthy democracy, we have to guarantee the independence of trade unions, their right to organise and to take industrial action to protect the interests of their members. The right to strike is a vital democratic right.

Other democratic rights should include the right to work, the right to a decent education, health services and a home, the right to leisure and culture, the right to care and security in old age, and the right of

women, migrants, Aborigines, and the disabled to live free from prejudice, racism and discrimination.

If people are to be able to fight for their rights and change society for the better, democratic rights to free speech and freedom of assembly are very important.

The private ownership of the mass media and its concentration in very few hands is a democratic rights issue. The best way to break up this monopoly is for the mass media to be owned and run by democratic and progressive organisations such as trade unions, environment, cultural and community organisations.

The introduction of proportional representation is essential for democracy as the present system favours the maintenance of the two-party system. Parliament is often a rubber stamp, with many parliamentarians lacking moral courage and more concerned about their careers than their constituents.

Proportional representation would increase the number of left and progressive voices in parliament.

We call for government funding of political parties to be ended and MPs and councilors should be required to report back to meetings of their electors with voters having the right to recall their representatives.

8. SOCIALISM IN AUSTRALIA

The Communist Party wants a co-operative society whose first priority is the improvement of the living standards and rights of the working people. A cooperative spirit and concern for all rather than selfish individualism is a major principle of a socialist society.

For socialism to work, the working people must be intimately involved in helping to run the country and industry. Workers must be involved in management and in decision making at all levels. A socialist

government would be made up of representatives of the workers, scientists, technologists, intellectuals, farmers and small business people.

Socialism and democracy go hand in hand. In addition to having the right to elect the government and to stand as a candidate in an election from time to time, it also means having social and economic rights and responsibilities. The right of recall would be introduced so those representatives who did not do their jobs well could be replaced.

Changes would have to be implemented which would eventually lead to the establishment of a developed socialist political and economic system. In such a system publicly owned and controlled enterprises would become the dominant form of ownership in our economy. This would not exclude some forms of private ownership continuing to exist for a long time.

While industries must be efficient and be able to balance the books, the benefits from increased production must be passed on to the people who are doing the work. This means placing limits on private profit making.

Conditions for the investment of foreign capital would be controlled and regulated, including the export of profits, so that transnational corporations would be prevented from gaining a dominant position in the Australian economy. This is essential if Australia's national independence is to be maintained.

Economic planning is necessary to prevent the booms and slumps which are a persistent feature of all capitalist economies and to make the best use of the nation's resources, the technical skills of workers and to protect the overall needs of the people.

A socialist government would insist on the peaceful, negotiated settlement of international disputes and would consistently support international and mutual disarmament. Aggression and interference in the internal affairs of other countries would be replaced by a policy of friendship, non-interference and respect.

A major task for a socialist government would be to educate everyone in an attitude and lifestyle that respects and protects the environment. Protection of the environment calls for scientific knowledge, constant vigilance and public awareness together with democratic involvement and accountability.

But hasn't socialism been a failure?

No, socialist societies have many outstanding achievements to their credit. Socialist societies eliminated mass unemployment. They provided advanced and comprehensive social welfare, education and health facilities. Modern housing was provided. Culture developed and became available to all. Equal pay and opportunities for women reached a high level. Education, sports and cultural facilities were provided for young people. Generous assistance was given to the developing countries.

The Soviet Union and other Eastern European socialist countries were the first socialist societies. Many difficulties had to be faced and overcome and some mistakes were made. Inevitably, some things were done badly - socialist democracy was not implemented fully, social life and the economy were allowed to stagnate - but socialism was not a failure. Socialism will be re-established in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the future.

Communist Parties have learnt much from these experiences. History is the continuous story of people fighting for a better life, for freedom, security and independence and we remain convinced that these great objectives can only be fulfilled in a society built on socialist principles, freed from the exploitation and limitations imposed by the huge private enterprise corporations.

The alternative is the continuation of capitalism with real power being exercised in their own interests, by the transnational corporations and the wealthy.

9. HOW THE CPA WORKS

The members of the Communist Party are workers, scientists, technicians, students, writers, farmers and other people from different walks of life. They are women and men, young and old, and have different national origins. All are united by a commitment to work for the interests and needs of the working people of Australia.

CPA members belong to branches that usually meet fortnightly. Branches are based on a particular place of work, a suburb or other locality.

We have committees which co-ordinate the work in particular States and districts. National Congresses of elected representatives are held every four years. Congresses make major policy decisions and elect a Central Committee that has the responsibility of leading the party between Congresses.

The CPA has a weekly national newspaper, *The Guardian.* The paper presents party policies and views on many issues, carries news of national and international events and promotes campaigns on economic and political issues.

Communist Party members have both rights and responsibilities. They can express views on party policy or activity, contribute to the party's newspaper or journals, and stand for elected positions. There are opportunities for critical discussion and analysis at all levels of party activity.

At the same time, members are expected to be activists and to carry out decisions once they have been collectively discussed and decided by the majority. All members pay a fixed membership fee and are asked to make additional voluntary financial contributions.

10. HOW TO SUPPORT AND JOIN THE CPA

Supporting the CPA. The CPA supporting you.

If you agree with some or all of the policies of the CPA, the main way in which you can help the party is by supporting them wherever you are active. Maybe you are an active member of a trade union, a peace group, or an environmental or community organisation. The CPA has policies on a wide range of issues. We are happy to discuss them with you at any time. If you need assistance with any work you are doing in a trade union, peace group, community or other organisation, please get in touch with us. We will be pleased to help.

If you are not already a reader of *The Guardian* we invite you to become a reader either by taking out a subscription or by arranging for the paper to be delivered to you by one of our members. Please help us to increase sales by introducing the paper to your friends and workmates. You may also be able to help finance *The Guardian* by making a contribution to the paper's Press Fund. These are acknowledged each week in the Press Fund column.

You can also help by making financial contributions to the party's general funds, either at a meeting or by post. We do not receive any big business subsidies or get an income from paid advertisements. As a working class party we depend on the generosity of our members and supporters to keep our work going.

From time to time we produce leaflets and booklets on various issues and we welcome your assistance in distributing such literature.

Party branches often run discussions on various topics. You are welcome to join in such discussions and express your views. Contact the local party organisation for details.

Joining the CPA

If you decide to join the CPA you have to fill in a Membership Application Form. It is a simple, straightforward form and can be obtained from any party member you know or by writing to your nearest party office.

Your application for membership has to be supported by a party member who signs your application form as your nominator.

The application is then presented to a party organisation (usually a party branch) for consideration.

Membership is open to all who are 16 years of age or older, who normally reside in Australia, who accept the party's Program and Constitution, and are willing to be active in a party organisation. Membership fees are $60 per year for those receiving an income above the age pension rate and $15 per year for those receiving the age pension or less.

Upon acceptance of the application for membership by the party organisation, the applicant becomes a full member and is entitled to exercise all the rights and duties which are set out in the Constitution.